

The Firm Study Guide

The Firm by John Grisham

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Plot Summary

The Firm is the story of Mitch McDeere's employment with the Bendini, Lambert, and Locke law firm. Mitch is a young, ambitious man who recently graduated from Harvard law school. Having excelled in his law program and possessing a strong character, he is recruited by the exclusive firm. The firm promises him a lifestyle that he and his wife, Abby, had never dreamed was possible. The firm provides them with a BMW, low rate mortgage, sign-on bonus, a cash bonus for passing the bar exam, study aid for the bar exam and continuing education following it, the use of a corporate jet and international accommodations, and it repays all of Mitch's outstanding student loans. All of these "perks" are in addition to a great salary and guaranteed partnership in ten to fifteen years. Mitch and Abby are lured by the instant lifestyle upgrade. They are quickly disillusioned by what comes along with the benefits.

Employment with the firm is meant to be permanent, and some of the previous partners have died under mysterious circumstances at fairly young ages. Mitch can't help but wonder what is in store for him. As the story unfolds, Mitch learns that he is being followed and all of his conversations are recorded. The surveillance extends beyond his office and into his car and home. Mitch is approached by an FBI agent, Wayne Tarrance, who would like Mitch to cooperate with FBI officials to infiltrate the Bendini law firm. He informs Mitch that the law firm has ties with the Moroltos, a mafia family known for its criminal activity. The FBI suspects that the Bendini firm is a front for the Morolto's illegal activities and money laundering. Mitch agrees to help covertly. He makes and supplies thousands of photocopies of secret internal documents to the FBI, risking his life to do so. Along the way he is aided by Abby as well as his other friends, Tammy and Barry. The law firm's head of security, DeVasher, has suspicions about Mitch's behavior. He makes plans to eliminate Mitch. Mitch escapes just in time and becomes the subject of an inter-state chase with both the FBI and private surveillance teams following him. Mitch and Abby do escape, along with Mitch's brother, Ray, and the FBI successfully prosecutes the Bendini employees.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

John Grisham's novel, *The Firm*, opens at the Bendini Building on Front Street in Memphis, Tennessee. A lawyer by the name of Royce McKnight is reviewing the resume of a recent law school graduate named Mitchell McDeere. He had graduated within the top five at his law school, Harvard, and served as associate editor of its journal, the *Harvard Law Review*. Mitch came from a broken family. He had seen hard times and is looking forward to the stability that accompanied a new career. Mitch is heavily in debt from his law school loans. Despite these pressures, he and his schoolteacher wife, Abby, enjoy a happy marriage. They live in a small student apartment and have few possessions. As a job candidate, Mitch is viewed favorably and has already been offered jobs at three other firms. He therefore feels no anxiety about his interview with McKnight. The Bendini, Lambert, and Locke Law Firm employs forty-one lawyers. Of its many lawyers, McKnight, Lambert, and Quin are present for Mitch's interview. McKnight is a senior partner. Lambert is also a senior partner and is in charge of recruiting, and Lamar Quin is an associate who, as a young lawyer, the others hope will connect well with Mitch. The lawyers are as pleased with Mitch in person as they are with his resume. They inform him of their strict policies regarding marriage and partying, and also introduce him to their many benefits. Perks include a new BMW, a low rate mortgage, country club memberships, a full pay-off of acquired school loans, and vacations to corporate properties around the world. The Bendini firm's offer greatly exceeds those of its rivals. The firm prides itself on being different, and boasts its zero percent turn-over rate. Its employees stay with the firm through retirement and all eventually become millionaires. Mitch is also drawn to the warm weather and welcoming atmosphere of the south. Lamar proceeds to give Mitch a tour of the law offices, libraries, and conference areas.

Lamar's wife, Kay, is given the task of showing Abby around the town while their husbands tour the Bendini building. Kay is fun and Abby likes her, but maintains her distance. Abby is still a country girl at heart and believes in core family values. While her values seem to agree with what the firm espouses, she resists the notion that they would be involved in her family's decision making process. Although Abby can't articulate her fears, she has reason to worry. The fifth floor of the Bendini building includes a dining room where the partners share lunch prepared daily by a private cook and served by the cook's husband, as well as the firm's security center. The secret security center is managed by a retired detective by the name of DeVasher. In that capacity, he spies on each of the employees, including the prospective recruit Mitch McDeere. DeVasher is also busy watching and recording two associates named Kozinski and Hodge, who are allegedly in contact with the FBI. Mitch and Abby overlook any lingering reservations and pack for their move to Memphis. Abby brings her dog, Hearsay, and little else when leaving their apartment. They move into their new home made possible by the firm's low interest mortgage, discover their new BMW parked beneath the carport, and meet with an interior designer. Then they head off to Lamar



and Kay Quin's home where they are expected for dinner. Instead of being greeted warmly, they are shocked to find Lamar and Kay grieving for the loss of two of the firm's associates, Hodge and Kozinski, who had just died in a scuba diving accident.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The early chapters of *The Firm* introduce all of the main characters. The first page also briefly introduces a former lawyer with the practice who had died in a car accident. She was unique in that she was female, and the partners viewed her employment as a mistake. Her time with the firm was described as "turbulent". The first section of the book also describes how the firm investigates its candidates for employment, which it refers to as recruits. The reader understands that for some unknown reason, the firm is particularly careful about whom it hires. The reader is led to feel uneasy about the firm's business practices.

The firm recruited Mitch for employment. He meets all of their criteria. The firm hires only young men who will be fiercely loyal. Often these are men who have little no other family. In Mitch's case, he lives apart from his two brothers. Rusty died in combat and Ray is in jail. Mitch is not as desperate as the firm is inclined to believe. He entertains other job possibilities and has completed diligent research. When the lawyers interviewing Mitch make inappropriate comments, he rebukes them with memorized statistics about their own educations. The information is public knowledge, but Mitch's thoroughness makes quite an impression. Mitch's wife, Abby, is suspicious and questions the firm's involvement in their lives. She is private by nature, but like Mitch, she is eventually seduced by the prospect of a more comfortable lifestyle.

The structure of the Bendini building is detailed in the novel. It is made to seem like an impenetrable fortress. The building itself is sound, and it has security guards as well as an invisible inner surveillance system. The third chapter introduces DeVasher. He is the head of security for the Bendini firm and is ruthless. He and Oliver "Ollie" Lambert verbally spar. One gets the impression that although one man is scholarly and the other is physically strong, they are equals at the firm and both demand respect. Kozinski and Hodge are introduced and the reader is curious about what they could be telling the FBI. DeVasher discloses that the preliminary plans for eliminating Kozinski and Hodge have been completed. This information will become crucial as the plot unfolds.



Chapters 5-8

Chapters 5-8 Summary

When Mitch arrives for his first day of work the office is ominously empty. The employees are still recovering from the loss of their esteemed peers. When the managing partners, Lambert and McKnight, finally appear, they are accompanied by two other partners, Victor Milligan and Avery Tolar. It is explained to Mitch that Avery Tolar would be his mentor, and Mitch would be working exclusively on Avery's files. In addition to assisting Avery, Mitch is expected to study for and pass the bar exam. To help in his success, each of the partners devises a study guide pertaining to his area of expertise and promises to spend time reviewing it with Mitch. Mitch is introduced to his personal secretary, a woman named Nina. Like all Bendini secretaries, Nina is not particularly pretty. Instead, she is matronly, intelligent, and very efficient.

The combination of working and studying soon exceeded sixteen hours per day, and Abby complains bitterly. Mitch is the first to arrive most mornings and greets the security guard, Dutch. He is also one of the last to leave. Mitch would have liked to appease Abby, but curtailing his hours is not an option. The firm stresses the importance of billable hours and confidentiality and expects its associates to obey. Avery's largest client, Sonny Capps, is undertaking another venture. Avery estimates that they have forty days to complete it. Capps is impatient and the forty days are reduced to twenty, and Mitch works around the clock to make it happen. Completing the Capps transaction soon replaces studying for the bar exam. As soon as Mitch delivers the two hundred page Capps document, Avery presented him with work for another client, Koker-Hanks. Unbeknown to Mitch, while he was working tirelessly, Lambert and Locke were in a secret meeting on the fifth floor with the head of security, DeVasher. They discuss the deaths of Hodge and Kozinski and the mysterious way in which they died. They also discuss leaks in the firm. Over the weekend, Mitch takes a brief break to attend an obligatory dinner with Abby, the managing partners, and their wives. While they are enjoying dinner, a group of professionals steals his car and uses it to drive to the McDeere home. They plant state of the art recording devices in both the car and the house. The firm intends to eavesdrop on Mitch.

Chapters 5-8 Analysis

Mitch's ambition and sense of humor are both represented in his request for a limousine. He brings youthful vitality to the firm. One should not mistake his youth for being naive, however. The partners and DeVasher will continuously underestimate Mitch's strength. Billable hours are described as extremely important to the firm. Mitch is reminded multiple times in his first two days of work that he must be sure to bill for everything and that his progress with the firm will be assessed according to his billable hours. Although the firm seems to have so many rules to follow, at lunch on Mitch's first day, Avery, his mentor, shows signs of breaking the rules. One wonders which rules (if



any) are regarded with leniency. Mitch's friend at the firm, Lamar Quin, is introduced as a family man. Lamar seems to have the ideal life, yet he is tainted with cynicism. Mitch tries to remain unaffected by Lamar's attitude and enjoys his newfound success.

