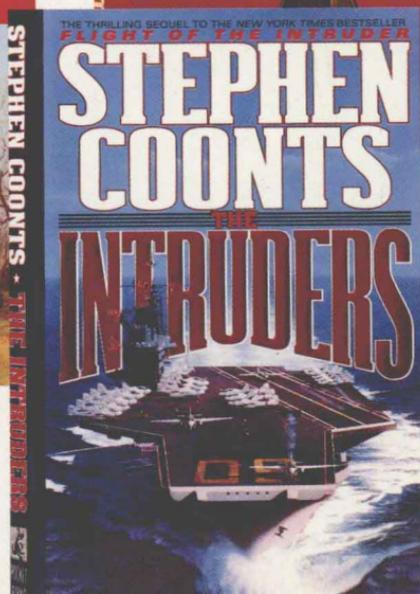
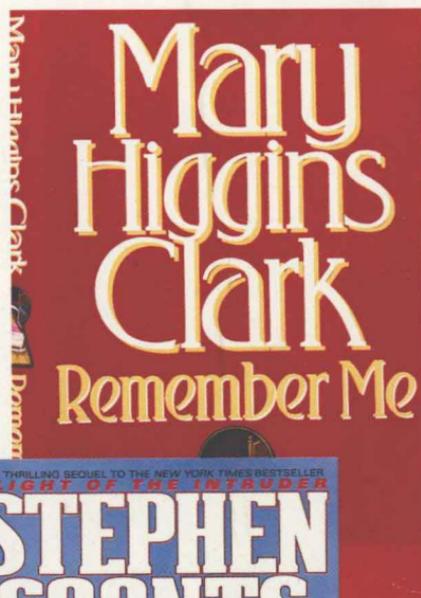
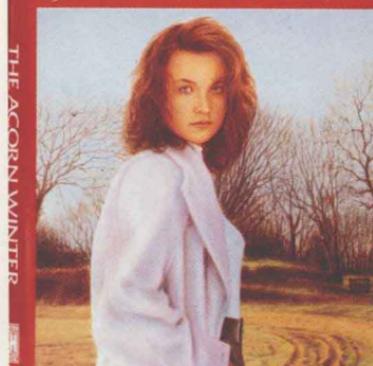
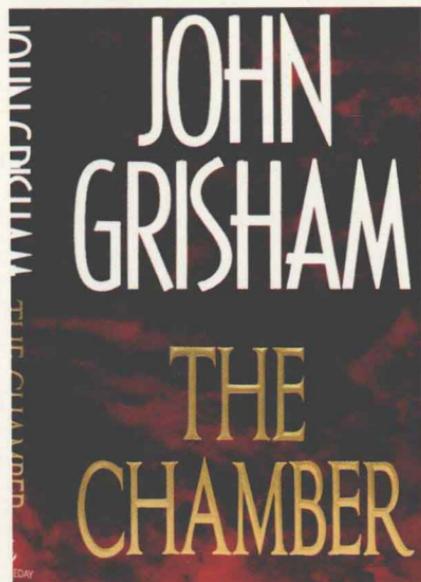


READER'S
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Elizabeth Webster

It was tragedy in her own life that prompted Elizabeth Webster to tackle such a heartbreaking subject as the death of a child. "I lost one of my sons when he was two years old," the author, now in her late seventies, recalls. "It was so traumatic. It's taken me all this time to be able to write something that might be of comfort to others who are coping with bereavement. It's something people find so hard to talk about."

Elizabeth Webster has never been afraid to tackle difficult subjects. Over the years she has penned novels addressing such important issues as wife battering, in *The Flight of the Swan*, and child abuse, in *Johnnie Alone*. "My aim is not only to tell a good story but also to make people think," she says.

Music is another field in which the author has been keen to compose her own material. The Japanese opera in *The Acorn Winter* is one she wrote and has staged many times with local children near her home in rural Gloucestershire, England.

Elizabeth Webster has been close to children all her life. When her own three were small, she taught nursery school. Today she's blessed with twelve grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She is already hard at work on her next novel.

