



Undue Influence

Steve Martini

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Defense attorney Paul Madriani is mired in a complex web of intrigue and murder when the sister of his late wife, embroiled in a bitter custody battle with her former husband, becomes the prime suspect in the murder of her ex-husband and his new young wife.

Undue Influence Details

Date : Published (first published July 6th 1994)

ISBN :

Author : Steve Martini

Format : Kindle Edition 530 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Legal Thriller, Crime

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From Reader Review Undue Influence for online ebook

Jerry B says

His very best, wonderful inventive plot with ultimate twist!

We've nearly given up on Steve Martini several times. While we enjoyed his first novel, "Simeon Chamber", most of the others of his books we have read, including a couple others from the Defense Attorney Paul Madriani series, have been so incredibly dry during sluggish middle sections that we really should have quit them right there. However, this his fourth novel, and third Madriani, gets it completely right: good writing, one of the most clever plots we've ever encountered, sustained suspense and pace, and a story so engrossing we'll admit to staying up til three in the morning to get to the end!

We don't want to reveal too much plot, but in short, Madriani is defending his sister-in-law Laurel on the charge of murdering her ex-husband's trophy wife. A custody battle for her two kids is an apparent motive, and the evidence all seems to look bad, including secrets Laurel won't even reveal to her defense team. Suspense builds as we join the courtroom audience for an entertaining fight with a female prosecutor with a chip on her shoulder, not to mention the main cop (Lama) who is a Madriani enemy. Things don't get sorted out until quite late in the book, yet we're on edge til nearly the very last page as twists and turns in the story line have us hustling through the pages at breakneck speed. A most unusual ending is our final reward!

This book is as good as Scott Turow or John Grisham at their best. While we're still not totally Madriani fan club enthusiasts, this is surely one of the best books we've read in a long time -- and thus very highly recommended!

Kenny McGinnis says

I'd give 95% of this book 5-stars, but I can't forget that last 5%.

Mary says

I knew there had to be a twist but was 3/4th finished until I began to have an idea.
Could not put it down.

Debbie says

These books all start to run together in my mind so I can't really give a good review. I will say that I liked all of them. I have read all of his books except the first one.

Heather Jenkins says

Good, but complicated

This Paul Madriani book has been my favorite in terms of his personal character, but it's definitely been the most difficult to follow from a legal standpoint. At one point you have at least 5 court cases interwoven.

(That you are aware of!)

Still a great book.

Jill Manske says

Although this is one of the earlier books in the Paul Madriani series by Steve Martini, it's one of his best. "Undue Influence" is a mystery, courtroom drama and thriller rolled into one. Defense attorney Madriani is representing his sister-in-law, who has been accused of murdering her ex-husband's new wife in the midst of a bitter child custody battle. Laurel Vega is no one's idea of the perfect client, as she refuses to provide answers that could help Madriani win her case. Throw in disappearing witnesses, a rage-filled homicide detective with a checkered history with Madriani, a prosecutor who takes no prisoners, and a federal prosecutor with questionable motives to help and you have a very complex plot where anything goes. Seldom have I read a book with more shocking plot twists at the end. Just when you think you have everything figured out and Martini is wrapping things up, he throws another grenade. It's exceptionally well-written and a real page-turner.

Ken Heard says

I am rereading Martini's Paul Madriani series and still find his courtroom scenes as the best I've read. Some may be put off by the first-person, present tense narrative, but I think it adds to the drama, and it offers insight into the strategies Madriani makes.

As the series progressed, however, Martini seems to have drifted away from the courtroom drama and instead focused on more conspiracy theory plots of terrorism and mayhem. Madriani was no longer just concerned with saving his client, he wanted to save San Diego, Washington or, ultimately, the world. I burned out after reaching his sixth or seventh book in the past. The first three or four, though, are still amazing reads. I'll reserve judgment on the rest once I get back to them again.

There are a few knock-off writing techniques Martini uses that seem to get in the way, and that's why I dropped this to a four-star instead of the five it could deserve. He often writes how his characters "make faces" as responses to something. A few times it's okay. But after a while, I begin making the face "Not again" when I read it. In his first book, "Compelling Evidence," Martini often had his characters placing "their buttocks on the edge" of desks. It was enough buttock-fest that I took notice.

Also, a small point in the ending of this. I won't do the spoiler thing that so many freak on, but there is a lapse in reality at the very end - a small detail - that in reality would not allow the climactic ending to continue. I have covered courts for newspapers for 30 years and an element that set things in motion in Undue Influence would not happen in reality.

That aside, Martini is a far better writer than most legal fiction authors. He is comparable to the deep-plotting brilliance of John Lescroart and so far above the standard-setter of the beach-reading genre of Grisham. I look forward to continuing my delving into his books and I may have a different attitude toward the conspiracy stuff once I get into them as well.

Cathy DuPont says

These series is simply the best one I've read in a long time. And I love Paul Madriani.

If you enjoy courtroom drama, read this because it's so entertaining.

Just when I thought all the strings were tied up, they come loose. Then once again they're tied up and come loose again.

The storyline is amazing and I loved reading this book.

Can't wait to read the next in the series but need to get a Dave Robicheaux in. He's been waiting for me.