Mitch learns that not everyone at the firm is friendly. Nathan Locke works long and hard like Mitch, but he has cold eyes that are unsettling. DeVasher is introduced, as is the Bendini connection to Chicago, from where DeVasher takes his orders. It becomes apparent that the firm is more devious than virtuous. When DeVasher calls Oliver Lambert "Ollie", he is expressing his contempt for Lambert. This sign of disrespect levels the playing field. Both men are committed to the firm and are equals. The first of many recorded calls is mentioned on page eighty.



Chapters 9-12

Chapters 9-12 Summary

Mitch impresses the firm's employees with his determination and follow-through. He manages to complete all of the work assigned to him by working extreme hours, and yet he never sacrifices quality. They do have some reservations. Although his work is excellent, they fear that he might not pass the bar exam because he is unable to study appropriately. Mitch also recognizes that this is a problem, and two weeks before the exam he finally asks for a break. He needs to study, and Avery agrees. Mitch only stops studying to attend the firm's ceremony to honor Hodge and Kozinski. The firm had commissioned portraits of each man. The firm had also established a scholarship in each man's name and established trust funds for their children. They assure the wives that their families will be well cared for despite their husbands' deaths. After taking the bar exam, Mitch finds himself with his workload decreased and a weekend to look forward to. Abby wants her parents to visit, and this is a sore spot between them. Mitch holds a grudge against her parents. They wished the best for their daughter and had wanted her to marry into an aristocratic family. With a brother in jail and a mentally disturbed mother, Mitch was not the answer to their dreams. To underscore their point, they did not attend Mitch and Abby's wedding, which further damaged the relationship and made reconciliation nearly impossible. The visit is filled with uncomfortable silences, and Mitch welcomes their departure.

After the disastrous visit with Abby's parents, returning to work is a relief. Nina tells Mitch that although it was unscheduled, Oliver Lambert is waiting for him in the library. Mitch rushes there with a worried feeling in the pit of his stomach. With his best straight face, Lambert proceeds to tell Mitch how he was afraid Mitch wasn't studying hard enough for his exam. The punch line is more promising—Mitch has passed the exam with the highest grade among his peers. He is officially a lawyer and the firm is in a celebratory mood. His name and accomplishment are published in the local paper. This attracts the attention of Wayne Tarrance from the FBI. Tarrance informs him that the FBI is watching his firm closely and offers a warning to Mitch. Although he won't elaborate, Tarrance also states that Hodge and Kozinski's deaths were not accidental. Mitch confides his unease in Lamar, who refers him to Avery and Lambert. Avery and Lambert dismiss Tarrance's interest as being solely related to their client's avoidance of taxes, but instruct Mitch not to speak with him again.

Mitch does not disclose his brother's whereabouts to the Bendidni firm because he knows it would not be received well. His brother, Ray, is confined to Brushy Mountain Prison. They exchange letters regularly, but Mitch has not been to visit in a few years. Ray spends his time learning new languages, for which he has a skill, and dreaming of escape. Mitch wants to see his brother, for whom he cares deeply, but he also wants some information. Ray was friends with a private investigator and Mitch wants his contact information. Mitch hires Ray's friend, Eddie Lomax, to investigate the cause of death for each of the lawyers who previously worked for the Bendini firm. Unfortunately,



driving to see his brother in the car provided by the firm means that his trip is monitored and his brother's location is no longer a secret. DeVasher researches Ray's past and learns that he had a dishonorable discharge from the army as a result of a drunken brawl that ended in second-degree murder.

Chapters 9-12 Analysis

Mitch is overwhelmed by the firm's confidence in him. After passing his law exam, Mitch is awarded a plaque of the company's letterhead, a generous bonus, and a pay raise. Mitch thinks he is moving up in the world. His emotions move up and down and can be interpreted as raw. He is vulnerable to Tarrance's warnings against the firm. When Mitch discusses Tarrance's visit with Lamar, Lamar immediately notifies his superiors. The managing partners lash out at the FBI and downplay its significance. The reader understands that, like any insecure person or organization, the Bendini firm attempts to knock down the FBI to make themselves appear stronger. They are also trying to secure Mitch's loyalty. The firm's need for secrecy is underscored yet again. The more that the firm demands secrecy the more Mitch becomes uneasy. Mitch hires his brother Ray's friend, Eddie Lomax. Lomax is a private investigator and agrees to help Mitch research the firm and its deceased employees.



Chapters 13-16

Chapters 13-16 Summary

Avery is impressed with Mitch's work ethic. Mitch continues to work eighty-five to ninety hours per week. Avery is thankful for Mitch's output, but is concerned that he might burn-out. Mitch is perturbed by Avery's hypocrisy- it is Avery's client base that has forced Mitch to work so hard. Furthermore, Avery questions Mitch's attention to his marriage, which should not concern Avery. Mitch reassures him that everything is fine and suggests they talk business instead. Avery has planned a trip to the Grand Cayman. He needs to meet with bankers for the Capps file and invites Mitch along. The Cayman Islands houses many banks from around the world. It is a banking haven because of its secrecy and caution, and also because the islands are tax free.

Avery can't wait to shed his business attire. Their first night on the island Avery drinks too much alcohol. He goes to bed with an islander whose friend made a pass at Mitch. Mitch refuses and leaves the bar to go for a walk on the beach. While on the beach, he is hit on by a second woman. He is conflicted between desire for the woman and love for Abby. Mitch battles internally, but relents and has sex with the stranger on a deserted beach.

The next day both men return to business. Avery brings Mitch to the Royal Bank of Montreal and explains international banking procedures to him. Later they separate for a lunch break. Mitch notices a familiar looking man but doesn't know where he knows him from. Mitch can't shake the eerie feeling that he is being watched. He tries to conceal his identity with sunglasses and hires a cab to take him to Abanks Dive Lodge. The lodge is the site of Hodge and Kozinski's deaths, and Mitch is curious. He speaks with Barry Abanks, whose son was also killed in the scuba diving incident. Mr. Abanks had reservations about the circumstances and was not convinced that it was an accident, although that was how the authorities classified it.

Upon returning to the United States, Mitch's first task is to visit Abby. He arrives unexpected at the school where she works and asks her for a dinner date that evening. He has been worried that she would somehow know about his infidelity on the beach, but she is not suspicious. She complains to Kay Quin about Mitch's long work hours and fights with Mitch about it in the privacy of their home, but more than anything else, she just wants a strong, intimate relationship with her husband.

Mitch thinks he had gotten away with his fling on the beach, but doesn't know that he had been photographed with the woman. The law firm had hired both the woman and a photographer, and DeVasher is keeping the photos in a file on the fifth floor. The investigation is reciprocal- Mitch meets with Eddie to find out what he learned about the firm and its deceased lawyers. Lomax discovers that each died under suspicious circumstances. Mitch is becoming leery of the Bendini law firm. Eddie acknowledges the danger, offers his assistance, and cautions Mitch to be careful. Mitch decides to confide



in Abby. At dinner that night, he tells her about his concerns and about the deaths of the lawyers. He explains that he suspected the firm of following him and instructs her to be careful as well.

Chapters 13-16 Analysis

Avery is revealed as a hypocrite in chapters thirteen through sixteen. He offers unsolicited marriage advice to Mitch when he is in the middle of his own painful separation and divorce. Working for the Bendini firm has many perks. Mitch's first trip out of the country is for Bendini business. While there, Mitch discovers that Avery is a playboy. Mitch is not entirely surprised because he recalls Avery's lunchtime drinks on his first day. Mitch tries valiantly to be faithful to Abby and refuses the first girl who approaches him. He succumbs to his own weakness, however, and is intimate with the second one. Unlike Avery, he feels remorse for his actions. Avery sums it up in his "What we do away from Memphis stays away.." quote on page 137.



Chapters 17-20

Chapters 17-20 Summary

Mitch's concerns about the firm's actions are unsettling to Abby. She is also unhappy about Mitch's long hours at the office. She decides to head to her parents' home for Christmas. Shortly after her departure, Mitch feels lonely and heads south in the general direction of his family. His mother had remarried to a man he had never met. She lives in a trailer park and works as a waitress at a waffle restaurant. Mitch finds her but doesn't know what to say to her, so he leaves without ever announcing his presence. While Mitch is away, Eddie Lomax meets with a man who calls himself Al Kilbury. Al claims that he needs Lomax's help to investigate his wife whom he suspected was having an affair. The scheme is a set-up, and when Eddie arrives to take the requested photographs, he is murdered.

When the employees of the Bendini firm return from their holiday vacations, business resumes at its usual fast pace. The partners enjoy surveying the past years' fiscal records and splitting the profits. They also invest in a new system of photocopiers. Each requires the insertion of an account code prior to making a copy. The system keeps track of copies via high tech computerized software and routes the charges to accounts accordingly. This is frustrating, and a waste of Mitch's time, but he has more pressing matters to be concerned about. He has heard about Eddie's death and has been in contact with Tammy Hemphill, who was employed as Eddie's secretary. She had requested a meeting with him. According to Tammy, she and Eddie shared a special relationship. Eddie had talked with her about Mitch's case, and she worries that the people who were following Mitch might also be the people who had killed Eddie. She fears for her own safety and asks Mitch for his advice. Mitch and Tammy agree to communicate often. Due to the surveillance placed on Mitch, she would need to contact him under the alias "Doris".

As promised when he was hired, the law firm pays for Mitch's continuing education. They send him to Washington DC for a four day seminar on Congress's latest tax revisions. Avery leaves for the Cayman Islands on another business trip. Because Mitch is not with him, Mitch is able to bring along twenty-five cases of cash, totaling six and a half million dollars. They transport the money aboard the corporate jet, and then stow it in a truck with the words "Cayman Produce" written on the side. Once it enters the international banking system it will be considered legitimate (as opposed to fraudulent).