ILLUSTRATORS

Mike Radencich: *The Chamber*, title spread

Mike Wimmer: *The Chamber*, interior art

Deborah Chabrian: *Remember Me*

Derek Mueller: *The Intruders*

Carolyn Bucha: *The Acorn Winter*, title spread

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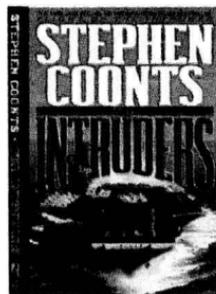
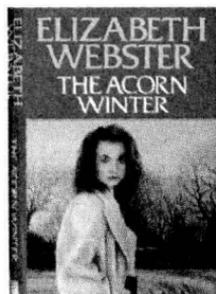
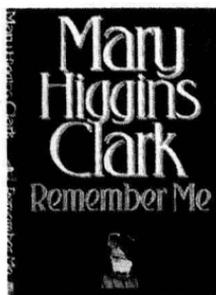
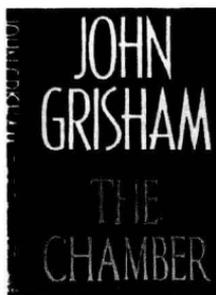
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ROOSEVELT'S HYDE PARK
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THE

CHAMAN

JOHN

UBER

GRISHAM

For Sam Cayhall the waiting is almost over.

For nine and a half years he has been sitting on death row while his lawyers tried every possible legal maneuver to postpone his appointment with the Mississippi gas chamber.

Now Sam's time is up. His latest appeal has been rejected, and the date for his execution has been set.

And Sam is ready. He's tired of fighting, tired of prison, tired of a life he'll be happy to leave behind.

But not yet. For Sam is about to meet a brash young lawyer, Adam Hall, who's set on making one last effort to save him from the chamber.

CHAPTER 1

THE decision to bomb the office of the radical Jew lawyer was reached with relative ease. Only three people were involved in the process. The first was the man with the money. The second was a local operative who knew the territory. And the third was a young patriot and zealot with a talent for explosives and an astonishing knack for disappearing without a trail.

The lawyer's name was Marvin Kramer, a fourth-generation Mississippi Jew whose family had prospered as merchants in the Delta. He lived in an antebellum home in Greenville, a river town with a small but strong Jewish community, a pleasant place with a history of little racial discord. He practiced law because commerce bored him. Like most Jews of German descent, his family had assimilated nicely into the culture of the Deep South and viewed themselves as nothing but typical southerners who happened to have a different religion. For the most part, they blended with the rest of established society and went about their business.

Marvin was different. His father, Elliot, sent him up north to Brandeis University in the late '50s, then to law school at Columbia. When he returned to Greenville in 1964, the civil rights movement had center stage. Marvin got in the thick of it. Less than a month after opening his law office, he was arrested, along with two of his Brandeis classmates, for attempting to register black voters. His father was furious. His family was embarrassed, but Marvin couldn't have cared less. He received his first death threat at the

The Chamber

age of twenty-five, and started carrying a gun. He bought a pistol for his wife—a Memphis girl—and instructed their black maid to keep one in her purse. The Kramers had twin two-year-old sons.

The first civil rights lawsuit filed in 1965 by the law offices of Marvin B. Kramer and Associates—there were no associates yet—alleged a multitude of discriminatory voting practices by local officials. It made headlines around the state, and Marvin got his picture in the papers. He also got his name on a Klan list of Jews to harass. A radical Jew lawyer marching with and representing Negroes in the Mississippi Delta would not be tolerated.

Later there were rumors of lawyer Kramer using his own money to post bail for civil rights workers. He paid for the reconstruction of a black church bombed by the Klan. He actually welcomed Negroes into his home. He urged Jewish groups up north to get involved in the struggle. Lawyer Kramer was marching bravely toward his doom.

The presence of a heavily armed nighttime guard patrolling benignly around the flower beds prevented an attack upon the Kramer home. Thus the Klan decided to bomb his office.

The actual planning of the operation took very little time, and this was principally because so few people were involved in it. The man with the money, a flamboyant redneck prophet named Jeremiah Dogan, was then the Imperial Wizard for the Klan in Mississippi. As a terrorist, Jerry Dogan was quite effective because he delegated the dirty work to small autonomous groups of hit men who worked independently of one another. The FBI had become expert at infiltrating the Klan with informants, and Dogan trusted no one but family and a handful of accomplices. He owned the largest used car lot in Meridian, Mississippi, and he sometimes preached in rural churches.

