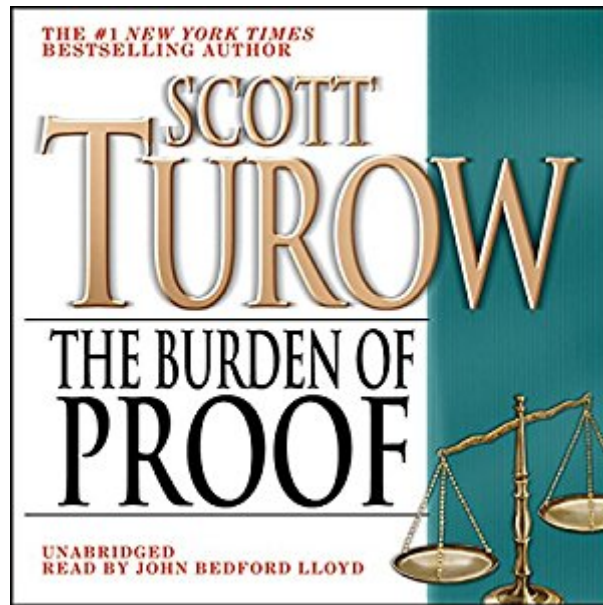


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The Burden Of Proof



Synopsis

Presumed Innocent was the fiction debut of the decade - a magnetic work of suspense that earned Turow acclaim for his unparalleled storytelling gifts. Now, in a brilliant follow-up, Scott Turow stakes his claim as an American master, in a mesmerizing novel of law, family and deceit. Alejandro "Sandy" Stern - the brilliant defense lawyer from Presumed Innocent - comes home to discover that his wife of 30 years has committed suicide, leaving behind a web of mystery, money, and guilt. While Stern hunts for answers, he is caught up in the threatened Federal prosecution of his most powerful and troublesome client - his own brother-in-law. Now, after a life of success, Sandy Stern is a man in desperate need of many truths - about his family, his uncertain future, and the troubled legacy his wife left behind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed this book, but people looking for a typical terse, thrilling courtroom or legal thriller may find that this one is deeper than what is typical for this genre. This book is more like a novel with very developed, deep characters, who have very complicated issues, all of which are essential to the story. It's a novel about the lead character, Sandy Stern, who happens to be a lawyer, and who does get entangled in a legal mess as the result of his wife's suicide, but the legal tangle and its solution is not really the point. The major theme of the novel seems to be that appearances are deceiving, that people within the same family often work at cross purposes, and that even what seems to be direct communication can be totally misinterpreted. Sandy Stern is deceptive and

deceiving, and so are all his family, friends and acquaintances. As he uncovers secret after secret he realizes how his life and everyone in it is largely a reflection of his own behavior. Turow is a much better and deeper writer than others in the "legal thriller" genre he's lumped in with.

Scott Turow writes literature. Like John La Carre, the joy of reading his works lies in the journey through the book. Characters come alive; scenes are rich with description. Though not stream of consciousness novels, we are able to witness the thoughts of the actors, and discern their emotions as well as their understanding of life. In reading the "Burden of Proof " I often forgot that I was reading a mystery. To many readers that may be seen as a novelistic flaw, but to me it was a source of pleasure. Sandy Stern has to cope with losing his wife who has committed suicide. How does a middle aged man make his way through this tragedy? How does a reserved, formal lawyer re-enter the world as a single man? How does he manage to legally represent his adventuresome, risk taking brother-in-law? These are a few of the challenges he faces. Yes it is a mystery; a double one in fact. One sub-plot involves the federal investigation of his brother-in-law for some questionable futures trading. Some readers may find this less interesting than the typical legal thriller where the protagonist is faced with defending a suspected murderer (as in Turow's "Presumed Innocent"). The other sub-plot concerns a medical mystery surrounding the death of Stern's wife. This is not a book for lovers of heart pounding, action thrillers. It is a story where you savor the quality of the writing; where you enjoy the development of the characters, and where you take pleasure in the scenes and setting of the story. One complaint I've come across in reviews of various books is the comment that the author could have told the same story in less than half the actual pages. Turow could have written this novel in half the actual 570 pages, but then we would have missed the beauty of the story as he wanted to tell it. One reviewer of this book indicated that Turow was trying to show his knowledge of the dictionary. That puzzles me; I didn't have to look up a single word, and I'm sure you won't have to either. If you like both fine writing, and a good story Turow can't be beat.

Scott Turrow took me on a trip that was amazing. One hundred pages before the end of the book I put it down and figured out the ending. It turned out that I "figured out" exactly what Sandy Stern did, but both of us were wrong. This book is the model for legal thrillers. I've read the book three times. I'm upset with myself for lending it out and not getting it back. I need to order another copy from .com because I discover an entirely new dimension every time I read it. Enjoy...

In "Burden of Proof", lawyer and novelist Scott Turow returns the character of Alejandro "Sandy"

Stern, the smooth-spoken, Argentine-Jewish defense attorney introduced in the earlier novel, "Presumed Innocent". In that earlier novel, Stern defended a prosecutor in a high-profile murder case. In "Burden", Stern now has all the questions. Just when his existence seemed routine enough, Stern returns home from a business trip to find his wife dead - an apparent suicide. Reeling from the loss, Stern must also confront a grand jury proceeding against his client and brother in law, Dixon Hartnell. A web of complex (and suspicious) financial transactions involving futures-trading on Kindle County market run by Hartnell has what the interest of the US Attorney's office, itself run by a foe of Stern. Though Hartnell is the sort of guy who routinely seems to hover at the edge of indictment for something, the charges now offer the chance of landing the embattled broker in a federal lockup and, because Stern's son-in law works for Hartnell, threaten to tear at the fragile Stern family. Into this mix of family and legal problems, Turow throws in Stern's romancing of his enemy at the US Attorney's office and of a nearby neighbor, his suspicions harbored against a neighbor who may have had an affair with Stern's now dead wife, and the story of his own romance, years ago, with Clara Mittler-Stern. "Burden" has Scott Turow's great prose and obsessive character dissection, but it's not as enveloping a book as "Presumed Innocent". The sense of an underlying secret isn't as enticing as the murder investigation in the earlier book, and the characters don't grab you as well either. Most annoying is Stern whose silver-tongued erudition was cute when he was a supporting character in the older book. Dixon Hartnell would have been a more interesting choice of main character, but the plot makes that impossible. Turow dangles the names of characters from the first book just to get our attentions (ex-PA Ray Horgan almost becomes the defense lawyer for Stern's embattled son in-law; Rusty Sabich is referred in passing as "Judge Sabich"; the specter of the corrupt Mayor Augie Bolcarro seems to hang like a smog over Kindle County) but remains its own book. Even the fictional choice of legal venue seems troublesome - exchanging the Kindle county court in "Presumed" with the anonymous Federal Court here. Kindle County, which seemed so real and unique in the older book seems just another mid-west city. The novel concentrates instead on the byzantine relationships of its main characters, but after you've finished, you wonder why you should care. This is a pretty good novel, but it loses something and suffers in comparison to its prequel.

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