



Undue Influence (Paul Madriani Novels Book 3)

By 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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A vicious custody battle escalates into a murder trial in this gripping courtroom drama, Martini's third to be narrated by defense attorney Paul Madriani (*Compelling Evidence* , *Prime Witness*). Before Madriani's wife, Nikki, died of lung cancer, she asked that Madriani look after her sister, Laurel, who's now going through a bruising custody battle with her ex-husband, Jack Vega. When Jack's young new wife, Melanie, is murdered, all the evidence points to Laurel as the killer: not only was she was seen threatening Melanie and arguing with her just before the murder, but when she's captured by the police, she has the dead woman's compact in her purse. Madriani takes on Laurel's case, but it's an uphill battle. Potential witnesses for the defense have mysteriously disappeared; while searching for them and pursuing other leads, Madriani uncovers evidence that points to a very different motive for murder--and a very obvious suspect. The action builds to a rousing climax through a brilliant series of trial scenes with several surprises. The characters are sharply drawn, the facts of the case are presented simply and the courtroom psychology is laid out vividly. Martini, who knows how to tell a story, wastes little time setting up his premise; by the time the trial starts, readers will find their fingers glued to the pages. 175,000 first printing; \$250,000 ad/promo; Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club main selection.

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From School Library Journal

YA-Lawyer-hero Paul Madriani returns, this time as a widower. His sister-in-law, Laurel, is in a bitter fight for custody of her two teenage children, with Madriani helping from the sidelines. Her ex-husband is a slick politician who has married an equally sleazy woman. When the new wife is murdered, Laurel is arrested. Madriani defends her, facing what appears to be insurmountable evidence. At the same time, he must deal with his own seven-year-old daughter, his troubled niece and nephew, a ruthless prosecutor, a vengeful police lieutenant, a beautiful attorney with whom he has an affair, and a killer who is now after him. The novel shares the flaws of its genre: the characters are flat, the plot contorted, and the writing uneven. Martini persists in describing gestures and facial expressions that should stand on their own, and then interprets them for readers. And he sprinkles his writing with lame hard-boiled similes. However, the good guys are likable, the bad guys are hateful, and the trial scenes are riveting. YAs should enjoy the page-turning suspense.

Chip Barnett, Rockbridge Regional Library, Lexington,

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From Library Journal

Recently widowed lawyer Paul Madriani has problems with his sister-in-law Laurel. She is involved in a nasty custody trial, and then she is arrested for the murder of her ex-husband's new wife. After Paul agrees to represent her, he gets sucked into a vipers' tangle involving Laurel, her two children, her ex-husband, a beautiful attorney, a bombing, and mistaken identities. Martini's dialog and characterizations are first-rate. Martini (*Prime Witness*, Putnam, 1993) has created a slam-bang narrative complete with astonishingly good trial scenes. Filled with surprises and twists, this is supremely readable and certain to be extremely popular. [Literary Guild selection.]-Robert H. Donahugh, formerly with Youngstown & Mahoning Cty. P.L., Ohi.

--Robert H. Donahugh, formerly with Youngstown & Mahoning Cty. P.L., Ohio

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