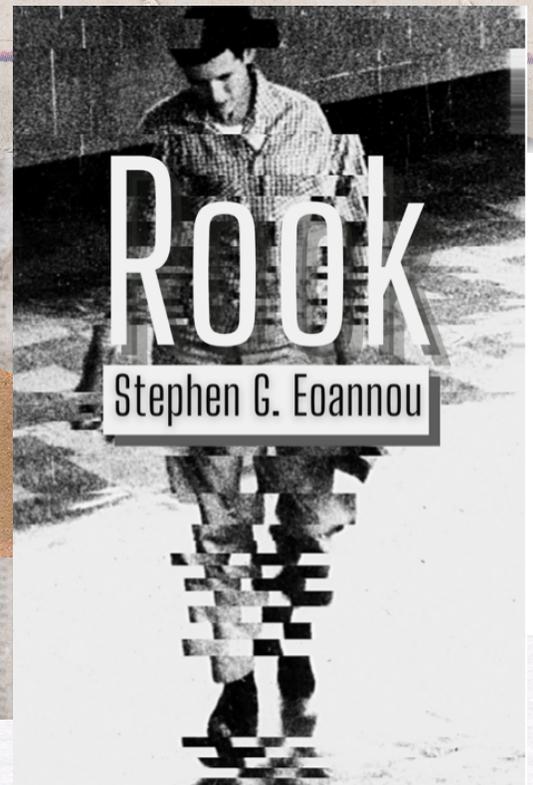


ROOK

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PUBLISHING DETAILS

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Rook is based on the true story of Al Nussbaum. To his unsuspecting wife, Lolly, Al is a loving, chess playing, family man. To J. Edgar Hoover, he is the most cunning fugitive alive. Al is the mastermind behind a string of east coast robberies that has stumped law enforcement. After his partner, one-eyed Bobby Wilcoxson, kills a bank guard and wounds a New York City patrolman, Al is identified as one of the robbers and lands on top of the FBI's most wanted list. He is forced to flee his hometown of Buffalo, New York as the FBI closes in and Lolly learns of her husband's secret life. One million wanted posters are printed and *The Reader's Digest* offers a ten-thousand-dollar reward for Al's capture. While Al assumes another identity and attempts to elude the police, Lolly is left alone to care for their infant daughter and adjust to her new life as 'The Bank Robber's Wife'. Friends, family, and federal agents all pressure Lolly to betray Al. While Lolly struggles at home financially, with unrelenting FBI agents, and her conscience, Al and Bobby continue to rob banks, even as Bobby grows more mentally unstable and dangerous. Al has only two goals: avoid capture and steal enough money to start a new life with his family. Returning to gather his wife and baby is suicidal, but as Al said, he'd only stick his neck in the Buffalo noose for Lolly.

Stephen G. Eoannou holds an MFA from Queens University of Charlotte and an MA from Miami University. His award-winning short story collection, *Muscle Cars*, was published by the Santa Fe Writers Project. He has been awarded an Honor Certificate from The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, and won the Best Short Screenplay Award at the 36th Starz Denver Film Festival. He lives and writes in his hometown of Buffalo, New York, the setting and inspiration for much of his work. **Rook** is his first novel.



Excerpt from *Rook*

"Al picked up the military-grade walkie-talkie from his lap and pressed the button. "Street clear. Green light."

Bobby slid on a pair of Ray-Bans, pulled his hat even lower to his brow, and then sauntered to the bank's main entrance. Curry, carrying an army duffle bag, made his way toward the Utica Avenue door. Al leaned back in his seat and continued humming.

Bobby strode into the bank. Al watched the street but was envisioning what was happening inside. He pictured Bobby letting the raincoat fall, revealing the Tommy gun, then pushing open the double-glass doors leading into the bank with his shoulder. He'd yell, "This is a hold up! I don't want no trouble, just the money," exactly as Al had made him practice. The sight of that machine gun would drain courage from anyone thinking about being a hero. Everything inside a person stops—their thinking, their ability to run or scream, their bravery—when that black barrel is pointed at them.

They're left with a pounding heart and a pair of struggling lungs trying to find air. That's why Al had Bobby bring the Thompson.

Curry would glide through the Utica entrance then, not saying a word, a .22 in one hand and the duffle bag in the other. He'd jump the counter and hustle from teller-to-teller, cleaning out cash drawers. Bobby would cover whoever was in the bank with the machine gun, moving the muzzle from side-to-side, person-to-person, face-to-face. Al was counting on at least fifty grand, a nice early Christmas present for them all.

Then he heard it."

Advance Praise for *Rook*

"A terrific Technicolor Noir that lives and breathes in the period. If I hadn't been told, I would've thought I was reading a lost paperback classic from sixty years ago. Clever, literate, and fun, **Rook** is right down my dark alley."

—**Ace Atkins**, New York Times Bestselling author of *The Revelators* and *The Heathens*

"If Elmore Leonard wrote the *Queen's Gambit*, he'd have written **Rook**. Set aside some time when you start Eoannou's true tale of Tommy guns, small-time hoods, and high-stakes chess because you won't want to put it down until checkmate."

—**Daren Wang**, Author of *The Hidden Light of Northern Fires*

"Stephen Eoannou has performed a remarkable feat with his novel **Rook**. First, he has detailed the little-known story of an ingenious bank robber, Al Nussbaum, who FBI director J. Edgar Hoover once called "the most cunning fugitive in the country." Second, Eoannou has dramatized how Nussbaum's obsession with bank robbery as an art form trapped him and his family in a downward spiral of shame and frustrated hope. Brilliant."

—**Charles Kelly**, author of *Gunshots in Another Room: The Forgotten Life of Dan J. Marlowe*