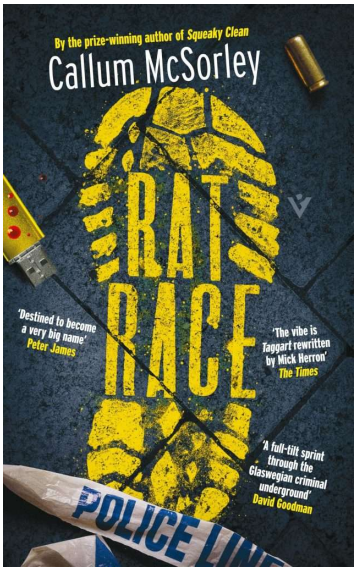
‘Rat Race’, by Callum McSorley

Review by Roslyn Potter



Rat Race is Callum McSorley’s third and final instalment of DCI Alison McCoist’s Glasgow trilogy. In this sensational finale, the young Fran Forbes gets embroiled in a crime syndicate that takes him from Dennistoun in Glasgow’s East End to dealing with a Russian OCG.

Exploiting the all-too-familiar world-altering events of 2020, McSorley’s central character, Fran Forbes, has a lucky break when he decides to take up long-distance running. What first becomes a front for delivering drugs across the city during lockdown, Fran takes surprisingly well to his new hobby and quickly becomes a decorated marathon runner. The legitimacy of Fran’s new career offers a way out of dealing class As, and into international sport, with sponsorship, prize money, and, for the first time, genuine praise. Unluckily, a severe knee injury forces him back into the pocket of the local syndicate, and he agrees to smuggle an unassuming USB stick (filled with cryptocurrency) into Moscow.

DCI Alison McCoist, consumed by her own stooshie of police corruption, gets involved after the bodycount (formed of members of the East End syndicate) rises overnight. The resultant drama is tense, high-stakes, and often intensely funny.

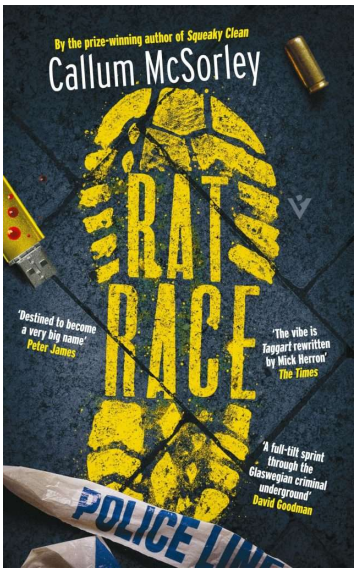
As with his other two books in the series, *Squeaky Clean* (2023)

and *Paperboy* (2024) McSorley captures the grit and gore of Glasgow's crime underworld with comic flair. Characters are neither stereotypes nor caricatures but feel believably unhinged. Favourite characters make a (sometimes violent) reappearance while new and equally unhinged characters enter the crossfire. Another highlight of *Rat Race*, like McSorley's other novels, is its pacing. The chapter transitions cleverly implement a series of varied timings of several seconds to several months or even years, in the case of the prologue. This keeps the story pressing forwards and compels the reader to indulge in just one more chapter. The twists and turns make it impossible to put down.

Rat Race is just as bloody and gritty as its predecessors, but underneath the vices and the violence, compassion is at its core. Like countless anti-heroes before her, DCI Ally McCoist makes choices based on a combination of self-preservation and empathy, resulting in a sort of twisted justice.

Gritty, tense, and impeccably written, McSorley again provides a fantastic new addition to the classics of tartan noir. For fans of the series, this finale will not disappoint.

Rat Race is published by Pushkin Vertigo.



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