



The White Devil

Domenic Stansberry

Molotov Editions (Oct 1, 2016)

Softcover \$15.95 (232pp)

978-0-9967659-1-6

Gripping from beginning to end, The White Devil is an unforgettable novel by an author at the height of his powers.

Domenic Stansberry's thriller *The White Devil* shows a masterful touch for perspective and character, unspooling a sultry story of passion, revenge, and betrayal that invokes the great age of Italian film noir.

In a Rome still under John Paul II, Vicki Wilson's lovers keep turning up dead. Vittoria, as she's known in Italy, is a small-time model and actress, recognizable but hard to place. Guided by her delinquent brother, Johnny, Vittoria enters the upper circles of Roman society. Before long, she's mingling with the high rollers, corrupt senators, and powerful movers. Among them is Paolo Orsini, who quickly claims Vittoria. Too bad he's married; too bad his wife, an aging film icon, is murdered. Vittoria soon finds herself at the heart of a scandal. Is she innocent, or just turning a blind eye to the facts?

Vittoria is a perfect main character. Her beauty allows her to get close to strangers easily. It gives her access to the secret parts of life, the back-room deals. At the same time, she's strangely opaque, like a mirror that holds light without divulging a reflection. Her brother, though fiercely protective of her, is possessive. He brokers her relationships, nudging her into the bedrooms of the rich and powerful. As Vittoria follows Johnny's guidance, normal life falls away and is replaced by the surreal. She's unsure of whom to trust, and even questions her own motives.

Stansberry keeps this thriller centered by pinning his characters to Italy's timeless hills: "Tuscany spread out in front of us, beautiful, ancient. The landscape had a runic quality, like a puzzle waiting to be solved." The cinematic cliffs, beaches, and architecture contrast with the violence that lingers, like a cloud, around Vittoria. When she's able to finally see through it, she has two choices: feign ignorance, or take revenge of her own.

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CLAIRE FOSTER (Winter 2017)

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