



The Rosary Girls: A Novel of Suspense (Byrne and Balzano Book 1)

By Richard Montanari

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BONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Richard Montanari's *The Echo Man*.

In his sleek, visceral novels *Deviant Way*, *Kiss of Evil*, and *The Violet Hour*, Richard Montanari slammed into the suspense field like a force of nature. Now Montanari has written an astounding novel that pits two besieged detectives against a fiercely intelligent serial killer.

Sprawling beneath the statue of William Penn, Philadelphia is a city of downtrodden crack houses and upscale brownstones. Somewhere in this concrete crazy quilt, one teenage Catholic girl is writing in her diary, another is pouring her heart out to a friend, and yet another is praying. And somewhere in this city is a man who wants these young women to make his macabre fantasy become reality. In a passion play of his own, he will take the girls—and a whole city—over the edge.

Kevin Byrne is a veteran cop who already knows that edge: He's been living on it far too long. His marriage failing, his former partner wasting away in a hospital, and his heart lost to mad fury, Byrne loves to take risks and is breaking every rule in the book. And now he has been given a rookie partner. Jessica Balzano, the daughter of a famous Philly cop, doesn't want Byrne's help. But they will need each other desperately, since they've just caught the case of a lifetime: Someone is killing devout young women, bolting their hands together in prayer, and committing an abomination upon their otherwise perfect bodies.

Byrne and Balzano spearhead the hunt for the serial killer, who leads them on a methodically planned journey. Suspects appear before them like bad dreams—and vanish just as quickly. And while Byrne's sins begin to catch up with him, and Balzano tries to solve the blood-splattered puzzle, the body count rises. Meanwhile, the calendar is approaching Easter and the day of the resurrection. When the last rosary is counted, a madman's methods will be revealed, and the final crime will be the one that hurts the most.

Relentlessly paced and vividly told, *The Rosary Girls* is a smart, emotionally complex, fiercely gripping thriller from an author who takes chances, breaks new

ground, and leaves readers haunted and moved long after the last page is turned.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The scene is carefully set--a teenage parochial school girl, artfully posed in death with her arms chained around a graffiti-scarred pillar, clutching a rosary and a picture of a religious painting by Robert Blake. The next three murder victims are found in similar tableaux, each one suggesting the next in a string of calculated killings whose themes are foretold in the sorrowful mysteries familiar to Catholic scholars. It takes Philadelphia detective Jessie Balzano back to her own adolescence and a priest who understands what the grisly slayings are about, but by the time she realizes who's next on the murderer's list and why, time has nearly run out for Jessie and her own daughter. Along with her new partner Kevin Byrne, a former superstar cop with his own secret past and a disturbing tendency to read killers' minds, Jessie makes a strong debut in Montanari's uneven, overwrought thriller, whose Gothic touches--like "living ghosts hovering in darkness, hollow-eyed and craven" in "a Gethsemane amid the cracked concrete and rotten wood and ruined dreams" to describe the abandoned cellar where the first crime took place, for example--too often overpower an otherwise satisfying read. --*Jane Adams*

From Publishers Weekly

A specialist in serial killer tales (*Kiss of Evil*, etc.) offers the gory first in a projected series. A religious nut is preying on Catholic schoolgirls, picking them off with impunity while Philadelphia detective Kevin Byrne and his new partner, Jessica Balzano, wring their hands and wrack their brains. The victims are found with their necks broken, their hands bolted together in prayer and their vaginas sewn shut. Byrne has a problematic past and a Vicodin habit, and Jessica's daughter, Sophie, is a tempting target for the killer, especially since her dad, undercover cop Vincent Balzano, has been kicked out of the house for cheating on Jessica. Several red herring suspects keep both cops and readers off balance, and there are plenty of subplots—Jessica is a female boxer, Byrne is the divorced father of a deaf daughter, there's a nosy tabloid reporter trying to start trouble. But most of these mini-dramas serve only to provide a breather between sadistic mutilations. Montanari can be a wonderfully evocative writer, but the final unveiling of the madman's identity will draw cries of foul from readers who expect a fighting chance at figuring out who the guilty party is.

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From [Booklist](#)

It's every Philadelphia cop's dream to make it to the homicide unit. For Jessica Balzano, formerly on traffic detail, she couldn't be more excited or more anxious. Jessica jumps in feet first when, on day one, she and her partner--the confident Kevin Byrne, who has a reputation for skillfully but unconventionally solving murders--get a call saying that a homeless man has found the dead body of a teenage girl. The victim turns out to be Tessa Wells, a student at the same Catholic girls' high school that Jessica attended. Returning to the school to investigate brings back memories of Jessica's high-school woes, but teenage growing pains pale in comparison to Tessa's fate--raped and murdered with a rosary, which quickly becomes the killer's calling card, tied around her hands. Montanari jumps between following the investigation and tracking the killer as the horrific events unfold. This high-concept, heavily promoted thriller--the first of what promises to be a grisly series starring two likable Philly detectives--could vault genre veteran Montanari into the big time.

Mary Frances Wilkens

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Users Review

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Brent Jones:

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try point that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition details. Even you love The Rosary Girls: A Novel of Suspense (Byrne and Balzano Book 1), you may enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh seriously its mind hangout people. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its named reading friends.

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