



The Window Washer

Eric Rill

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This mystery and thriller charts new territory by examining shades of evil and whether ends always justify means.

After his wife and son die in a suspicious fire, Nick takes a job as a high-rise window washer and building maintenance man, hoping that the mind-numbing work will ease his pain. Instead, he stumbles into a world of mobsters, murder, money-laundering, and double-crosses. Eric Rill's *The Window Washer* is a top-notch, high-octane thriller with an ensemble cast.

From his vantage point, Nick sees a woman in trouble; he rushes to her aid, and thus meets police officer Angela, who is posing as a prostitute in order to gain access to mobsters. As he gets to know Angela, Nick finds himself drawn deeper into her undercover world. He gets in even bigger trouble when he accidentally enters a mafioso's apartment. Nick seems to be alone in his concern for Angela's safety; her superiors are happy as long as her work can be used to catch the crooks, regardless of what danger she might find herself in.

Multiple viewpoints—such as those of various police officers investigating the mobsters and politicians—are used to explore ways corruption can take root, as well as the convenient nature of facades. Characters are well fleshed out, relatable, and nuanced, and many serve to shine a spotlight on the morally complex nature of individual choices. This is particularly true when a police officer mishandles evidence to further her career, which also leads to criminals being brought to justice; the question looms: Do the ends justify the means?

The novel also deals with political topics, and highlights how wheeling and dealing can lead to clouded judgment. The book neither condemns nor lionizes the people who make these morally dubious choices; laying bare their flaws humanizes them. Additionally, each dynamic character has an arc and each elicits empathy from the audience.

The mystery of the arson and its fallout fuel the plot. Chapters begin with action, generating curiosity and compelling attention forward. Although it takes time for the diverse cast members to connect, patience is rewarded, because all ends are tied up neatly. Complicated law procedures and acronyms are integrated seamlessly into the plot. Refreshingly, there is no new romance for Nick by the end of the book. Instead, he grieves his family, a welcome but unexpected allowance for a genre so often fueled by anger and plot twists.

This mystery and thriller charts new territory by examining shades of evil while delivering well-developed characters and complex themes.

JILL ALLEN (February 9, 2016)

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