Back in the United States, Mitch is being followed by two different organizations. The firm's surveillance team continues to monitor him, but the FBI is more aggressive in their method. Tarrance has been sent, again, to meet with Mitch. He is following instructions from the FBI director, F. Denton Voyles. They approach Mitch and offer him a package. Tarrance explains that the Bendini law firm is tied to the Morolto crime family. He explains their need for a legitimate front to hide their illegal activities, as well as their willingness to kill to keep their secret. The FBI needs Mitch's help. If he promises to



obtain incriminating documents that would result in indictments against the partners, they would assure him their indefinite protection.

When Mitch returns home from the tax seminar, he and Abby have much to talk about. He tells her all about Tarrance and the deal he had been offered. Whether he chooses to cooperate with the FBI or remain with the deadly organization, he would need her support. When Mitch next speaks with Tarrance, they are observed by the firm's men. Mitch makes a show of yelling at Tarrance and forcefully telling him to leave. He reports the meeting to the firm's partners, but they are suspicious of his motives. Mitch insists that he did not solicit nor encourage FBI contact, but their surveillance men don't seem to agree. As further enticement, DeVasher shows Mitch the pictures of him and the island woman. He threatens to send them to Abby and reminds Mitch that he needs to be loyal to the firm.

Chapters 17-20 Analysis

Chapters seventeen through twenty determine the direction of Mitch's journey. He clearly is uncomfortable with the firm's business practices. While he desires a certain way of life, Mitch is torn between materialism and his own ethics. Mitch's natural inclination would have been to cooperate with the FBI. However, in this section of the book, he learned to distrust the FBI. Their carelessness could have aroused suspicion that would result in his untimely death. From this point forward, Mitch will still cooperate with the FBI, but Mitch will be the one to make decisions and place orders. In the office, DeVasher shares with Mitch the pictures they captured of him and the island woman. The pictures are an intimidation tactic meant to keep him quiet.



Chapters 21-24

Chapters 21-24 Summary

Mitch continues to feel trapped. He knows that he is followed at all times and by multiple organizations, but he doesn't know where they are lurking. He fears retaliation from the mafia, especially if they see him communicating with the FBI, so he hides in his office for eighteen hours a day. Abby also feels trapped. Since Mitch shared with her the news that their household conversations were being monitored, her idyllic dream home had become a prison of sorts. They had taken to midnight strolls around the block where they could speak freely with one another. In an effort to determine the extent to which he was being monitored, Mitch surveys the Bendini building. In all of the offices, hallways and libraries he cannot locate any video equipment. As far as he can ascertain, the partners are listening to, but not videotaping, his movements. The surveillance team does manage to give him a good scare by sending Abby an empty manila envelope with no return address. Mitch immediately fears that it contained the pictures of him on the island and is reminded that he is dealing with dangerous people.

Nathan Locke and DeVasher meet to discuss Mitch. Neither man likes the other, but they must plan the firm's actions together because they both report directly to Lazarov, the head of the Morolto family. They have been given orders to create a preliminary plan to eliminate Mitch, although it makes them both uneasy. They realize that the firm has had more than its fair share of deaths and will generate publicity if it happens again. To mitigate risk, Lazarov demands a freeze on hiring and suggests laying off the associates who have not yet learned about the firm's illegal activity. He even suggests replacing Abby's contraceptive pill pack with placebos, hoping that if she becomes pregnant Mitch will want to stay with the firm. Although theirs is just a hunch, they are right to suspect that Mitch was taking risks. He had hired Tammy to be his accomplice. She rents two small rooms in the Cotton Exchange Building near Mitch's office. It comes furnished and she leases a state of the art copying machine.

That weekend Mitch heads south to see Ray. He also has a secret meeting with Tarrance, and his car is inspected for surveillance equipment. Mitch asks Tarrance to promise to never again approach him in public. The risks are just too great. Mitch discusses the terms for which he would agree to work with the FBI. Tarrance wants evidence and Mitch's cooperation in the subsequent trials. In return, Mitch wants two million dollars, entrance into the witness protection program, and Ray's release from jail.

Through a complicated mix of signals, Mitch sets off to the Cotton Exchange Building where he and Tammy swap a black briefcase full of incriminating files for an identical briefcase on the elevator. They are able to do this because Mitch had a meeting with a legitimate client, Frank Mullholland, that morning. Frank's offices are also in the Cotton Exchange Building, and Tammy has the duration of their meeting to photocopy the documents. They plan to continue in this manner each time Mitch has an appointment with Mullholland. Mitch also brings files home, which Abby transports to work and



Tammy retrieves. The goal is to copy as many files as possible while circumventing the office to prevent suspicion.

Chapters 21-24 Analysis

The manila envelope sent to Abby is an intimidation tactic undertaken by DeVasher. Of all of the things and people Mitch had to fear, losing Abby is one of his biggest fears. The firm must have known this, and targeting Abby fulfilled their needs. The Bendini firm paid both the girl and the photographer for the specified purpose of blackmailing Mitch when necessary. The reader understands that DeVasher likely has similar material with regard to the other employees. As Tarrance once explained to Mitch, employees agree to work for the Bendini firm and complete legitimate work for quite some time. By the time they are asked to commit illegal acts, they are unable to leave for fear of retaliation. These chapters reveal the elaborateness of the Morolto/Bendini plan and the ruthlessness with which they protect themselves.



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary

Mitch and Abby spent Abby's spring break at the firm's condo on Grand Cayman Island. They had planned the vacation before they knew about the surveillance, and it is difficult to view the trip as a relaxing retreat. Mitch makes a one day detour to Cayman Brac to meet with Tarrance. He also arranges a second meeting with Barry Abanks. Under the pretense of snorkeling, Mitch and Abby spend the day with Barry. Mitch and Abby have agreed to help the FBI, and Mitch is securing the help of Abanks to disappear when the time is right. The whole time they are followed by a Nordic looking man and a blond woman. The two can't prove it, but they suspect Mitch of continuing to cooperate with the FBI. The Morolto family has an FBI informant who they pay to check on the FBI's perception of Mitch. The FBI agent has been lured by the promise of money before, but is much more nervous this time. His name is Tarry Ross, but the mafia knows him as Alfred.

Abby arrives unexpectedly at Mitch's office. She causes a commotion by insisting that she speak with him immediately. When he greets Abby, she informs him that her mother has a lung tumor and would require surgery. Abby plans to leave immediately and stay away for an indefinite amount of time. She explains that her mother would need help rehabilitating and Mitch is rarely home to spend time with her anyway. The trip is just a ruse. Abby drives south and boards a plane for Grand Cayman Island. Tammy had arrived earlier and is busy seducing Avery, who is on the island for business. After a long night of drinking alcohol that Tammy had laced with drugs, Avery passes out back at the condo. The women find a locksmith and have Avery's keyring duplicated. Together, Abby and Tammy spend the entire evening shuffling secret documents between the condo and a motel room where they copy the files. They store the copies in a room they rent at a company called Cayman Storage and return the original files to the condo. Upon their return to the States, Abby goes to her parent's home as planned and Tammy continues to fly back and forth, importing an organized set of documents for Mitch.

Chapters 25-28 Analysis

In chapters twenty-five through twenty-eight, the reader begins to understand that Mitch has a plan of his own. He appears at work every day and puts in long hours to make himself appear productive, but he is secretly amassing evidence against the firm. He is thinking a step ahead of both the firm's members and the FBI. Mitch has already decided where he and Abby will run away to when the time is right. One can deduce from his enlistment of Barry Abanks that he and Abby are not going to live in Albuquerque under the witness protection program, although this is contrary to what he told Tarrance. An integral part of Mitch's plan involves Tammy Hemphill. Without Tammy's help, Mitch would not have been successful. Because he was monitored so

closely, he needed another person who could move with relative ease. Since losing Eddie, Tammy was happy to help and thankful for the income.



Chapters 29-32

Chapters 29-32 Summary

In the weeks heading up to April 15th, the firm's employees work even harder than usual. Since Abby is at her parents, Mitch stays at the office nearly around the clock. At three o'clock one morning, he lets himself into Avery's office. He had noticed two file cabinets that were never used in his presence. The files inside were for companies whose names were also found in the files Tammy uncovered. Mitch figures that the companies operate with dirty money, and he needs the paper trail as evidence. To make photocopies, he uses legitimate access numbers for files that are assigned to him. When he runs out of his own access numbers, he borrows some from his associates' files. Using the access codes that are associated with the files he is copying is out of the question because he is not supposed to have them. Tammy is also working late that night. Under the alias "Doris", she had taken a job with Dustbusters, the company that cleans the Bendini offices after hours. This provides her with access to the places Mitch can't get into. Of particular interest to the FBI are the basement and fifth floors.

Mitch is quietly planning his escape. He had enlisted the helps of Abanks, and Tammy is working tirelessly. He needs her help because his actions are beginning to arouse suspicion. DeVasher had figured out that he had made many copies, late at night, and assumed that the codes he used were not accurate. The first installment of documents had been delivered to the FBI, and the first million dollars had been deposited in an off shore account. Mitch is collecting the final documents. He goes to see his brother, Ray, and lets him know that he would be leaving prison, one way or another, on May 1st. Neither knew the details, but Ray agrees to be ready. Mitch is getting very tired of the endless surveillance. After visiting with Ray, Mitch drives to a suburban mall and leaves his car. Mitch enters the mall, calls a cab, and secretly meets Abby. Their reunion is a happy one. While Abby and Mitch are enjoying a few hours of freedom, Mitch's BMW is stolen. Mitch is not upset about its loss. The firm is forced to replace it in an efficient manner. He rents a car for a short time, and is pleased because it lacked recording devices. Mitch purposely requests the color maroon for his replacement car. He had checked the dealer previously, knew the color was out of stock, and is trying to maximize his time without surveillance.

