

The Chamber: A Novel

By John Grisham

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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

In Chicago's top law firm, a young lawyer stands on the brink of a brilliant career. Now twenty-six-year-old Adam Hall is risking it all for a death-row killer and an impossible case: Sam Cayhall is a former Klansman and unrepentant racist facing the death penalty for a fatal bombing in 1967. Cayhall has run out of chances—except for one: a determined lawyer who just happens to be his grandson.

While the executioners prepare the gas chamber, while the protesters gather, and while the TV cameras wait, Adam has only days, hours, minutes to save his client. For between the two men is a chasm of shame, family lies, and secrets—including the one secret that could save Sam Cayhall's life . . . or cost Adam his.

The Chamber: A Novel By John Grisham **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

"The decision to bomb the office of the radical Jew lawyer was reached with relative ease." So begins Grisham's legal leviathan *The Chamber*, a 676-page tome that scrutinizes the death penalty and all of its nuances--from racially motivated murder to the cruel and unusual effects of a malfunctioning gas chamber.

Adam Hall is a 26-year-old attorney, fresh out of law school and working at the best firm in Chicago. He might have been humming Timbuk 3's big hit, "The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades," if it wasn't for his psychotic Southern grandfather, Sam Cayhall. Cayhall, a card-carrying member of the KKK, is on death row for killing two men. Knowing his uncle will surely die without his legal expertise, Hall comes to the rescue and puts his dazzling career at stake, while digging up a barnyard of skeletons from his family's past. Grisham fans expecting the typical action-packed plot should ready themselves for a slower pace, well-fleshed-out characters, and heavy doses of sentimentalism.

From Publishers Weekly

The chamber in question is the gas chamber at the Mississippi State Penitentiary--and for 69-year-old Sam Crayhall, the road thence has been many years long. Sam was twice tried and twice acquitted for murder after a 1967 Ku Klux Klan scare bombing accidentally killed the twin sons of the intended target; 14 years later he was tried a third time, convicted and sentenced to death. Now, in 1990, a young Chicago lawyer, employed by the firm that represented Sam but which he has just unceremoniously dumped, wants Sam as a client. Adam Hall, the 26-year-old rookie, is Sam Crayhall's grandson. Adam's efforts to save this splendid curmudgeon from death form the center of Grisham's quietly compelling novel, a hub from which the far-reaching spokes of personal dramas extend. The despair of prison life has rarely been so grippingly evoked--no riots or dazzling escapes here, just a drab, pervasive dailiness. And the gradually revealed dysfunctions of the Crayhalls prove both surprising and affecting. This ranks as top-notch Grisham and reveals new dimensions to his talent: the focus on character, the credible emotion and the simple moments of human connection bear comparison to Grisham's work in *A Time to Kill*. The prose, too, has more subtlety and texture than Grisham has previously exhibited. Though the countdown to an execution is a well-worn plot device, it has seldom been as effective, especially in the novel's last 100 pages. Readers can almost hear the cogs of justice turning ever faster--or is that the sound of Grisham's fans stampeding the bookstores for this riveting read? 2.5 million first printing; Literary Guild main selection; audio rights to BBD audio; major ad/promo.

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From [Booklist](#)

It's a foregone conclusion that Grisham's latest novel will be a best-seller, but now that he doesn't have to worry about making money, he's apparently decided to flex his literary muscles with a tale of death-row inmate Sam Cayhall and his lawyer-grandson Adam Hall. Grisham's reputation as a writer of lawyer espionage novels is well known, but he is equally adept at fleshing out characters of the modern South. We begin in 1967, when Mississippian and Klan member Cayhall helps bomb a Jewish lawyer's office and mistakenly kills the attorney's two young sons. Two trials with all-white juries wind up in mistrials, but eventually the intelligent Sam is convicted in 1981 and sentenced to the gas-chamber. By 1990, Adam, who has never met Sam, agrees to file his final appeals shortly before the execution. Like *The Firm* and other Grisham books, the plot is centered on a race against time, but there is little hint of cloak-and-dagger; in addition, a subplot that could exonerate Sam is, inexplicably, never developed. Grisham asserts that most prison officials are against the death penalty, or at least the gas chamber method, and he provides gruesome

details of executions gone wrong. As usual, the dialogue is fast paced, witty, and screenplay-ready, and only near the end does it become mawkish in the midst of self-examination and tearful good-byes. Most ironic, however, is that Grisham fans will eat up this rather uncommercial tale. *Joe Collins*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Karen Martinez:

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