The second member of the team was Sam Cayhall, a Mississippi Klansman from Clanton, in Ford County, three hours north of Meridian and an hour south of Memphis. Cayhall was known to the FBI, but his connection to Dogan was not. The FBI considered him to be harmless because he lived in an area of the state with almost no Klan activity. A few crosses had been burned in Ford County recently, but no bombings, no killings. The FBI knew that Cayhall's father had been a Klansman, but on the whole, the family

appeared to be rather passive. Dogan's recruitment of Sam Cayhall was a brilliant move.

The bombing of Kramer's office began with a phone call on the night of April 17, 1967. Suspecting, with good reason, that his phones were tapped, Jeremiah Dogan waited until midnight and drove to a pay phone at a gas station south of Meridian. He also suspected he was being followed by the FBI, and he was correct. They watched him, but they had no idea where the call was going.

Sam Cayhall listened quietly on the other end, asked a question or two, then hung up. He returned to his bed and told his wife nothing. She knew better than to ask. The next morning he left the house early and drove into Clanton. He ate his daily breakfast at The Coffee Shop, then placed a call on a pay phone inside the Ford County Courthouse.

Two days later, on April 20, Cayhall left Clanton at dusk and drove to Greenville. He had spent a day in Greenville two weeks earlier and knew the city fairly well. He found Kramer's office, drove by his stately home, then found the synagogue. Dogan said the synagogue might be next, but first they needed to hit the Jew lawyer. By eleven Cayhall was in Cleveland, a college town an hour from Greenville. There was a green Pontiac parked at a truck stop on Highway 61. He found the ignition key under the driver's floor mat and took the car for a drive through the rich farm fields of the Delta. He turned onto a farm road and opened the trunk. In a cardboard box he found fifteen sticks of dynamite, three blasting caps, and a fuse. He drove back to the truck stop and waited in the all-night café.

At precisely two a.m. the third member of the team walked into the crowded truck stop and sat across from Sam Cayhall. His name was Rollie Wedge—a young man of no more than twenty-two, but a trusted veteran of the civil rights war. He said he was from Louisiana, now lived somewhere in the mountains where no one could find him—though he had told Sam Cayhall that he fully expected to be killed in the struggle for white supremacy. His father was a Klansman and a demolition contractor, and from him Rollie had learned how to use explosives.

Sam didn't believe much of what Wedge said. He never asked Dogan where he found the kid. They sipped coffee. Cayhall's cup

The Chamber

shook occasionally from the jitters, but Rollie's was calm and steady. His eyes never blinked. They had done this together several times now, and Cayhall marveled at the coolness of one so young. He had reported to Jeremiah Dogan that the kid never got excited, not even when they neared their targets and he handled the dynamite.

Wedge's car was a rental from the Memphis airport. He retrieved a small bag from the back seat, locked the car, and left it at the truck stop. The green Pontiac, with Cayhall behind the wheel, left Cleveland and headed south on Highway 61. It was almost three a.m. when Cayhall turned onto a dark gravel road and stopped. Rollie instructed him to stay in the car while he inspected the explosives. Sam did as he was told. Rollie inventoried the dynamite, left his bag in the trunk, closed it, and told Sam to head to Greenville.

They drove by Kramer's office for the first time around four a.m. The street was deserted and dark, and Rollie said something to the effect that this would be their easiest job yet.

"Too bad we can't bomb his house," Rollie said softly as they drove by the Kramer home.

"Yeah," Sam said. "But he's got kids in there, you know."

Cayhall parked the car in an alley behind Kramer's office. Both men quietly opened the trunk, removed the box and the bag, and slid along a row of hedges leading to the rear door.

Sam Cayhall jimmied the door, and they were inside within seconds. Two weeks earlier Sam had presented himself to the receptionist under the ruse of asking for directions, then asked to use the rest room. In the main hallway, between the rest room and Kramer's office, was a closet filled with stacks of old files.

"Stay by the door and watch the alley," Wedge whispered coolly, and Sam did exactly as he was told. He preferred to serve as the watchman and avoid handling the explosives.

