



Takedown: The Fall of the Last Mafia Empire

Rick Cowan , Douglas Century

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The bestselling true story of a young NYPD detective's life-or-death undercover odyssey that led to the biggest mob takedown in New York City history.

Takedown: The Fall of the Last Mafia Empire Details

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From Reader Review Takedown: The Fall of the Last Mafia Empire for online ebook

Bob Schmitz says

In May 1992 Rick Cowan, an NYPD undercover cop, is investigating the arson of a garbage truck at Chambers Paper and Fiber when 2 mobsters from a rival garbage company stop by. When they ask the owner Sal who Cowan is he responds "That's my cousin Danny." Seizing the moment Cowan for three years becomes Danny, works at Chambers and infiltrates to the top of the Mob controlled NYC garbage industry. He wears a wire to scores of Mob meetings collecting recordings that eventually put almost 200 mobsters in prison and collected many hundreds of millions of dollars in confiscated property and fees. The mob lost a \$500 million per year business which which as a non-competing cartel drained nearly that much money out of the economy of NYC.

These businesses had often been started by Italian immigrants with a single cart in the early 1900's. In the 50's the Mob figured out it could form associations and non-competing arrangements and these small family businesses joined and prospered. The families lived in grand houses sent their kids to prep schools and private universities and were expecting to pass to pass the businesses down for generations. The family fortunes were wiped out.

Cowan's bravery, resourcefulness, ability to think on his feet and sacrifice were astounding. Several times he was patted down, questioned, doubted and verbally attacked and yet he remained in character and survived. Working 18hr days and telling his wife nothing he missed much of the warmth of his wife and 3 years of his sons life. His wife was furious when she found out what he had done, they lived on Staten Island amidst these gangsters and needed to move and hide. They did stay together happily.

I live in Durham, NC and the book was given to me by Lydia who works with one of the local diet programs. The book mentions that often the mobsters would spend a month in Durham at one of these diet programs. I know the former head of the Duke Diet and Fitness program and mentioned this fact to Howard. He told me that two of his clients immediately came to mind that were from NY, seemed to have lots of money, seemed to have not a lot of education and could never fully explain what they did. Small world.

Larry says

This is one undercover cop's gripping tale of infiltrating the mob to uncover corruption in the waste management industry. Recalling it here in vivid, riveting detail, Rick Cowan (aided by journalist Century) reconstructs a time when he was deeper undercover in the garbage "cartel" than any city cop had ever been, with the close calls to prove it. Whether he's boosting a wiseguy's car to plant a bug, navigating confrontations with goons wielding two-by-fours and baseball bats or suffering through a Mafia Christmas party with a malfunctioning radio transmitter burning into his leg, Cowan's exploits play on the page like scenes from a well-mounted mob movie. Really gives you an "inside" view of what went on among high-level "Garbage Gangsters"

Kim Gates says

This is another good expose of the Mafia's inner workings. It's amazing to read about the 50-year stranglehold the Mob had on the collection of New York City's commercial garbage. If not for the infiltration by a courageous NYPD detective, NYC would still be in thrall to the Mob. Wow!

Adam Swift says

Probably closer to 3.5 stars if I had the option, fast-paced undercover detective infiltrating the mafia sorta stuff, with more information about waste management than you probably want or need.

Nathan Schmidt says

This is a very gripping story to read, covering a real-life sting against some of the most influential mob families in New York City. The book mixes important information about the mob's historical rise with Rick Cowan's personal struggle to infiltrate the mafia without being caught by some of the gangs' most dangerous members. I liked how Cowan is pretty honest with the real-life and often unexpected challenges of his work (things are hardly ever as straightforward as in police dramas), even if the meandering nature of the operation sometimes slowed down the narrative. All of the people involved in the sting, from detective Rick Cowan to "Sally Skates" Sal to "Joey Cigars" Francolino, are colorful characters that give the story a lot of life. Overall, the story was really moving and kept me on the edge of my seat.

Emily says

the book version, excellent!

Susan Schnell says

Fascinating story. I had a hard time getting past the obscene language even though I know that is realistic.

Thomas says

I really liked this book by NYPD detective Rick Cowan, about Operation Wasteland, the undercover investigation that crippled the garbage hauling rackets in NYC. I don't tend to be partial to books by police officers, maybe having been burned by the stunning dullness of Donnie Brasco early on in my true-crime-reading career. But I found this much more interesting, maybe because Cowan was younger and greener and, at least as he portrays it, had to do more improvising due to the lesser resources of the NYPD vs. the FBI. There's also some great stuff about inter-departmental politics and lower-grade corruption in NYC; for instance, a leak about Operation Wasteland led to the city government opening up the hauling contracts for the NYC Marathon to an out-of-state company for the first time. Lots of great political gems like that, viewed from street level. I enjoyed this more than I expected to.

Kevin says

Very detailed portrait of the Mob run garbage cartel in the 1990s. The fact that a large percentages of the conversations were from wiretaps allowed the author (undercover NYPD officer) to get into a lot of the minutia of the day to day activities of the organized crime figures and the carters. It was a fascinating look into a corrupt industry and the gangsters that had been running it since the 1950s. I deducted one star because the basic racket was explained and laid out over and over.

Vanessa Calabria says

A NYPD detective infiltrates the commercial, mob-dominated, garbage collecting industry in New York City.

Peter Shovlin says

If you like the genre, I'd definitely recommend. What I liked most is, this is the real deal, the majority of encounters described were caught on tape so what you're reading is for the most part genuinely what went down. Alongside Brasco and Falcone, essential true crime Mafia entry

Walt says

This is a very well researched and written study of the mob in a particular industry. The authors do an excellent job describing the racket from its inception through the modern era and its dissolution. This is one of the best books on organized crime I have read.

Lee says

This book tells the story of the NYPD's investigation into the mob run garbage cartel which ran and controlled the industry in NY for over 50 years. Told by the cop who spent over 3 years undercover with the members of the mafia who ran these lucrative rackets. Good read.

Harold says

Very good account of a cop infiltrating the NYC mob.

Rob Younger says

This is a fantastic, true story about the man who took down the Mafia from the inside. Highly recommended for true crime or Mafia buffs.
