

## The Smack

Richard Lange

Professional con man Rowan Petty is at the end of the line: down to his last five grand in Reno, NV, calling rubes on Thanksgiving about a real estate scam for ten percent of the take. Not even a rendezvous with his favorite hooker Tinafeey (“Like that white lady on TV, but all one word”) goes right. Then a blast from the past meets Petty with a rumor of a score that could mean early retirement, something about \$2 million smuggled out of Afghanistan currently being stored in a wounded vet’s Los Angeles apartment. Petty knows he might be getting played, but the lure—of the money, of the hunt, of spending quality time with Tinafeey—is too tempting to ignore. Plus he’ll get to see his estranged daughter Sam, whose medical condition quickly gives him a far more urgent reason to find the money. **VERDICT** Like his protagonist, Dashiell Hammett Award winner Lange (*Angel Baby*) knows how to reel in his audience with a seductive story and plenty of misdirection. There’s nothing criminal, however, about this rollicking, diamond-cut thriller shot through with elegance and heart.

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