

BOOKS



THE ASSISTANTS – If you suddenly came into a bunch of money, what would you do with it? Would you buy an awesome car? Or maybe a house? If you're a Millennial, you may have a more mundane answer – getting out of the soul crushing debt of your student loans.

In *The Assistants*, by Camille Perri, protagonist Tina Fontana is faced with a dilemma. An accident involving expense reports leaves the underpaid assistant to the Titan Corporation's CEO with a small chunk of money – just enough to pay her student loans. The temptation to use the money to dig herself out of debt is huge. It's not morally correct to use this stolen money, but for the multi-billion dollar mega-corporation, it's just a drop in the bucket.

Eventually, despite the guilt, Tina uses the money to pay off her loans. She still can't afford to move out of her dingy apartment with the rats living in the walls, but she's free of the burden to which so many people her age are accustomed. Tina eventually gets caught up in an even bigger scheme, as more underpaid and overburdened assistants learn of the ingenious method of stealing pennies from a corporate entity.

The idea of taking from the rich to give to the poor is nothing new, but *The Assistants* takes this Robin Hood-esque tale to a new, more modern level. With student loan debt topping \$1.5 trillion this year, the weight of the debt is familiar to most Millennials. Given that the Millennial age group only makes an average of \$60k a year – which isn't nearly enough for living in many of the United States' metropolises – student loans add more pressure on young adults' already strained budgets.

But that is what helps to sell the fantasy of *The Assistants*. Throughout the novel we see many debt-ridden professional young women, with a plethora of personal situations. One uses her feminine charm to look the part of a successful young woman, but is actually homeless; another doesn't actually have any debt but simply wants to help and give a middle finger to the corporate man. The characters of *The Assistants* are easy to empathize with, in a world where more and more people are saddled with an overwhelming bill for simply going to college.

– ELIZABETH HENGES