

A 'DREAM' TURNS DEADLY Jimmy Breslin details an immigrant's tragedy

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Body

The Short Sweet **Dream** of Eduardo Gutierrez By **Jimmy Breslin**.

Crown, \$22.

Newspaper columnist **Jimmy Breslin** had a moving story to tell for his latest book: that of Eduardo Gutierrez, a struggling Mexican immigrant who plunged to his death in a pool of concrete when the substandard apartment he was building - the project of politically connected Brooklyn Hasidim - collapsed. If only **Breslin** had stuck to the saga's main ingredients.

Instead, he detours to border patrol operations in Arizona, federal officers on loan in Kazakhstan, marijuana smuggling and the destruction of the Berlin Wall. As a result, readers are shortchanged when it comes to Gutierrez - beyond learning that the 21-year-old day laborer was born into poverty in rural Mexico, grew up in a brickyard and lusted after the streets of New York.

There is also the parallel story of Silvia Tecpoyotti, whom Gutierrez loved but never married - a combination of his paralyzing shyness and a belief that their future lay at the end of a rainbow over the horizon.

Through the inexorable forces that prevent those at the bottom of the human pyramid in America from taking control of their destinies, she winds up in an Olive Garden restaurant in College Station, Tex. He winds up in a lethally dangerous construction site in Brighton Beach.

There is the web of political connections and money in New York, where the rich have "fixers" who can whitewash the dirtiest linen and hold police badges that carry respect. All this takes place in a mayoral administration headed by a former U.S. attorney.

And there is a key subtext - the barrenness and hypocrisy of an immigration policy that enables the exploitation of Eduardo and Silvia, and 275,000 other immigrants like them in New York City alone.

It is a fascinating story, but there is neither prescription nor cure. There is only the denouement.

Eugene Ostreicher, the 70-year-old Hasidic builder, contributor to Mayor Giuliani and convicted exploiter of immigrant labor (100 hours of work for \$340), was ordered to pay \$1 million to his victims and their families. The cost of doing business. There the book ends.

In October, Ostreicher was sentenced to serve three years and ordered never to work in the construction trade again. He told the court he was sorry, but, "I have helped people all my life and intend to keep helping people for the rest of my life."

Many who read **Breslin**'s book will have a distinctly different perspective.

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Graphic

Jimmy Breslin

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