Chapters 29-32 Analysis

At this point in the book, Mitch has learned much more information than he was given permission for. He has a better idea of the extent of the crimes committed by the Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm. Knowing this information makes leaving the firm imperative. Ideally, Mitch wants to leave the firm and still be married happily to Abby. To protect Abby, Mitch prepares a "smoke and mirrors" routine. He sends Abby away so that she won't have to feel awkward in their home and so that she would be safe if the firm's guards decide to harm Mitch. They make her departure resemble a falling out.



The surveillance crew still listens in on their conversations, and Mitch and Abby kept them short and impersonal. Due to their clipped discussions, rumors circulated that they are having marital problems. Their relationship is stronger than the Bandini lawyers speculate. They speak and meet in secret and their marriage is still full of passion. The only one who is catching onto Mitch's inconsistencies was DeVasher. He can't prove it, but he thinks that Mitch is playing games with him. He even entertains the idea that Abby's mother may not have been sick at all, but the managing partners disagree with him. They don't know how accurate DeVasher's intuitions are.



Chapters 33-36

Chapters 33-36 Summary

The firm's need for Mitch's demise is rapidly increasing. Preliminary plans are becoming definitive plans. They try to isolate Mitch by sending him to Grand Cayman Island again. They claim that Avery had suffered from a heart attack and Mitch is the only lawyer with enough familiarity with the Capps file to complete the necessary transactions. Mitch would like to refuse but is afraid to say no. He hopes that his escape plan will be ready before the mafia's plan to eliminate him. Tammy contacts one of Lomax's old friends. He is paid to create forged identities for Mitch, Abby, and Ray. Ray's escape is arranged by the warden. The FBI forces his release. Early parole isn't an option due to his sentencing, so a break-out is the only alternative. The barbed wire is cut and the guards look the other way while Ray climbs over the wall.

Two weeks after their previous meeting, Tarry Ross meets with the mafia again. He wants the money they offer, but is having second thoughts about working with criminals. He gives the Morolto's the information they requested, takes his payment, and swears that he will never help them again. He runs from the room and is captured by his peers. FBI Director Voyles calls him a traitor and demands to know what information he has supplied. The information quickly makes its way back to DeVasher who then plans Mitch's death. He hopes to crash the plane that Mitch is taking to the island. Meanwhile, the FBI knows that Ross has destroyed Mitch's chances at remaining safe. Tarrance and Mitch have devised a code name, Judge Hugo. If Tarrance ever calls by that name, Mitch is supposed to run for cover. When Judge Hugo calls, Mitch leaves the office immediately, but does not return to FBI custody as he was instructed to do. He tries to hide on the streets of Memphis, but is followed by men who don't hesitate to shot their guns. When he finds a quiet moment, he calls Tammy with a list of instructions. He then goes to the airport, purchases four tickets under his real name and one in cash under the name Sam Fortune. Mitch is headed for Cincinnati, Tammy is headed for Memphis, and Abby and Ray are headed for Perdido Beach. In Cincinnati, Mitch finds the files Tammy had prepared and places them in a rented a U-Haul truck. Ray arrives safely in Perdido Beach, and is soon joined by Abby. Abby has been followed by the blond female investigator. Ray catches her, binds her feet and hands, and stuffs her mouth with socks. Then he and Abby leave again, this time destined for Panama City Beach. Before joining Abby and Ray, Mitch stops at a bank and transfers the money the FBI had paid him. He gives some to his mother, some to Abby's parents, and moves the rest in a way that he can easily access it later. He also transfers ten million dollars of the Morolto's money into his own account.

Chapters 33-36 Analysis

Mitch knows that he needs to end his evidence gathering days. As the firm prepares to send him away on business, he has reservations. First, he knows that Avery's heart



attack was staged. When Mitch visits him in the hospital, he doesn't even have the rudimentary intravenous line that all hospital patients seem to require. This makes Mitch doubt the firm's reasons for sending him away on business. The idea of boarding an airplane scares him. When Kozinski and Hodge boarded a plane for the Cayman Islands, they returned in body bags. Mitch is smarter than the rest of the players, and he feels confident that he could get what the FBI needs, but he has to stay safe in the process. The FBI leak is a huge blow to his cover. His safety, which was previously precarious, is now non-existent. Mitch is forced to run away in the middle of the day. Fortunately, he had planned for this possibility. He hopes that his family is taking him seriously and following his directions. All of their lives depend on it.



Chapters 37-41

Chapters 37-41 Summary

Panama City Beach becomes much more crowded when the Morolto and FBI surveillance teams converge on site. It seems as though Mitch, Ray, and Abby are cornered. They hop from one hotel to the next to avoid being caught. Luck seems to turn their way at the Sea Gull's Rest Motel. The clerk there is an ex-con, and has no patience for authorities. Ray is being hunted for his so-called prison break and assault on the woman following Abby. Mitch had taken the FBI's payment but as of yet has only given half of the files in return. When police come searching for them at the Sea Gull's Rest, the clerk takes pity. He claims not to have seen them, but later goes to Mitch's room and introduces himself as Andy Patrick. Andy is willing to help them evade the police. For five thousand dollars a day, he agrees to keep the maids away, deny their presence, and occasionally bring them food. For an additional twenty thousand, he hand delivers the forged papers forwarded from Tammy.

Morolto's men feel confined by the FBI's presence. They call in a fake tip to the police that sends authorities searching in the wrong direction. The disappearance of police means increased danger for Mitch and his family. He prefers arrest to death, but would be even happier to get away safely. Andy offers to drive away with them in his trunk, but Mitch declines. To satisfy the FBI, Mitch instructs Tammy to contact Tarrance. Mitch and Abby complete the deposition where Mitch walks the FBI through each document and traces the business transactions. Mitch figures that the videotape satisfies his agreement to testify against the partners at trial. He doesn't plan on being available for their trials. After dark, Mitch, Ray, and Abby slowly make their way to the pier. They do not go undetected. The Nordic man is following, again, and when he approaches Abby, Mitch tackles him. Ray kills him silently and they drop his body into the water. The three swing underneath the pier and balance on a stabilizing beam. Abby is pulsing a green flashlight and waiting for a response. Barry Abanks comes for them in a small boat and transports them to safety. Once they have left the area, Tammy telephones Tarrance and gives him the room number and address where Mitch had been staying. The videotaped deposition and photocopied documents are waiting for him at the Sea Gull's Rest Motel. The McDeere's escape to the Cayman Islands, where they buy a boat and hope to live, fictitiously and safe, for the rest of their lives.

Chapters 37-41 Analysis

Mitch, Abby, and Ray are at the center of an impending crossfire. Shortly after they arrive at Panama City Beach, the mafia and the FBI follow. They are in close pursuit and Mitch is just trying to keep ahead of them. The FBI would have liked to protect Mitch, but at this point both organizations want something from him. The FBI had promised his protection, but only in exchange for files that he has not yet furnished. Even if they were inclined to help, Mitch has found the FBI to be careless, and he is not



willing to entrust them with his life. The mafia is not at all interested in his safety. Instead, they prefer him dead but want to recoup any evidence he might have in his possession. Mitch is a good man at heart, which is why he still wants to help the FBI. He had been misled by the promise of riches, but recognizes how wrong he had been. To make amends, Mitch is sure to provide a detailed description of all of the documents. In addition to their inventory, he takes the time to explain how they fit together so that the FBI can easily punish the perpetrators. He still fears the mafia, however, and is not interested in watching the fall-out. He moves money in a series of questionable transactions, just like he had learned while employed by the Bendini firm. Mitch is not bothered by this. He is stealing from thieves, not innocent people. It is largely off of this money, not the FBI payment, that he, Abby, and Ray will live. They hope to literally sail off into the sunset and elude the mafia for as long as possible.



Characters

Mitch McDeere

Mitchell "Mitch" McDeere is the main character in John Grisham's novel, *The Firm*. Mitch comes from a broken family. His father is deceased and he and his mother are estranged. His father left an insurance policy behind when he died, but Mitch's mother spent it and eventually remarried. Ever since losing her son, she has been emotionally unstable and was even institutionalized for a time. Her current husband is abusive and they live in squalid conditions in a trailer park. Mitch has never met his stepfather and is not interested in doing so. Ray was one of three brothers. One of his brothers, Rusty, died serving the United States Military, and his other brother, Ray, was incarcerated in prison. Ray joked that Mitch was the only brother to make anything positive of himself.

Mitch is twenty-five years old and a graduate of Western Kentucky University. He married his sweetheart, Abby, just out of college, and they moved to Boston where Mitch completed the Harvard Law School program. Mitch earned excellent grades there and was recruited by multiple law firms. He has three pending job offers and was contacted by a fourth firm called Bendini, Lambert and Locke. The Bendini, Lambert and Locke firm is different from any of the others he had interviewed with. It is similar to a fraternity of sorts. They are an exclusive group and offer the best benefits package. Mitch's life of hardship made him hungry for a lifestyle he had yet to be able to achieve. The firm offers everything that he and Abby had ever dreamed of.