Kellie says

(#3 of the Paul Madriani Series)-This was an odd book. I liked it a lot, until the end. Steve has a great way of writing to help educate us that are less than fluent in legalese. This book is about the murder of Melanie, Jack Vega's second wife. Jack Vega's first wife, Laurel, is accused of the murder. Paul, at the last request of his dying wife, is watching over the family and defending Laurel.

This book definitely kept my interest however, this isn't the first time I was disappointed in the ending of a Martini book.

Theresa Alan says

I enjoyed this legal suspense novel. It's the first book I've read featuring Defense Attorney Paul Madriani, but I think it stood fine on its own, without having read the first two books in the series.

There were plenty of twists and turns as Madriani attempts to prove that his former sister-in-law did not murder the new wife of her ex-husband. When Madriani's wife was dying, she made him promise that he would look out for Laurel, but Laurel's making it difficult for him because she refuses to tell him the whole story. (A plot device for the reader's benefit.)

As he and his partner chase down witnesses who can exonerate his client, its evident that his life may be at risk as well. A couple things I guessed and a couple things seemed a little convenient, but mostly I thought the plot twists were fun. That feeling of: Uh-oh, how's he going to recover from that blistering attack from the prosecution?

There were some odd storytelling choices and I hate when an author switches from sometimes calling a person by his/her first name and other times refers to the person by his/her last name, but mostly, the writing

was entertaining and well done.

For more of my reviews, please visit: <http://www.theresaalan.net/blog>

Nancy (Hrdcovers) says

MADRIANI FOR THE DEFENSE

It's been quite awhile since I read a really good courtroom drama and, revisiting Steve Martini's recurring character, Paul Madriani, was the perfect way to get back into the melee. Since I refer to myself as a RIO, (someone who reads series "in the order in which they were written"), this was officially the third book I've read in this series. I think I have to say that it was the best of the three thus far which is always promising. I love it when an author gets better and better. There's nothing worse than a great debut book followed by a good sophomore book and then going downhill from there. I can already see that this will not be the case with Martini. I had about 160 pages left to go in this book very late last night and refused to go to bed until I had finished it -- clearly the sign of a great book in my estimation.

Every other review has pretty much given a synopsis of the storyline but, in one sentence, Madriani is defending his sister-in-law who has been accused of murdering her ex-husband's new, much younger, very pregnant, wife. Curiously enough, on the first page of this book, attorney Paul Madriani is thinking about his recently deceased wife Nikki and the promises he made to her before her death. Right away I'm thinking....did I miss something? She wasn't even ill in Prime Witness, the second book in the series. I guess Martini didn't like the way that marriage was unfolding so he gave her cancer. Bad for Nikki but actually better for the reader as Madriani is much better as a single father trying to take care of his young daughter Sarah in the evening while saving the lives of his defendants during the day. As a widower, this opens the door to some romantic dalliances, which adds another interesting layer to the main character's life.

As in his previous books, Madriani still seeks the help of another attorney Harry Hind. These two make quite a good pair and I enjoy the way Harry handles things. If there's such a thing as a good lawyer, bad lawyer routine, Harry and Paul have this market cornered. Paul Madriani seems to be such a nice guy and is very adept at his job but there's always someone who has it in for him with some vendetta or another. In this book it's police officer Jimmy Lama, who makes it his business to throw roadblocks in the way providing some stumbling blocks for Paul as he makes his way towards unraveling this case.

This series comes highly recommended by me. My only complaint with this book, and it's a minor one, is that Martini had the ending neatly tied up with quite a twist and I was very satisfied with it. In a matter of two or three pages, he fools the reader by throwing in yet another twist, one I wasn't particularly fond of and one I found unnecessary. Just my humble opinion, but come on Steve, how do you expect us to feel about this character in future books?

Ken says

Excellent courtroom scenes; good personalities of the people

Connie says

I really enjoyed this book about Paul's sister-in-law Laurel. I found it to have a lot of different scenarios that could have taken place and Mr. Martini kept me turning the pages to see who really killed Melanie. I didn't care for Melanie all that much and thought she perhaps was a gold digger. There were some comical moments when Jack Vega took the stand and Laurel made her comments. I could definitely see this happening even though your attorney has coached you to show no emotion or to have outbursts in court. I am going to read more by this author as I really enjoy the courtroom drama that takes place. It is not so much the investigation side, but the actual scenes in the courtroom that I really enjoy. I am giving this 5 out of 5 stars and can't wait to read the next one.

Nolan says

Paul Madriani promised his wife as she was dying (spoiler for previous books) that he would look after her sister, Laurel. Paul is now a single dad raising a seven-year-old girl, and Laurel indeed needs looking after.

She is in a custody battle with her former husband for their teenage children. The husband, a state legislator, traded Laurel in for a younger more top-heavy model, and the divorce proceedings have gotten rancorous and ugly. But Paul isn't handling the divorce. He's in the courtroom, but someone else is dealing with the case.

Then, the new trophy wife is murdered in her house, and Laurel Vega has left the state. Worse still, she was seen leaving the house where the murdered woman's body was found.

This, then, is the account of Madriani's efforts to clear his sister-in-law, and it is a twisty literally explosive story that will keep you pressing on to the back cover.

Chris says

THIS SUMMARY/REVIEW WAS COPIED FROM OTHER SOURCES AND IS USED ONLY AS A REMINDER OF WHAT THE BOOK WAS ABOUT FOR MY PERSONAL INTEREST. ANY PERSONAL NOTATIONS ARE FOR MY RECOLLECTION ONLY

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