



The Street Sweeper

Elliot Perlman

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How breathtakingly close we are to lives that at first seem so far away.

From the civil rights struggle in the United States to the Nazi crimes against humanity in Europe, there are more stories than people passing one another every day on the bustling streets of every crowded city. Only some stories survive to become history.

Recently released from prison, Lamont Williams, an African American probationary janitor in a Manhattan hospital and father of a little girl he can't locate, strikes up an unlikely friendship with an elderly patient, a Holocaust survivor who was a prisoner in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

A few blocks uptown, historian Adam Zignelik, an untenured Columbia professor, finds both his career and his long-term romantic relationship falling apart. Emerging from the depths of his own personal history, Adam sees, in a promising research topic suggested by an American World War II veteran, the beginnings of something that might just save him professionally, and perhaps even personally.

As these men try to survive in early-twenty-first-century New York, history comes to life in ways neither of them could have foreseen. Two very different paths—Lamont's and Adam's—lead to one greater story as *The Street Sweeper*, in dealing with memory, love, guilt, heroism, the extremes of racism and unexpected kindness, spans the twentieth century to the present, and spans the globe from New York to Chicago to Auschwitz.

Epic in scope, this is a remarkable feat of storytelling.

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