Rollie quickly sat the box on the floor in the closet and wired the dynamite. It was a delicate exercise, and as always, Sam's heart raced as he waited. His back was to the explosives, just in case something went wrong.

They were in the office less than five minutes. Then they were back in the alley, strolling nonchalantly to the green Pontiac. They were becoming invincible. It was all so easy. They had bombed a

real estate office in Jackson because the broker had sold a house to a black couple. They had bombed a small newspaper office because the editor had uttered something neutral on segregation. They had demolished a Jackson synagogue, the largest in the state.

They drove through the alley in the darkness, and as the green Pontiac entered a side street, its headlights came on.

In each of the prior bombings, Wedge had used a fifteen-minute fuse, one simply lit with a match, very similar to a firecracker. And as part of the exercise, the team of bombers enjoyed cruising with the windows down on the outskirts of town just as the explosion ripped through the target. They had heard and felt each of the prior hits at a nice distance as they made their leisurely getaways.

But tonight would be different. Sam made a wrong turn somewhere, and suddenly they were stopped at a railroad crossing as a freight train clicked by. A rather long train. Sam checked his watch more than once. Rollie said nothing. The train passed, and Sam took another wrong turn. They were near the river, on a street lined with run-down houses. Sam checked his watch again. The ground would shake in less than five minutes. Rollie fidgeted as if he was becoming irritated with his driver, but he said nothing.

At the next turn Sam hit the brakes as he realized he had turned the wrong way on a one-way street. And when he hit the brakes, the engine quit. He turned the ignition. The engine wouldn't start. Then the smell of gasoline.

"Dammit!" Sam said through clenched teeth. "It's flooded."

Rollie sat low in his seat and stared through the window. "Don't run the battery down," he said slowly, calmly.

Sam was near panic. At least fifteen minutes had passed since they had left Kramer's office, and it was time for the fireworks. Once again he tried the ignition. Mercifully, the engine started. Two blocks later they were on Main Street. "What kind of fuse did you use?" Sam finally asked as they turned onto Highway 82.

"I tried something new," Rollie answered without looking.

"What?"

"You wouldn't understand," Rollie said, and Sam did a slow burn.

"A timing device?" he asked a few miles down the road.

"Something like that."

The Chamber

THEY DROVE IN COMPLETE silence. As the lights of Greenville slowly disappeared across the flat land, Sam half expected to see a fireball or hear a distant rumble. Nothing happened.

At the truck stop, Rollie eased from his seat and closed the passenger door. "Until we meet again," he said with a smile, then walked to his rental car. Sam watched him swagger away and marveled once more at the coolness of Rollie Wedge.

It was by now a few minutes after five thirty, and a hint of orange was peeking through the darkness to the east. Sam pulled the green Pontiac onto the highway and headed back into Greenville.

THE horror of the Kramer bombing actually began about the time Rollie Wedge and Sam Cayhall parted ways. It started with the alarm clock on a nightstand not far from Ruth Kramer's pillow. When it erupted at five thirty, the usual hour, Ruth knew that she was a very sick woman. She had a slight fever and was quite nauseated. A nasty flu bug circulating through Greenville had found its way into the Kramer home.

The maid woke the twins, Josh and John, now five years old, at six thirty and quickly had them bathed, dressed, and fed. Marvin thought it best to take them to nursery school as planned and get them, he hoped, away from the virus. He called a doctor friend for a prescription, said good-bye to Ruth, who was lying with an ice pack over her face, and left with the boys.

The twins loved his law office. They were not due at nursery school until eight, so Marvin could work a little before delivering the boys and heading on to court. They arrived at the office around seven thirty. Once inside, the twins went straight for the secretary's desk and the thick stack of typing paper waiting to be cut and stapled and folded.

The office was a sprawling structure, built over time, with additions here and there. The front door opened into a small foyer where the receptionist's desk sat. A hallway ran directly from the foyer through the center of the downstairs. Marvin's office was the largest, the last on the left, next to the cluttered closet. Just across the hall from the closet was Marvin's secretary's office. Her name was Helen.

As usual Marvin was the first to arrive on Friday, April 21. He