The drawback is that Mitch has to pledge complete allegiance to the firm. He is expected to remain employed there for life, even though he learns it is practicing law illegally. This conflict is a difficult one for Mitch. He is hungry for success, but not so hungry that he can ignore his morality. For this reason, Mitch agrees to help the FBI infiltrate the Bendini law firm. To produce the evidence that the FBI required, Mitch has to risk his own life. The Morolto's associates surely would kill him if they find out. Mitch proves to be a very clever man. His resourcefulness surprises all of the other characters. Although the FBI pledged to protect Mitch, he feels more comfortable protecting himself. He, Abby, and Ray successfully elude the FBI and the mafia and escape into the Caribbean Islands.

Avery Tolar

Avery Tolar is the man to whom Mitch reports at Bendini, Lambert and Locke. The firm requires that each new recruit spend the first two years paired with a partner who acts as a mentor. This relationship is akin to an apprenticeship. Avery is an excellent lawyer and Mitch quickly learns much about taxation law while working with Avery. There are other aspects of Avery that are not so stellar. Avery and Mitch share a similar background. They both come from broken families with little money. Avery went to junior college, then a four year college via an academic scholarship, before attending Stanford



University's law program. He had been with Bendini, Lambert and Locke for sixteen years at the time that Mitch is recruited.

Avery has a wife and two children but his family life is unstable. He is consumed with money—he is already a millionaire, and plans for more. On Mitch's first day in the office, Avery takes him out to lunch. After informing Mitch that the firm has a strict no drinking policy, Avery promptly orders a martini for himself. Avery comments that the firm has too many rules. On their first business trip together, Mitch again observes Avery breaking the firm's rules. Avery is clearly intoxicated and takes a woman back to the corporate condo. Avery's infidelity is nothing new and his marriage is suffering. He and his wife are separated and their children live with her.

Mitch is dismayed by Avery's hypocrisy. Avery offers marital advice when he is in no position to give sound advice. He lectures about the firm's rules but doesn't follow them. Avery fakes his own heart attack, at the firm's instruction, to move Mitch away from sensitive files. Mitch views Avery as being self centered and materialistic.

Abby McDeere

Abby McDeere is Mitch McDeere's wife. Abby was raised in a small town in Kentucky by parents who remain happily married. Abby envisions her and Mitch settling into small town life with a home and children someday. She is happy to wait, though. After they both graduated from Western Kentucky, she accompanied Mitch to Boston, where he enrolled in Harvard's law school. Abby supported Mitch and worked as a teacher in a grammar school near Boston College. Their apartment was small and their possessions few but their marriage was a healthy one. When Mitch is offered a job at Bendini, Lambert and Locke, Abby is delighted. The firm is located in Memphis, which is close to her parents, who still live in Kentucky. The other job offers came from firms in Chicago and New York. Furthermore, the benefits package offered by Bendini, Lambert and Locke is by far the best.

Abby and Mitch move to Memphis amid excitement, but it doesn't take Abby long to become disillusioned. She quickly forms a distaste for the firm's meddling. The firm likes its lawyers to be productive and feels that a lawyer's happiness will lead to natural productivity. This is why they provide such extensive benefit packages. While this explanation makes sense, Abby still feels unease about the firm's interest in their marriage. Abby wants to have children with Mitch, but she enjoys her career, too. Much to the dismay of Mitch's peers, Abby accepts a position teaching at St. Andrew's private school. She remains there until returning home under the pretense of helping her mother. Mitch shares his concerns with Abby. Although the firm's surveillance crew overhears them fighting about Mitch's long hours, they do not know that Mitch and Abby are committed to their marriage and that Mitch is concocting a wild plan to get them out of the country safely. Abby becomes Mitch's accomplice and, along with their friend Tammy, she helps Mitch to secure and photocopy the files that he later delivered to the FBI. Abby escapes with Mitch to the Caribbean where they hope to live out their lives under fictitious names.



Wayne Tarrance

Wayne Tarrance is an FBI agent. He was transferred into the Memphis area from New York approximately two years before Mitch's employment at the Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm. Prior to working with Mitch, he had earned the trust of Kozinski and Hodge, who were in the process of providing Tarrance with information about the firm when they were mysteriously killed. Tarrance is Mitch's main contact from the FBI, but he is assisted by agents Acklin, Jenkins, and Harbinson. Little is said about Tarrance's physical description. The reader understands that Mitch often becomes frustrated with Tarrance and doesn't entirely trust him. Tarrance seems to be a good guy, and a loyal United States servant, but he sometimes approaches Mitch with insufficient protection. Each time he draws near to Mitch, he puts Mitch's life in danger. When Mitch is on the run he refers to Tarrance as an idiot, and insists that Tarrance is "cracking up". Their relationship is further impaired by the FBI's internal leak.

DeVasher

DeVasher is the head of security at Bendini, Lambert and Locke. He communicates with and receives orders from Lazarov Morolto in Chicago. DeVasher carries out those orders, which sometimes include executions. DeVasher also makes sure that the conversations and activities of Bendini employees are followed. He and his team insert microphone "bugs" into the lawyers' homes, cars, and offices. He is aided by Dutch Hendrix, a retired police officer, who mans the garage entrance and reports the staff's arrival and departure times back to DeVasher. DeVasher has learned the art of intimidation. Not only does he monitor telephone conversations, but he also records them. He holds on to suspicious material and even pays an island woman to seduce Mitch. Furthermore, he pays a photographer to take pictures of the woman seducing Mitch. Similar photos were used to bribe Mitch's colleagues into submission and DeVasher took pride in them. DeVasher could be found on the fifth floor of the Bendini Building where the surveillance center is located.

Lamar and Kay Quin

Lamar Quin is a senior lawyer at Bendini, Lambert and Locke. He is not yet a partner, but at thirty-two years old he is already faring quite well. Lamar is married to Kay Quin and they have two children, Hunter and Holly. Kay was raised in a small town and married Lamar after graduating from college. She worked while he was in law school but quit after Lamar joined the law firm. Lamar was a graduate of Vanderbilt's law school. Prior to that, he had attended Kansas State for his undergraduate program. They live in a nice neighborhood and appear to have the life Mitch and Abby long for. Lamar and Kay are an athletic and social couple and they enjoy Mitch and Abby's company. Kay doesn't seem to mind the firm's involvement in their lives and speaks of a happy life in Memphis. Lamar, on the other hand, voices his cynicism about law and working for the firm. He is especially bitter after the deaths of his close friends, Kozinski and Hodge.



Tammy Hemphill

Tammy Hemphill worked as Eddie Lomax's secretary until he died unexpectedly. Eddie had shared with her some of the details about Mitch's case. Tammy correctly assumes that Eddie's death was related to the work he was doing for Mitch. Fearful for her own life, she contacts Mitch. They agree to stay in touch, and over time Mitch confided in her more. Tammy eventually becomes a big part of his undercover operation. She helps him move and photocopy all of the files he later hands over to the FBI. She is also the woman who seduces and drugs Avery on Grand Cayman Island so that his files and keys can be retrieved.

Barry Abanks

Barry Abanks is the owner of Abanks Dive Lodge on Grand Cayman Island. His son was killed in the so-called accident that claimed the lives of Kozinski and Hodge. Barry does not believe that their deaths were accidental. Consequently, he is eager to assist Mitch with his escape plan. Barry purchases a boat on behalf of the McDeeres and sails it into American waters where he retrieves the McDeere family and brings them to safety.

Ray McDeere

Ray McDeere is Mitch's remaining brother (their other brother, Rusty, had died serving in the military). Ray and Mitch share a close, although long-distance, relationship. Ray is incarcerated at Brushy Mountain Prison. He had been found guilty of second-degree murder in a bar fight that turned deadly. Ray had been in the military but received a dishonorable discharge following the brawl. When Mitch agrees to help the FBI, he includes Ray's release from prison as one of the requirements for his cooperation. To obtain Mitch's help, the FBI agreed, but Ray still has seven years remaining before he is eligible for parole. With so long to go, he doesn't qualify for early release. Instead, the warden and guards look the other way while he escapes one evening. Ray joins Mitch and Abby on their journey into the Caribbean and assumes an alias.

Eddie Lomax

Eddie Lomax was a friend of Ray's. Because he was Ray's brother, Eddie was willing to help Mitch in any way possible. He worked independently as a private investigator. Mitch hires him to investigate the deceased employees of the firm and the way in which each died. Unfortunately, their meetings does not go unnoticed and Eddie is murdered before he can be of help to Mitch.



Oliver Lambert

Oliver Lambert is a senior partner with the Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm. He is sixty-one and spends the majority of his time managing the forty-one lawyers employed at the firm. He is also in charge of recruiting.

Royce McKnight

Royce McKnight is the managing partner at Bendini, Lambert and Locke. He explains Mitch's benefits package to him and repeatedly stresses the firm's commitment to confidentiality and secrecy.

Nathan Locke

Unlike all of the other lawyers at Bendini, Lambert and Locke, Nathan was not recruited. As a child he ran errands for the Morolto family, so the Moroltos and the Bendini firm are his family. He was raised in a harsh environment and it shows in his mannerisms. His most remarkable feature are his cold, unforgettable eyes.

Lazarov

Lazarov is the man to whom DeVasher reports. He has no reservations about instructing DeVasher to kill employees if he thinks it was in the best interest of the firm. When he becomes too uncomfortable with Mitch, he not only orders him killed, but also orders all associates to be laid off and no new lawyers to be hired in an effort to contain the firm's secrets.

