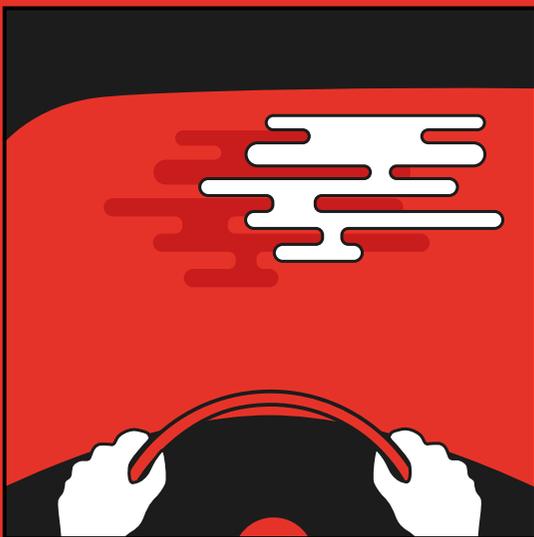


PRIZE POLAR EN SÉRIES 2021



LEUR ÂME AU DIABLE Marin Ledun (Gallimard, 2021)

(THEIR SOULS TO THE DEVIL)

If it were a film:

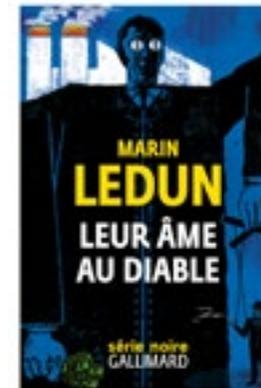
El Reino, Rodrigo Sorogoyen
Révélations, Michael Mann

If it were a serie:

Baron Noir, Eric Benzekri et Jean-Baptiste Delafon
1992, Alessandro Fabbri, Ludovica Rampoldi et Stefano Sardo
Jeux d'influence, Jean-Xavier de Lestrade et Antoine Lacomblez

Format:

Series on several seasons



1986, two tank trucks carrying twelve thousand litres of ammonia each to a cigarette factory, are found burnt down in the middle of nowhere. It is another of a series of identical heists, but this time it causes 7 deaths and it does not go unnoticed. Anton Muller, the brains behind the operation, erases any traces that could lead to the sponsors.

Nora is the young Lieutenant in charge of the investigation, and he has no idea that it will keep him busy for 20 years of his life and send him in all parts of the world. For all those years, he will obstinately try to understand, identify, track down and arrest those whose job is to corrupt, manipulate, embezzle and bypass anyone who would interfere with the cash machinery of cigarette manufacturers. The very ones who try to avoid, and bypass the Evin law...

Dirty money flows and floods all circles that lobbyists may need, corruption is in full swing. David Bartels, brilliant and unscrupulous technocrat, head of a communications agency, sells his talents to European G. Tobacco. Rojas, his crime partner, embodies another aspect of the criminal megalomania of these white-collars. Valentina and Hélène run a very « feminine » event company, particularly on motor-vehicle circuits. Meanwhile, Anton Muller, the henchman, goes into exile in former Yugoslavia to set up networks...

Against them : the stubborn Nora, who is after « Goliath »'s blood, and Patrick Brun, the junior lieutenant who swore to bring back to her parents a young woman, gone missing since the bloody heist of the ammonia convoy at the origin of Nora's investigation...

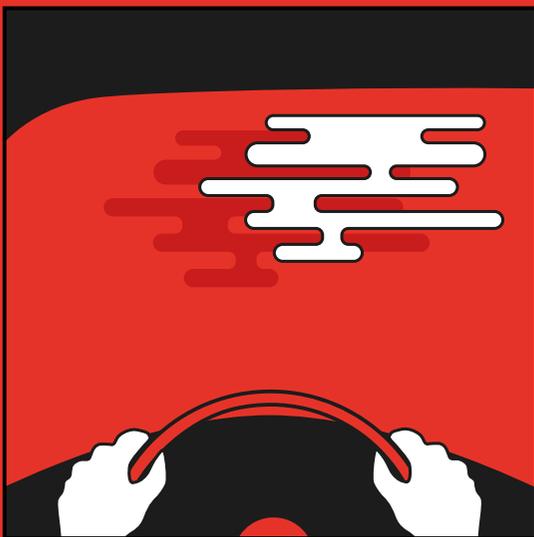
DIVING INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE EUROPEAN TOBACCO LOBBY

Their souls to the Devil bullring is the world of lobbies and the tobacco industry. From the 80s onwards, it has to face revelations related to the health issues caused by tobacco use. This documented story describes the political undersides, dealing with lobby pressure, but also with the destiny of lawless men galvanised by our times.

Power struggles between French « men of influence » take on an international dimension when it is no longer just simply putting pressure on elected officials but on all representatives within Europe, which has been liberalised since the fall of the Berlin Wall. We find a Europe in which free circulation has just been applied, thanks to the Schengen Agreement and Convention, and which prepares itself for the introduction of its single currency.

It is in the shadow of a triumphant economic liberalism that lobbies will use marketing and advertisement to ensure their sustainability, while covering up numerous crimes and offences.

PRIZE POLAR EN SÉRIES 2021



AN INDUSTRY IN TUNE WITH THE TIMES

The novel is a dark and political portrait. From the “money years” to the current crises, it very well captures the atmosphere of the 80s, and the following decades. References are insightful: Bernard Rapp’s news flashes, the attack on the Rue de Rennes, Chernobyl and the Klaus Barbie trial are at the heart of conversations.

The intrigue crosses decades and ends in 2007, after the ellipse on the 90s. Times have changed but the story line perfectly describes how the tobacco industry got up to date.

Strategies used by the tobacco lobby to deal with changes in society and laws do not lack sharpness: the organised crime is never far. Companies always find a way to prosper despite new tobacco laws. Marin Ledun skilfully depicts the methods used by cigarette manufacturers to bypass the Evin Law, while pretending to respect it.

« SMOKED »

The story is dry and powerful; it shows a violent world in which beating up, intimidation, murders and mysterious disappearances are the law. Lieutenant Nora from the financial squad, a stubborn and upright man, has to investigate in this hostile universe. He will soon team up with the Italian Scleci, whose methods are radically different from the usual techniques of the French authorities. Scleci’s confidence in the politics and judicial system is of relative value. He does not hesitate to hire private mercenaries for public inquiries, while an army of legal experts works behind the scenes for the Big Tobacco. These two will offer a dynamic duo for a police series, in which all means are good to achieve one’s goal.

The gallery of characters, mostly men, evolving in an uninhibited macho climate, allows us to imagine a series deployed on several seasons and the complex struggle between a few idealists and corrupted men, who gave in to the lure of gain, can be developed. Destinies collide, creating a complex spider web.

A FEW LINES OF THE NOVEL:

« Of course, money is not the problem. Neither are the seven dead. The problem is the shortfall in the short term and the loss of market share. Because smokers cannot wait. They act like impatient junkies, in need of their daily dose. If their Virginia tobacco cigarettes are unavailable, they fall back on another brand. For every burnt down tank truck, you will have millions of cigarettes that won’t be smoked by the French today, and they will buy from the competition. »

THE AUTHOR:

Marin Ledun was born in 1975, and has already written over 30 books. Committed citizen and Doctor in Political Communications, he doesn’t hesitate to tackle current issues in the most impactful way. His novels, generally in the *noir* genre, are translated in numerous countries and discuss, without filter, the limits of progress, the contemporary crisis and its social consequences. He also writes radio plays for France Culture.

CONTACT:

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