

The Night The Rich Men Burned

Malcolm Mackay

Scottish author Mackay achieved international notice for his award-winning trilogy about the Glasgow underworld (*The Necessary Death of Lewis Winter*; *How a Gunman Says Goodbye*; *The Sudden Arrival of Violence*). His follow-up offers more of the same, a sharp-edged morality play delivered with the relentless intensity of machine gunfire. When two young friends hard up for work, Alex Glass and Oliver Peterkinney, turn to the violent shadow industry of debt collection, their wayward lives begin to verge in significant ways. While Alex revels in the money and vices his new job provides, Oliver coolly seeks more power, climbing the ladder with such ruthless precision that he becomes unrecognizable to his grandfather. As in his trilogy, Mackay's distinctive narration offers the fevered thought-speak of the three kingpins Oliver is competing against—each balancing multiple agendas and loyal only to himself. As the names pile up and the alliances keep shifting, they begin to sound the same, often rendering them indistinguishable to the reader (Mackay, as if knowing this, provides a humorous but redundant five-page cast of characters in the front). Eventually, the story's machinations lead to an inevitable but satisfying climax between the two former mates. **VERDICT** Recommended with modest reservations, this compelling modern noir will stand out in most crime fiction collections.

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