Mr. Voyles

Mr. Voyles is the FBI director. Tarrance's orders originate from Director Voyles. Tarrance is always under pressure from his boss, who is anxious about the success of Mitch's assignment.

Tarry Ross

Tarry Ross is the FBI employee who, for two hundred thousand dollars, sells confidential information about Mitch's relationship with the FBI.

Nina Huff

Mitch's secretary at Bendini, Lambert and Locke. Like all of her peers, she is not beautiful but is skilled at her job.

Kozinski and Hodge

Kozinski and Hodge were lawyers with the Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm. They were deceased for the entirety of the novel, but their deaths are important. The two lawyers had been cooperating with the FBI when they were mysteriously killed in a boating accident in the Caribbean.



Objects/Places

Bendini Building

The Bendini Building is located on Front Street in Memphis, Tennessee. It was purchased and renovated by Mr. Bendini himself. Mr. Bendini took great care to continually remodel it to suit the growing needs of his law firm. At the time of the story it is home to Bendini, Lambert, and Locke Law offices. Its basement is dedicated to huge computer terminals, the fifth floor is for the surveillance and security crew, and the floors in between house the offices of the forty-one lawyers, paralegals, and secretaries.

Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis, Tennessee is where the majority of the story takes place. It is where the Bendini Building is located.

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago, Illinois is the location from which the Morolto family operates. They determine DeVasher's course of action and so there is a trickle-down effect from Chicago to Memphis.

Cayman Islands

The Bendini firm owns two condos on Grand Cayman Island, which its employees use for both business and leisure. The islands are a good location for business transactions because they have a tax free policy and are known for their secrecy, much like the renowned banks of Switzerland. Grand Cayman Island was also where Kozinski and Hodge mysteriously die.

Condo Unit A

Condo Unit A is the location Bendini employees used when visiting the islands for business. It includes a room that stores multiple file cabinets, each filled with confidential business documents.

Condo Unit B

Condo Unit B is the condo that Bendini employees use when visiting the Cayman Islands for vacation. It lacks the file storage area.



Rumheads

Rumheads is the name of a tourist bar on Grand Cayman Island. Locals and tourists alike drink Red Stripe beer at this location. They play dominoes by day and dance at night. It is at Rumheads that Mitch is first tempted by a woman other than Abby. She is hired professionally by DeVasher to seduce Mitch.

Abanks Dive Lodge

The Abanks Dive Lodge is owned by Barry Abanks. His son was the dive master that had been working the day that Kozinski and Hodge's boat malfunctioned. All three died. Barry Abanks has suspicions about the so-called accident and is happy to help Mitch and Abby escape.

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston, Massachusetts is where the main character, Mitch, and his wife Abby live at the beginning of the novel. Mitch is just finishing his law degree from Harvard and they share a student apartment. From Boston they move to Memphis, Tennessee.

Kentucky

Kentucky is where Abby's parents live. She returns home to be with them for two reasons. The main reason she does so is that she needs to distance herself a little from Mitch's workaholic tendencies, but more importantly, she returns home to protect herself from the Bendini law firm's manipulations and intrusions.

Dan Russell Pier

The Dan Russell Pier is the most westward pier on Panama City Beach, where Mitch, Abby, and Ray find themselves hiding from both the Morolto family and the FBI. From there they are rescued by Barry Abanks and they leave the country.

Bendini Perks

The perks of employment with the Bendini, Lambert and Locke firm include a BMW, low rate mortgage, country club memberships, a sign-on bonus, repayment of all outstanding student loans, a cash bonus for passing the bar exam, study aid for the bar exam and continuing education following it, and the use of a corporate jet and international accommodations. All of these "perks" are in addition to a great salary and guaranteed partnership in ten to fifteen years.



Surveillance Equipment

The Bendini partners monitor their employees through an extensive system of surveillance equipment. They placed "bugs" in their cars, homes, and offices, as well as literally follow the individuals' activities.

Black Briefcase

Mitch's black briefcase is used to transport files between his office and Tammy, who then photocopies them and returns the files to Mitch through an identical black briefcase. The black briefcase is different from his regular, more slender attaché case.

Sea Gull's Rest Motel

The Sea Gull's Rest Motel is the final stop for Mitch, Abby, and Ray before escaping from the United States. At the Sea Gull's Rest Motel, they videotape Mitch's deposition and later give the FBI directions of where it can be found. They are lucky to have found a sympathizing clerk, Andy Patrick, employed there.

St. Andrew's Episcopal School

St. Andrew's is the private school in Memphis where Abby teaches elementary education.



Social Sensitivity

As his first success and as a title with over eleven million copies in print, Grisham's *The Firm* merits special consideration. A good overview for Grisham's work appears in the comments by Stanley Fish of Duke University's English Department and Law School that appeared in Adrienne Drell's 1994 article on lawyer-authors for the *ABA Journal*. Referring to the popularity of legal thrillers, Fish states, "I think people are fascinated by the law and welcome sex and courtroom drama . . . or the opportunity to learn something about a technical corner of the law." Drell quotes Fish again later in the article: "By the end of these novels, the reader gets a sense of double satisfaction by finding an answer to the legal puzzle and also by participating in the solution of the protagonist's private puzzle." That is, the genre works by combining the portrayal of a special realm (the law) with a personal and involving crisis for the main character.

Although the characters never go to court, *The Firm* gives readers an insider's view of how law firms hire and treat their staff and associates, how nonlitigators fill their time, how work in tax law consists of looking for loopholes, how lawyers think. The Memphis law firm of Bendini, Lambert & Locke is not typical in its hiring nor in its practice, yet the novel still gives readers the idea of the day-to-day drudge work and expectations that young lawyers endure. Of course, because this firm exists to serve the legal interests of a Mafia crime family, the novel further offers explanations of how a criminal enterprise can work: how to smuggle ill-gotten cash to safe accounts in the Cayman Islands, how to appear legitimate, how to protect secrecy. To a large extent, all of Grisham's novels portray how-things-work, thereby offering readers an instructive glimpse to an enclosed, specialized world where few readers have ever been.

The novel's crisis concerns how Mitch McDeere, age twenty-five, in the top five of his Harvard Law School class and seduced into becoming an associate for Bendini, Lambert & Locke, will handle the knowledge of the firm's nefarious purposes. Once he learns that the firm has its goons follow him, bugs the rooms of his home, and has people killed, he sensibly realizes that he is not safe among them.

Yet turning to the federal government, which zealously pursues him as a potential witness against the firm, does not offer the security he wants. First, they are cheap in the monetary negotiations — Mitch wants a large amount from them. Second, the witness protection program offers, in Mitch's view, only a drab and suspicious future; Mitch is convinced that he and his wife will live always in fear. Third, the FBI proves unreliable when an insider sells Mitch's name to the Mafia, necessitating Mitch to make a dramatic escape.

Grisham appeals to the commonly held view that the federal government cannot manage to do much right; Mitch just does not trust that the FBI can deliver effectively on its promises.

Grisham does not suggest that the government is as corrupt as the firm, but rather that the government is less efficient than Mitch needs it to be.



Significantly, civic duty offers only a minor pull on Mitch's conscience.

Turning in the firm because doing so would be right is only a secondary issue. Mitch's priority is to preserve his and his wife's lives, to escape in a way in which they rely on no one but themselves for their safety. While Grisham does not push the point, the novel does address the conflicted reasonings of witnesses in criminal cases who feel great threat and cannot trust the authorities to rescue them.

Mitch gets into this crisis because he answered the siren call of money; the allure of lucre is the novel's great issue, an allure Mitch never really escapes. He goes to Memphis because he is offered \$80,000 as a base salary, a low-interest mortgage, a BMW, and guarantees of greater wealth if he works hard. Yet he tries to extort millions from the FBI, insisting on a down-payment of a full million which he can squirrel safely in a foreign bank.

He eventually loots the illegal accounts of the firm's clients to build a cache for his escape. The novel's chief issue in evaluating Mitch is what he has learned about the desire for money, beyond how to sate that desire. In a strongly negative review (July 1991) in the Village Voice Literary Supplement, Pagan Kennedy charges that the novel "simultaneously worships and demonizes money." What Kennedy dismisses as a flaw really may be the book's most challenging aspect: Grisham realistically renders wealth as a primary motivation and offers a character who despite a great deal of goodwill and self-awareness cannot escape the worship of the demon money.

Techniques

Grisham shifts narrative focus backand-forth between Mitch and the firm.

While not completely giving away the firm's background, Grisham lets the reader know more than Mitch knows.

Thus the reader does not so much figure out the mystery as Mitch does, but instead watches Mitch catch up. At the midway point, in a scene that uses as a striking backdrop the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, the FBI Director explains to Mitch (and to readers) the origins of the firm. Thereafter, Grisham continues to shuttle scenes between the hero and the vil lains, letting readers experience how the threat against Mitch mounts within the firm. The chief result of this dual tracking of scenes is the build-up of suspense: How will Mitch learn what the firm really is? Then, how will Mitch escape what the firm plans for him? The technique establishes the difference between a mystery and a thriller. In the former, the hero would grow suspicious, gradually unravel the secrets of the firm, and then expose them at the novel's climax. In contrast, in the thriller, what we have here, the hero may also detect the answer to a mystery, but mostly he must evade grave danger.

Grisham retains the wiseacre narrative style evident in the earlier novel *A Time to Kill*. He describes the people of Grand Cayman as "twenty percent white, twenty percent black, and the other sixty percent wasn't sure and didn't care." An FBI agent reads a warrant that automatically includes mail fraud and muses that he "was not sure where the mail fraud fit, but he worked for the FBI and had never seen a case that did not include mail fraud."

