

Saving Rachel

John Locke

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Sam Case, the suave and self-important narrator of *Saving Rachel*, thinks he has all he could ask for. He has a devoted wife on one hand and a secret mistress on the side. He makes ridiculous amounts of money as a software engineer hiding others' ill-gotten gains, and he has a rambling mansion and a snazzy car. What could go wrong? Answer: Everything!

After enjoying some time with Karen, his mistress, Sam is kidnapped by thugs who threaten his wife Rachel and murder his sister-in-law, all with the intent of getting their hands on the money that Sam has illegally hidden away for other criminals. Reeling in disbelief, Sam tries to preserve the safety of Rachel and Karen, but he soon finds himself and them sealed separately in Lucite boxes. The air will be sucked from their prisons, causing both Rachel and Karen to die, unless Sam makes a choice about who should live.

After he makes his decision, Sam thinks his trials are over, but since *Saving Rachel* is only halfway over at this point, we know that Sam's suffering has just begun. The book's second half shifts viewpoint and piles on the plot twists, providing alternative explanations for everything Sam has experienced.

Locke, who has written three other novels (some of which star Donovan Creed, who appears in this book), concocts a featherweight thriller with plenty of entertainment value and no dramatic heft. *Saving Rachel* starts slowly from the perspective of clueless slimeball Sam Case, but the reader soon realizes that things aren't as they seem, leading to the hope that Sam might get a comeuppance later on. The second half doesn't disappoint, as revelations follow revelations in short, cliffhanger chapters that progressively increase tension.

With its unreliable narrators and double- and triple-crossing cast, *Saving Rachel* establishes early on that everyone is messing with everyone else's heads. It is difficult, therefore, to care about or root for anyone in the book, since they are all selfishly and dishonestly working toward their own ends. Without a place in the pages for readers to put their hearts, the book has plenty of narrative push, but little true suspense, as nothing significant is at stake.

Saving Rachel is a fast-moving thriller, technically complex and a star example of intricate plotting. The convoluted story often threatens to turn silly, but it is saved by a light touch and a snarky sense of humor.

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