

The Kills

Richard House

House's (Uninvited) thousand-page epic, first published in Britain as four stand-alone ebooks (Sutler; The Massive; The Kill; The Hit) and long-listed for the Man Booker Prize in 2013, is now collected in one massive omnibus. Modeled after Roberto Bolaño's labyrinthine 2666, the novel blends the geopolitical machinations of an espionage thriller with DeLilloesque levels of conspiracy and metafiction. In the first book, a government contractor known as Sutler goes on the lam when \$53 million earmarked for rebuilding Iraq disappears with him. The Massive serves as a prolog, focusing on the American civilians who work at an Iraqi burn pit before Sutler arrives. The third book concerns a text called The Kill, referenced by characters in the first two volumes, about a pair of brothers who read about a fictional murder and re-create it, beginning a complex loop of art imitating life. The final book, The Hit, attempts to tie the strands together, as a German diplomat's sister-in-law takes up the search for Sutler. It's tough to summarize this book succinctly and equally tough to forge through in places, so dense is the writing, and might be best considered in its original form as four separate volumes. The work is also intended to be interactive; readers can find supplemental audio and video material on the publisher's website, though the extras aren't essential to the story. VERDICT House's doorstep of a tome demands considerable attention and patience from readers, and those prepared to offer it will find subtle intertextual rewards. Others will be frustrated by the sudden narrative shifts among each volume and the deliberate lack of resolution. Recommended for those who wished their John le Carré came more postmodern and surreal.

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