



The Last City Room

Al Martinez

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It's almost a tradition in the city room of *The Herald* for journalists to collapse at their desks, having worked, imbibed, and smoked themselves into the grave. On these occasions the behavior required by the dead man's erstwhile colleagues -- a group of cynical old news hounds with skin the color of faded newsprint-- is to applaud, simultaneously hailing their fallen comrade and signaling an opening in the city room. It is in this manner that William Colfax, an ambitious young reporter, earns a coveted position as a staff member of this long respected newspaper. Colfax accepts the offer mere minutes after his predecessor's body has been carted away.

The Last City Room depicts the decline of an influential newspaper in San Francisco during the turbulent early 60s. As the conservatism of the old guard, led by *The Herald's* publisher and his bylined minions, clashes with the radical leaders ascending to power in the city, Colfax quickly realizes that the golden days of *The Herald* are long over. With his past threatening to ensnare him between the two warring factions, Colfax's struggle quickly becomes one of not simply proving himself as a reporter, but of maintaining his independence and integrity as a journalist.

The Last City Room is a provocative evocation of a time when the carefully modulated social fabric of the country was just beginning to show signs of uncertainty. It is a tribute to the end of a newspaper and the beginning of a new era.

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