



Takedown

Leonard Ruhl

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Takedown is an intense thriller in which a principled and embattled judge works to achieve justice despite his formidable adversaries.

In Leonard Ruhl's thriller *Takedown*, a former judge is tested when he returns to civilization after a two-year hiatus.

Benjamin's family's safety was compromised by his role as a judge in a high-profile case involving a cartel. They chose to disappear. Now, upon receiving an offer that's too tempting to turn down, he's out of hiding and back in Kansas, functioning as a defense lawyer for the first time in his career.

Benjamin's client, twenty-year-old Mia, has been accused of murdering Jimmy, a former police officer who was a pedophile. But Mia, who's confessed to the crime, doesn't fit the killer's profile. She might have been an accomplice; she might have witnessed the murder. Benjamin decides to do some digging. Still, he isn't prepared for the morass that he uncovers—including the revelation that there is more to the story of his own mother's death than he previously knew. He learns about the involvement of influential public figures in a conspiracy that's twenty-eight years old.

Meting out intrigue and suspense at a gripping pace, the book develops its cast with deep backstories that ensure the audience's emotional involvement. Benjamin's dreary childhood (he was raised by a mother who was addicted to drugs and her boyfriend; he found her body) was followed by the loss of his first wife; he endured persistent assassination attempts and other dire situations too. In his dedicated endurance, he is endearing. Still, his is but one of several brave voices who give the novel its life—and who persist in declaring that the truth must come out, no matter how long it takes. There's an idealistic sense of kinship among the different agencies and fields represented in the investigation as they work toward the common good.

Featuring tense courtroom battles (that also include some humor), the story works to unveil the killer, unearth buried secrets, and see those who are drunk on power brought to justice. Its prose is precise and directed toward these aims; it has cinematic moments and is thematically absorbing.

Takedown is an intense thriller in which a principled and embattled judge works to achieve justice, but has to go against powerful and manipulative forces to do so.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (January 9, 2023)

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