



The Last Honest Place in America: Paradise and Perdition in the New Las Vegas (Nation Books)

Marc Cooper

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Las Vegas America begins with the dynamiting of the Desert Inn in October 2001, the moment when old Vegas “cool” died and the new corporate model claimed definitive victory. From this moment, Cooper takes us on a journey from the top of the Luxor Hotel’s glass pyramid, down “the Strip,” past the golden glow of the Mirage into the town’s black ghetto. Along the way, the best-selling author introduces us to a cast of characters including casino king Steve Wynn and Tim Thuller, leader of the Vagabound Motorcycle Club. He explores life among Vegas’s 75,000 union families and considers how outlaws and iconoclasts are adapting to life in the new corporate city. Finally Cooper strays beyond the Strip into a desolate landscape characterized by pawnshops, destitution, crime, and impending environmental crisis. “For me,” writes Cooper, “Las Vegas is the last, most honest place in America. Vegas is often described as a city of dreams and fantasy, of tinselish make-believe. But this is getting backwards. Vegas is the American market ethic stripped completely bare, a mini-world totally free of the pretenses and protocols of modern consumer capitalism. Watching it operate with barely any mediation generates nothing short of an intellectual frisson.”

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