



by Tom Zürcher
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Fiction

Dastardly Dick

Mobbing Dick

review

A darkly comic coming-of-age story, *Mobbing Dick* is comparable to titles like Joshua Ferris' *And Then We Came to the End* for its satirical take on the intricacies and incessant frustrations of corporate life.

Tom Zürcher's novel follows a young man who tries to escape the confines of his parental home by getting a job in a Swiss bank with arcane working practices and obscure hierarchies. Under mounting stress, he starts to act out his fantasies of revenge through his alter ego, 'Dastardly Dick', embarking on a downward spiral as the pressures of work and home come to a head.

Dick Meier's precise role at the bank is unclear, but even his most basic efforts garner approval, and within days there is talk of him moving up the ranks. Due to various misunderstandings, Dick is promoted over his line manager, Remo. His guilt at how Remo has been treated soon gives way to outbursts of spite at his new subordinate. Dick is inducted into the Vreneli code, an arcane system of markings designed to maintain Swiss banking secrecy, and is made to take notes while one of the department's leading lights, Marianne Koch, persuades clients to invest in dubious funds. Dick makes a series of poor professional decisions, culminating in gaining illegal access to his father's account and discovering that he is secretly a millionaire. Meanwhile, his employer is taken over by an American bank which holds no truck with Vreneli. Dick begins to insert his own inventions into the documentation and to work all

hours, in the hope of keeping everyone happy.

Dick eventually moves out of home, but starts hearing the voices of his parents and fellow workers in his head and morphs into 'Dastardly Dick', making prank calls late at night and causing all sorts of trouble. He prints off a statement of his father's account and makes sure that his mother sees it. As the takeover gathers pace, Dick spirals into alcoholism. He is fired from work, but later that night sees Marianne in the street, drunk and disoriented. He takes her back to his apartment, then worries it will appear that he has drugged and molested her. Becoming increasingly paranoid, he ties her up and hits and force-feeds her. Dick's father arrives and is shocked at what has happened to his son. The action moves forward a few months, with Dick on the road to recovery in a psychiatric institution, Marianne fully recovered, and Dick's parents in a better place.

Mobbing Dick is uproariously funny in parts, but as things take a darker turn the novel enters the realm of black comedy

about the author

Tom Zürcher, born in 1966, lives in Zurich and is Switzerland's best-kept secret. He earns a living writing advertising slogans, and has published two previous novels, *Der Spartaner* (2016) and *Högo Sopatis ermittelt* (1998).

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