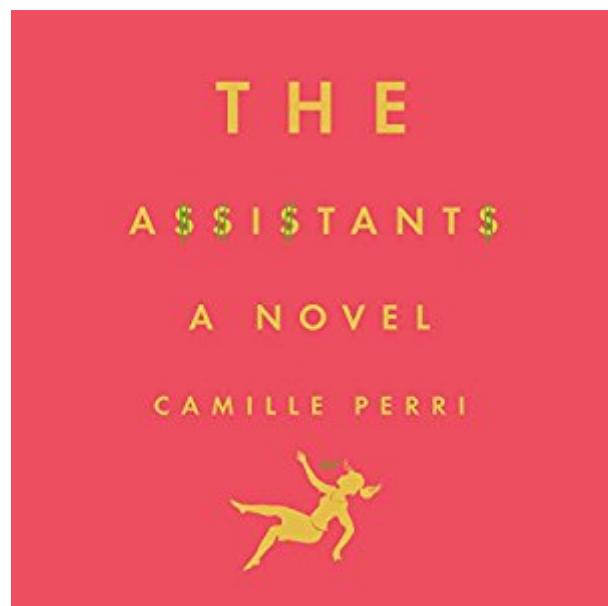


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# The Assistants



## Synopsis

A wry and astute debut about a young Manhattanite whose embezzlement scam turns her into an unlikely advocate for the leagues of overeducated and underpaid assistants across the city. Tina Fontana is the hapless but brazen 30-year-old executive assistant to Robert Barlow, the all-powerful and commanding CEO of Titan Corp., a multinational media conglomerate. She's excellent at her job and beloved by her famous boss - but after six years of making his reservations for restaurants she'd never get into on her own and pouring his drinks from bottles that cost more than her rent, she's bored, broke, and just a bit over it all. When a technical error with Robert's travel-and-expenses report presents Tina with the opportunity to pay off the entire balance of her student loan debt with what would essentially be pocket change for her boss, she struggles with the decision: She's always played by the rules. But it's such a relatively small amount of money for the Titan Corporation - and for her it would be a life changer.... The Assistants speaks directly to a new generation of women who feel stuck and unable to get ahead playing by the rules. It will appeal to all of those who have ever asked themselves, "How is it that after all these years, we are still assistants?"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Words are not sufficient to convey how much I LOVED this book. I hope Camille Perri is busy writing her next novel because I am anxiously awaiting it. In *The Assistants*, Perri tackles the relevant contemporary issue of the imbalances of wealth and gender in today's society with humor,

insight, and thoughtfulness. Her prose is outstanding, and so many of her clever modern and historical references had me continually laughing out loud as I read this novel. The main character Tina Fontana works for Robert, the CEO of Titan Corporation. Titan is the largest media corporation in the world, and Robert maintains a spot on Forbes billionaire list and has been accused of evading tax and other laws to further his own wealth and his company's dominance. As Robert's assistant, Tina arranges and orders everything for him and frequently these expenditures individually cost more than her annual salary. While a well-educated individual herself, Tina is stuck in a job where she is reduced to performing menial tasks for Robert. One day Robert asks Tina to book a last minute flight on United (because his company jets aren't available) which involves having the seats around him cleared and asking United to comp his seat. Initially, the United representative requires Tina to pay for the seats because the rep doesn't know who Robert is. Tina pays the \$20,000 on her personal card, files for reimbursement from Titan, and receives payment from Titan. In the meantime, United reverses the charges. Tina waits for Titan to ask for the money back.

While reading *The Assistant*, I initially was curious how everything was going to turn out, however, there was not enough of a story line to keep the pace moving throughout the entire novel. Thirty year old Tina works as an assistant to billionaire founder and CEO of Titan Corporation, Robert Barlow. Her days are filled with anticipating his every move and then making it happen. Tina was raised Catholic by what they call old-school Italians, so when a technical error gives her an opportunity to pay off her entire college loan, she wrestles with her conscious. In the end, she cannot resist the temptation and takes the money. When out of the blue, Tina is summoned to the 43rd floor by the Director of Travel and Entertainment's assistant Emily, she prepares for the worst. Instead of turning her in to the authorities, Emily, the Connecticut Barbie, wants in on the action in order to pay off her own student loan. This unlikely duo forge a friendship, which becomes important to the both of them. When, Margie Fischer, Titan's gruff head of accounting comes a calling for the same fraudulent expense reports as a favor for one of her young accountants, because the game is rigged and nobody does anything about it. Tina and Emily realize they may well be in over their heads. *The Assistant* is formula fiction with a Robin Hood like theme depicting the rich with their over the top consumption of wealth and how easy it is to snatch. The main characters could have used fleshing out with more facets to their personalities explored. They were very generic. While Robert Barlow was clueless to the plight of his employees, he was certainly no Amanda Priestly from the novel *The Devil Wears Prada*, who epitomizes the boss from hell.

Tina Fontana is a 30-year old executive assistant to Robert Barlow, billionaire CEO of Titan Corporation, a media conglomerate. Her days consist of booking his first class travel and restaurant reservations, slicing limes and pouring drinks, and basically catering to his every whim. She has a tiny walkup apartment in a crummy neighborhood in New York City, a \$40K salary, and nearly \$20K of student debt that she is paying off very slowly. \$40K is such a trivial amount to a highly paid CEO, and she can't help remarking (numerous times) of the inequity of a system that keeps intelligent college-educated women underpaid and at the beck and call of wealthy, successful men. Due to an administrative error, an expense reimbursement check is issued to her for just over \$19K, and she dithers over whether to keep it or pay it back. She knows that it is unlikely that the error will be detected so decides to keep it and pay off her college debt. Then another assistant, Emily in the accounting department, finds out about the theft, and rather than turn her in, asks Tina to help her to pay off her student debt as well via fraudulent expense reports. This begins an unlikely friendship between the two women, and the expense report scheme starts to spiral out of control as others become aware of it – not because they want to expose her, but because they want in on it. In the meantime, Tina is dating and starting to fall in love with an attorney in the company's legal department; but of course she doesn't tell him anything about the scheme. She leads him to think that she is starting up a non-profit – pay it forward – website scheme (called "The Assistance") to attract donations that will be used to pay off student debt for working women.

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