

Tower 18

Tony Bathey

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Exciting and skillfully plotted, Tower 18 is a gripping, edge-of-your-seat thriller.

Thrilling and thought-provoking, *Tower 18* by Tony Bathey explores ruthless political maneuvers and offers copious amounts of scandal.

Rival lifeguards for the San Diego Department of Coastal Safety, Cynthia Harden and Marisol Escobar find themselves competing for a prestigious sergeant's position. The lieutenant wants experienced Harden to snag the role, while the mayor supports Escobar, who represents diversity and could help him garner votes.

On every political level, proponents of both women debate, scheme, and undermine in order to make sure their candidate is chosen. When a despicable setup from a troubled colleague leads both women into harsh winter weather to save a drowning swimmer, their fates will soon be determined.

Billed as "the first installment of an explosive series," *Tower 18* does not disappoint. The plot twists and turns at a thrilling speed while still maintaining believability. The underbelly of political cajoling is explored in all its repugnant glory, showing the true price of victory.

Characterization is dynamic, and each character is forcefully compelling in some way. Bathey has an excellent eye for detail and creates striking, flawed humans that are both loathsome and relatable. Harden and Escobar are especially fascinating—two strong, highly qualified women who are forced to battle for their department's only leadership role offered to a woman.

Settings are wonderfully executed, with the natural beauty of San Diego juxtaposed to the grimy bureaucratic activity happening inland. The seeming discord of good versus evil aids the suspense and tension of the story. As the story progresses, it is unclear who to trust, making for a compelling mystery.

Writing is memorable for its vivid imagery and thematic plotlines. Language is crisp yet compelling, both in exposition and dialogue. Ample foreshadowing also allows for subsequent rereadings and leads to fun speculation about coming works in the series. Bathey lays phenomenal groundwork with this novel.

Structurally, narration follows an omniscient approach, vacillating among characters and settings seamlessly. Character thoughts and motivations are parsed out wonderfully, with crucial exposition released at moments when it will have the greatest effect, which keeps the pace moving along quickly. No space is wasted in *Tower 18*, making for a compact, spellbinding read.

The cover is minimalist yet striking, indicative of the major mystery of the novel. Chapter breaks are also stylistically successful, hearkening back to lifeguard towers.

This is a work that is nearly impossible to put down. Exciting and skillfully plotted, *Tower 18* is a gripping, edge-of-your-

seat thriller.

AMANDA ADAMS (May 23, 2017)

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