This deadpan humor leavens what could be a story only about suspense.

Grisham gives his readers both chills and grins.



Themes

Family

Family is a pivotal theme in *The Firm*. When recruiting new lawyers, Bendini, Lambert and Locke takes great care in investigating the candidate's familial status. The firm seeks applicants who come from less than happy circumstances. It believes that this history creates a hunger for success and fraternity later in life—ideals that the firm upholds. It also seeks young men who are married. The firm leverages its benefits packages and entices couples looking forward to a particular way of life. The firm selects according to intelligence as well, but intelligence alone would not yield an interview. Once a lawyer has been hired, he is strongly encouraged to buy a home and have children. The firm offers such a bargain on its low interest mortgages that the employees would be crazy to not take advantage of the offer. When Mitch McDeere joins Bendini, Lambert and Locke, they are certain he meets their eligibility criteria. He comes from a broken home, is young, and is married to a beautiful woman. His wife, Abby, doesn't quite fit the Bendini mold. She does want children and dreams of a suburban life, but is reluctant to do so on a time schedule determined by anyone other than herself. Abby is content in her career as a teacher. When the firm realizes that it is losing Mitch's allegiance, the Morolto crew goes so far as to instruct DeVasher to swap Abby's birth control pills with placebos. They believe that a family would force Mitch to stay with the firm because he would be more dependent on its wealth. The firm underestimates Mitch McDeere. He cares more about his family—Abby and his surviving brother, Ray—than all of the riches the firm offers. Mitch escapes with his family and assumes a new identity. Ironically, he does so after stealing millions of dollars from the firm's clients. After escaping, they retire to their newly purchased ship. Away from the pressures of the law firm, Abby coyly says to Mitch "Let's get drunk and make a baby".

Fear

Fear permeates *The Firm*. It is the motivating factor in many of the characters' actions. The Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm acts in such a way that it retains its employees through fear and intimidation tactics. Young, ambitious recruits sign on to work with the firm. They are seduced by the promise of wealth. In the beginning, the work that they complete is legal. Over time the lawyers are exposed to more questionable work. Eventually they become aware that the firm is conducting highly illegal business and is connected with organized crime. During their years of honest work, the recruits' movements are followed and their conversations are recorded. Whenever possible, the young men are captured conducting themselves inappropriately. The firm sometimes ensures that they will act poorly. In Mitch's case, even though he was committed to Abby and refused the first woman who made a pass at him, the firm hired a second woman and a photographer to ambush him. This provides material for blackmail and ensures that the men will keep the firm's many



secrets. The few who do attempt to leave the firm or disclose its illegal activity promptly die under mysterious circumstances. The partners in the firm plan the deaths and consider them necessary in order to protect the firm from collapse. The lawyers who are not yet partners do not know the details of the deaths, but the coincidences do not go unnoticed. In the firm's history, not one lawyer has voluntarily left the firm; however, five have died under questionable circumstances. These statistics loom over the lawyers, and even those with strong morals are afraid to leave. Eventually they become convinced that their lack of action against the firm is akin to a tacit agreement with its behavior. At that point, the lawyers have a selfish interest in keeping the firm's secrets because they fear to lose their marriages, career, wealth, and possibly their lives if they were to tell authorities.

Friendship

The Firm abounds with interesting friendships. Mitch's brother, Ray, is incarcerated for much of the book. Generally, society has a hard time feeling empathy with and connecting to inmates. The reader learns right away, however, that Ray is a good guy and capable of friendship. While in prison, Ray befriended Eddie Lomax. Eddie was a police officer who was sent to jail after being found guilty of statutory rape. The inmates instantly disliked Eddie when they learned that he was a police officer. Their abuse ended when Ray stuck up for Eddie, and Eddie was eternally grateful for his friendship. After being released from jail, Eddie established himself as a private investigator. He hired a secretary, Tammy Hemphill, and rented an office.

Mitch asks Eddie for help. He is curious about the deaths of the Bendini lawyers. As an extension of his friendship with Ray, Eddie is pleased to help Mitch, even though he senses that the work is dangerous. Eddie also has a special relationship with Tammy. The book doesn't outright state that they were lovers, but on page 186 it says that they were "close . . . very close." Regardless of the exact nature of their friendship, Tammy feels a deep loss following Eddie's death. The reader believes that it is partially out of this sorrow and partially out of fear for her own safety that Tammy befriends Mitch and becomes his accomplice. Mitch owes the success of his plan and ultimately the safety of his family to Tammy's assistance.

Mitch has other friends as well. He is friendly with Lamar Quin, the Bendini lawyer seven years his senior who orients him to the firm's daily activities. Mitch, Lamar, and their wives enjoy each other's company. After he realizes that Lamar probably knows about the murders, Mitch has trouble acting casually around Lamar, and their friendship takes on some distance. Additionally, Mitch befriends Barry Abanks, the father whose son was killed in the "accident" that claimed Kozinski and Hodge's lives. Abanks is happy to help Mitch and his family escape from the United States and the people whom he has come to perceive as the enemy. Mitch would not have survived his journey if he were not helped by his friends Tammy and Barry.



Significant Topics

The characters in *The Firm* frequently debate the problem of what loyalty costs. Bendini, Lambert & Locke buy loyalty from the attorneys they hire, eventually paying them so much and so completely co-opting their lives that the young associates become willing partners, too consumed with enjoying consumables to worry about the morals of their practice. The wife of an associate explains to Abby, Mitch's wife: "It's a question of loyalty. If all your money comes from one source, then you tend to be very loyal to that source. The firm demands extreme loyalty. Lamar [her husband] says there's never talk of leaving. They're all happy, and either rich or getting that way." The firm seeks out people to whom money will matter; the character type they recruit suggests some psychological insight on Grisham's part in creating the firm's methods.

The firm periodically scours the top law schools for candidates to pursue as associates. Mitch fits the type in his humble origins — he was raised in poor, fatherless circumstances in Kentucky — and in his drive to be better than others, to rise above his roots.

Writing from the perspective of the firm's partners, Grisham explains: "The poverty hurt, and they assumed, correctly, it had bred the intense desire to succeed. He had worked thirty hours a week at an all-night convenience store while playing football and making perfect grades. They knew he seldom slept. They knew he was hungry. He was their man." The firm does not want someone who will simply grab at the money, but someone who will be proud to work hard in earning it. The firm builds loyalty by rewarding hard work, thereby massaging the ego of the hard worker that his effort is recognized. Mitch resolves to win the awe of the partners by always arriving first at the office, even if he must be there at 4 a.m.; if they recognize such immense effort, the partners believe, he will eventually become their willing accomplice. Avery Tolar, the tax specialist who is Mitch's mentor in the firm, also exemplifies the type: The product of a broken home and unstable foster care, Avery won a scholarship to college and became an academic star in law school.

Mitch and Avery (and presumably many others in the forty-member firm) typify the American Dream of achieving material success by unstinting hard work. The firm perverts the American Dream by directing the devoted labors of such men as Mitch and Avery toward evil purposes.

The firm also purchases loyalty by instilling fear, as exemplified when the security chief, DeVasher, threatens to give Abby proof of Mitch's adulterous liaison in the Cayman Islands unless Mitch cooperates with the rest of the firm. The associates who make partner protect the firm for fear of their own security; their wealth and position evaporate if the authorities ever crack the firm's criminal network. The controllers of the firm reason that money and fear will secure enough loyalty to keep the enterprise going.

Yet the novel posits other loyalties that are stronger than those based on dollars. Personal relationships build a much firmer species of loyalty. Although he does betray her when tempted by a beautiful whore, Mitch remains ultimately loyal to Abby, as

solicitous of her safety as his own. His older brother Ray virtually raised Mitch, and although Ray is a violent felon serving time in prison, Mitch remains bonded to him. In prison, Ray befriended and defended a convicted policeman named Eddie Lomax, and their bond remains so strong that Eddie readily helps out Ray's brother. After Eddie's death, his secretary Tammy turns to Mitch for help and joins Mitch's efforts to snare evidence from the firm for the FBI.

This network of relationships cannot be shaken by money nor by fear of safety, as these characters take great (and unnecessary) risks for each other.

Grisham positions this trusting network against the firm, which offers no such personal, emotional supports.

Late in the novel, as the firm's members hunt a beach community for the escaped Mitch, Lamar Quin, who had been Mitch's closest friend in the firm, spots Ray, but declines to alert the Mafia henchman. If Mitch gets away, Lamar may go to prison, but Lamar lets his friend escape. In Grisham's world view, the ultimate loyalty cannot be bought but can be earned.

This loyalty based on relationships is as close to a moral order as the novel provides. Mitch does not work against the firm because the firm is immoral.

Even the FBI does not use basic right and wrong to lure Mitch: They combine payment for services with threat of arrest for not cooperating. So The Firm offers a standard of conduct in which higher moral principles are not as strong as money, but in which the strongest standard is preservation of self and of valued others. That personal loyalties matter, even to Mitch, may be the novel's great consolation.



Style

Point of View

The Firm is written from the third person point of view. The novel is fictional and was written for no other reason aside from the enjoyment of creating it. Because the characters are spoken about, as opposed to speaking for themselves, the reader is not inclined to feel empathy for any of the characters. The book is a fast moving adventure, however, so connection with the characters is not important. Therefore, the third person point of view is appropriate and not a detractor from the novel.

