

New Yorked

Rob Hart

Freelance private investigator Ash McKenna emerges from his latest bender at 4 p.m. to two voicemails: the first from his ex-girlfriend Chell, scared she's being followed; the second from his friend Bombay, informing him of Chell's brutal murder. Fueled by a toxic brew of rage, unresolved guilt (stemming from the death of his firefighter father on September 11), and copious amounts of alcohol and cocaine, Ash sets out on a bull-headed pursuit for Chell's killer. In sharp contrast to the gentrified New York he despises, Ash winds up in every dive bar and seedy hangout he can find, engaging in curt, often violent interrogations with colorful people such as Ginny Tonic, a drag queen crime boss; a dancer named Fanny Fatale; and the King of Hipsters, with whom Chell was hooked up in an elaborate role-playing game. Unable to remember anything of that fateful night, Ash soon learns that he might have been the last one to see Chell alive.

VERDICT A bloody valentine to a New York fast disappearing, this debut by the associate publisher of MysteriousPress.com is an urban noir populated with memorable characters but saddled with an unnecessarily convoluted story line.

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