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Johnson's "Fatal trust" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Johnson, T. M. (2017) *Fatal trust*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Press. 343 pp \$15.99
ISBN 9780764212352

A complicated twisting plot involving family secrets, legal trust fund payouts, mobsters and an uncertain outcome, make this novel an intriguing legal thriller.

Ian Wells is a young Minneapolis attorney who takes over his late father's law practice while caring for a mother with Alzheimer's. Business is slow. Nearing a financial crisis, a lucrative new trust case has strong appeal. The task appears to be simple. The client wants Ian to conduct research on three individuals to make sure they have not been involved in any criminal activity during the past twenty years. That is the primary condition of the trust fund. If proven innocent, all three will inherit three million dollars each, to be distributed within seven days.

When Ian accepts the challenge, his rollercoaster ride begins. Unbelievable things about his father's past connections with criminals emerge. His grandfather has mobster ties that Ian knew nothing about. There is even a flashback to his own memories from age twelve when he met a client of his father and later suffered nightmares. What he heard and saw as a child now helped him fit together missing puzzle pieces.

Twists in the plot quickly lead to one crisis after another and eventually link this trust fund to the greatest unsolved art theft crime in Minnesota history. Soon Ian's reputation, along with his father's good name is under criminal investigation as twelve thousand dollars of tainted money arrive into his law firm's account. When the trust's nine million dollars simply disappear, Ian realizes then that he is being targeted as the fall guy. Unless he can catch the real thief, he will be accused, and face jail time.

Brook, an attractive friend from the Prosecutor's office, believes he is innocent and is willing to put her own career on the line to give him access to privileged information. Blossoming romance add a layer to the story.

Readers soon become attached emotionally to the main characters as themes such as loyalty, love, honour and moral character unfold. As the plot thickens, readers will find it difficult to put the book down.

However, a few unbelievable coincidences may cause the reader to chuckle, such as finding a gun – at the exact moment it is needed – hidden in a log, and the number of times Ian's mother with Alzheimer's conveniently becomes lucid.

I recommend this book for a public library collection, or for a college library with a large literature collection or creative writing focus.

The author, Todd M. Johnson, has practiced as an attorney for over 30 years, specializing as a trial lawyer. This novel will appeal to readers who also enjoy authors such as John Grisham and Robert Whitlow.

Reviewer

Nancy Warwick