Setting

The majority of The Firm is set in Memphis, Tennessee. The Bendini, Lambert and Locke law firm is situated there. The characters are extremely uneasy in Memphis. The extensive surveillance conducted by the Bendini law firm makes the characters feel trapped. The building itself is like a fortress and has many guards in attendance. The basement houses impressive computer equipment and employees are not granted access. The fifth floor is the realm of DeVasher and the surveillance crew, who enjoy recording and photographing the employees' activities. These items are later used as blackmail, which enhances the general feeling of discomfort. Little is said about the city itself, but the building is not a happy one.

Small portions of the book take place in Boston, Massachusetts, where Mitch and Abby live in a small student apartment prior to moving to Memphis, in Chicago, where the Morolto family is found, and Kentucky, where Abby goes to visit her parents. Significant time is spent by the characters in the Cayman Islands. Grand Cayman Island is scenic and a tourist hot spot. Red Stripe beer is imbibed in large quantities and dominoes and dancing are favorite pastimes. One would like to enjoy the atmosphere, but the mysterious deaths of Kozinski and Hodge lend a feeling of dread that cannot be ignored. Surveillance crews abound on the island as well as in the United States. Much like in Memphis, the reader understands that the mood is more important than details about the setting, of which few are given. The characters also travel along the gulf coast beaches towards the end of the novel when preparing the deposition and undertaking their escape. They check in to many small motels along the beach and often leave without formally checking out. They wish to remain undetected and avoid a paper trail.

Language and Meaning

The Firm is a very straight-forward novel. It is written in the present tense so there is no use of outdated language. The main characters are all Caucasian and professional, so they share a common language and avoid the use of slang. The book does not seem to include significant alliteration or flashbacks, although they are commonly used in popular writing. The only examples of foreshadowing occur on page 227 when



DeVasher announces, "This place is about to change, Nat. . ." and again on page 241 when Mitch says, "I can disappear in the middle of the night . . ."

It is worth noting the use of Spanish on pages 328-329. In an attempt to disguise their conversation about Ray's prison break, Mitch and Ray oscillate between languages and pepper the conversation with other topics as well. The lack of fluidity is meant to make the conversation seem trivial so as to not attract the attention of prison guards or other people who may be eavesdropping. On the Cayman Islands, people commonly use the vernacular word "mon" which means "man", as in "you".

At one point Mitch succinctly says to Ray "We either disappear or we're dead". The reader is lead to believe that those are the only two possible outcomes, and even though Mitch has hinted at escaping before, his choice of words on page 369 have a finality that they previously lacked. Irony can be seen in Mitch and Abby's choice for retirement. They escape to the Cayman Islands, which is where the trouble with Kozinski and Hodge originated and the Bendini firm made their fortune.

Structure

The Firm is 421 pages long. It is divided into forty-one chapters. Besides the necessary chapter breaks, there are no other divisions and the book is entirely forward moving.



Quotes

"This firm recruited, and remained lily white." p. 1

"We are different, and we take pride in that." p. 4

"You mean as in a home, with grass around it and shrubs?" p. 12

"He pampered the building, indulged it, coddled it, each year adding another layer of luxury to his landmark." p. 15

"Bendini, Lambert & Locke was a big family, of sorts." p. 16

"The theory is that a strong marriage means a happy lawyer, and a happy lawyer is a productive lawyer, so the bottom line is profits." p. 22

"He had arrived." p. 55

"When he spoke, the eyes narrowed and the black pupils glowed fiercely." p. 62

"You're the first McDeere in two generations to amount to a damned thing." p. 113

"There's an unwritten rule at the firm—what we do away from Memphis stays away from Memphis." p. 137

"Cherished for its exclusivity, St. Andrew's was the most expensive private school in Memphis for grades kindergarten through six." p. 147

"I don't know who the bad guys are, but I'm convinced they're very dangerous." p. 161

"He tried to appear calm, under control, skeptical." p. 202

"Perhaps a year from now the next new associate would be sitting here and watching the saddened partners talk about young Mitch McDeere and his remarkable stamina and what a helluva lawyer he would have been but for the accident." p. 254

"Abby dug her fingernails into her husband's leg, and their table became quiet." p. 273

"He breathed deeply, and the fresh oxygen went screaming through his temples." p. 294

"It was over now, for the most part, and they had committed the perfect crime." p. 296

"In fact, if you knew what she knows you'd be serving indictments right now instead of sitting here bitching about her." p. 317



"With one eye, he glanced apprehensively at the cheap, flimsy rented fold-a-bed that was waiting." p. 330

"During the second day of the rest of her life, she began writing letters; letters to her parents, Kay Quin, Mr. Rice and a few friends." p. 419

Adaptations

Paramount's 1993 film version of *The Firm*, directed by Sydney Pollock and scripted by David Rabe, Robert Towne, and David Rayfiel, met with considerable box office success. Among the film's key strengths are the ways the supporting players flesh out their characters. Especially the women, Abby portrayed by Jeanne Tripplehorn and Tammy by Holly Hunter, gain depth and have meatier scenes than the portraits of them that appear in the novel.

Hunter earned an Academy Award nomination for her work. Gene Hackman adds strength and presence to his portrayal of Avery Tolar, a character who could have been played as a forgettable weakling. And Wilford Brimley, who appeared in his earlier work as a benign grandfather-type, provides considerable menace by underplaying DeVasher.

The film's deviations from the book, however, disturbed Grisham's most loyal fans. Typical of Hollywood treatment, the movie mutes the troubling and darker aspects of the book. As played by Tom Cruise, Mitch retains a sense of ethics and ultimately rejects the temptation of money. In the film adaptation, Mitch resolves the dilemma not by fleeing to the islands with the firm's money, but by devising a method to snare the firm that removes the Mafia's threat against him and Abby.

The script whitewashes Mitch by removing his acquisitiveness, essentially watering down the book's edge. The film also ignores the scene in the book in which Ray must kill someone to effect their escape. The film also alters the portrayal of FBI agent Wayne Tarrance, played by Ed Harris, to make the FBI seem as threatening and as malevolent as the firm. In the novel, Tarrance is cool and insistent, whereas in the film he often becomes histrionic.

Many fans of the novel further complained that the movie removed an important icon: Mitch's car in the film is not a BMW.

D. W. Moffett reads the abridged Bantam audio version, and George Guidall reads the complete text for Recorded Books.



Key Questions

While an obvious context for discussing the novel is fiction about the law, a less obvious but equally interesting context is the treatment of success in American literature. In his life through law school, Mitch could be a classic example of the Protestant ethic.

How does the American Dream relate to the trait of acquisitiveness, and how does this character with a Ben Franklin-style work ethic become seduced by the firm, are questions that can open up discussion of *The Firm* into a debate on what Americans consider to be personal success. Readers could consider whether the initial tempting offerings of the firm seem worth the price of long hours and reduced private life (aside from the firm's illegal purpose).

1. How do you like Mitch? How would you define his personality? As he decides how to resolve his conflict, what matters the most to him? What is his hierarchy of priorities? Where does money fit in the hierarchy? Does he or his hierarchy change as the novel progresses?

2. What does Grisham accomplish by including Ray McDeere as a character?

What does Ray add to the book's presentation of Mitch and its presentation of crime?

3. How does Grisham portray the government? Does the FBI seem trustworthy, honorable, reliable?

4. How malevolent are the members of the firm? The key partners have debates with DeVasher on how to deal with problems, especially with Mitch.

They often recoil from DeVasher's ideas.

5. Which characters, if any, seem to retain an internal moral compass?

What are the book's moral standards?

6. What is Grisham's comment on the American Dream, the myth of success exemplified by Mitch?

7. How well does the book provide a sense of place, of Memphis, of the Cayman Islands? Why is Mitch's big confrontation with the FBI Director set on a frigid day in the vicinity of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial?



Topics for Discussion

Mitch comes from a small and broken family. Discuss the members of his family and his relationship with each.

Nathan Locke is different from the other lawyers. Discuss how he came to work at the Bendini law firm.

Who is Tarry Ross? His character was a minor one, but his actions had big repercussions for Mitch. Please explain this.

Compare and contrast Abby with her new friend, Kay.

Barry Abanks is an essential part of Mitch's escape plan. Why do you think he was so willing to help Mitch leave the country?

What was the relationship between the Bendini Law Firm and the Morolto family?

Mitch oscillates between inner goodness and greed. Consider his life's path and discuss what has made him into the young man portrayed here.

DeVasher is a fierce character. What is his position and how does it affect Mitch and his colleagues?

The Bendini building is strategically organized. As best as you can, please describe its structure and functionalities.

Discuss the extensive incentive plan at the law firm. Why are they willing to give such generous compensation?

Literary Precedents

Doubleday's design for the novel's dust jacket, a man in a suit suspended by guide-wires against a marblelike background, recalls the symbol of the hand on the puppet strings used for the book covers and film posters for Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* (1969). Yet while Puzo crafts an inside narrative of the Mafia, Grisham leaves readers largely on the outside, only seeing the mob members through the tangential figures of DeVasher and others in the firm. The best precedents and comparisons for *The Firm* are other examples of the thriller genre — such as books by Stuart Woods or Ken Follett or even Tom Clancy — to evaluate how Grisham embraces yet stretches the generic limitations.

Related Titles

As different as this novel is from *A Time to Kill*, a potentially fruitful discussion question is what does unite the two books, how can readers see that the same author produced both. Here are of the key aspects of the Grisham style: an insider's insight into the legal profession, the wry style, the sharp dialogues, and most significantly the characters' inability to embrace absolute moral standards.



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