

Just Plane Murder

Eric Kendall

XlibrisUS (Sep 13, 2021)

Hardcover \$25.99 (78pp)

978-1-5434-9799-1

In the swift thriller Just Plane Murder, the human costs of so-called financial savviness are exposed following multiple aviation disasters.

Eric Kendall's novella *Just Plane Murder* concerns the deadly consequences of corporate greed.

In the book's opening, hundreds of passengers die in a plane crash. It soon becomes apparent that this crash was the result of a plane manufacturer's greed: in an effort to stay ahead of the competition, but unwilling to risk too much money, they ordered their employees to take a shortcut to achieve airworthiness approval from the FAA. A second crash follows, and the company again responds with impunity—though they also find themselves facing desperate measures to combat their actions.

Despite this outward excitement, the book prioritizes its message above its stories, and many of its characterizations are flat. While people's circumstances change, they themselves do not. Individual chapters do a better job of fleshing a few people out, as with those that evoke two couples who died in the plane crashes, whose personalities, plans, and dreams are covered. Images from the crashes, as of a severed hand with a shining wedding band, play on emotions to represent the severed futures of this select micro cast. Still, the book's several time jumps result in a jolting narrative that seems most interested in the facts about the crashes, with the human elements of the events, including people's reactions to them, feeling diminished. The story becomes emotionally vacant; aside from the four named victims, most people function as role players whose inner lives are not considered.

The audacious behaviors of three villains—the manufacturer, an engineer, and the president of the United States—are made focal: all engaged in deception, willfully endangering human lives. And others respond in bombastic ways: in the middle of a debate to determine his party's 2024 presidential nominee, the president is subjected to a vigilante trial, by his rival, the debate host, and a number of other key people, and the entire event strains credulity. The book is further burdened by its copious supply of unnecessary technical information, and by irrelevant details like the location of a Starbucks. As it progresses, the short book becomes tedious, and (though its prose evens out near the end) its often convoluted sentences compromise outside interest.

With a partial basis in the facts of corporate greed, the swift thriller *Just Plane Murder* exposes the human costs of so-called financial savviness following multiple aviation disasters.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (June 5, 2022)

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