

Saint John Of The Five Boroughs - Edward Falco

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When 22-year-old Avery Walker, a senior at Penn State, meets Grant Danko, a 37-year-old performance artist from Brooklyn whose stage name is Saint John of the Five Boroughs, her life changes radically as she leaves college to live with Grant in Brooklyn and pursue a life as an artist. Out of concern for Avery, her mother, Kate, and her aunt, Lindsey, and Lindsey's husband, Hank, all travel to Brooklyn, where they all face a crisis and they are all forced to make life-altering choices. Grant Danko is a bad guy with a curiously attractive personality and a coterie of bright, artistic friends. He uses his good looks and his accomplishments (and the accomplishments of those friends) to get as many women as possible into bed. He's at times screwed up on drugs, winds up murdering someone as a result of taking a job working for his gangster uncle. He's inclined toward sex as an act of violence, has violent sex at least bordering on rape with his best friend and with Avery, a college student fifteen years younger than he. He mocks religion in his performance personae, and at the point where we first meet him, he's locked off from any kind of relationship with a higher power. Grant is about as lost as a man can get. So, when he finally chooses to risk death rather than to murder yet again, something extraordinary has happened. He's at the beginning of redemption and change, almost a kind of grace. Saint John of the Five Boroughs is beautifully turned, a stunning and layered novel about the effects of violence, both personal and cultural, on its characters' lives. It's about the way violence twists character but it's also about the possibility of changing paths for the better. This novel explores why we make the choices we make both the choices that are so bad for us in their ultimate consequences, and the choices that save us.

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