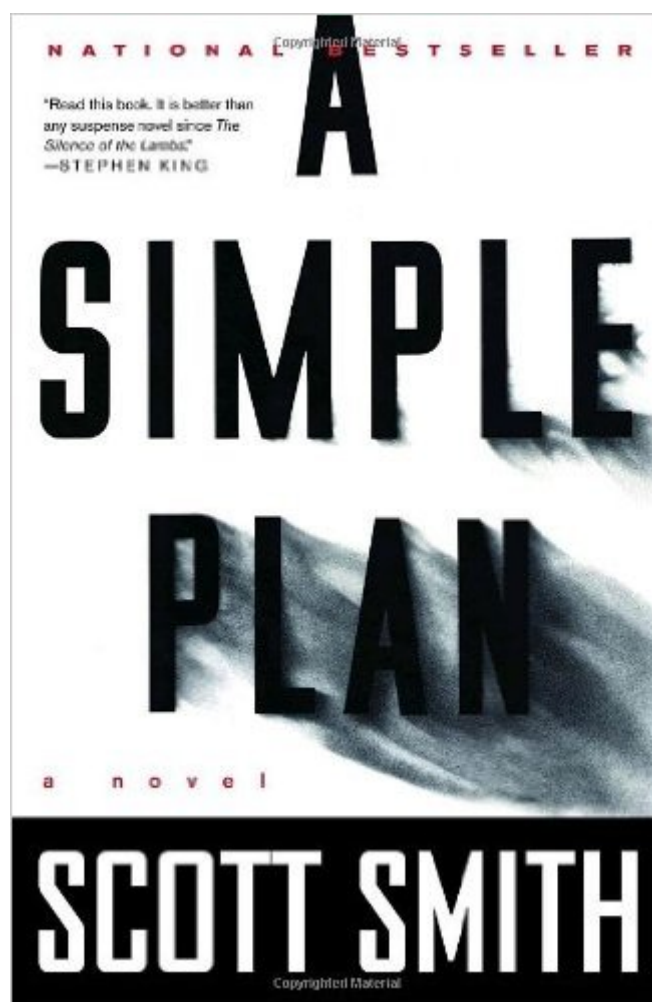


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A Simple Plan



Synopsis

Two brothers and their friend stumble upon the wreckage of a planeâthe pilot is dead and his duffle bag contains four million dollars in cash. In order to hide, keep, and share the fortune, these ordinary men all agree to a simple plan.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I began this novel, I already had an inkling of what the trajectory of the plot would be, based upon the information on the book jacket. It's no secret that the story revolves around what unfolds when three men accidentally stumble upon a plane that has crashed with millions of dollars in cash on board. The bulk of the book explores the grim consequences of this discovery. Despite the generally predictable and even formulaic nature of the plot overall, Smith has done an amazingly skillful job of creating a page-turner of a suspense novel that is nearly impossible to put down. The particulars of just how things go awry for the various principals involved are spun out in ingenious fashion over several hundred extremely well-written pages. This book not only tells a gripping (and sometimes gory) tale of how a seemingly "simple plan" goes awry, it also provides clear insight into the darker side of the human condition, that is, how under particular circumstances even seemingly "nice, normal people" can end up committing and rationalizing the most heinous deeds, always with "good reasons" behind their actions. The way that Smith lays bare the fragility of human ethics and morals sadly rings true, and renders the book as depressing as it is horrifying and suspenseful. Overall, it's a terrific read that should not be missed.

This is, without a doubt, an amazing debut novel. It is a modern day morality tale, which sees people's lives change significantly, when they come upon a veritable treasure trove of money. The change is not necessarily for the better, as the reader will discover. The plot revolves around two, small town brothers, Hank and Jacob Mitchell, who, along with Jacob's friend, Lou, inadvertently come upon a downed plane that is buried in the snow, deep in the woods of a rural area. In that plane is a dead pilot, along with four million dollars in cold, hard cash. All three of them could sure use the money. The question is, what are they going to do about it? They come up with what they think is a simple plan. They will take the money and just wait and see, not spending it, until the coast seems clear. From the moment they make this decision, life is never the same for any of them. Hank, taking charge of the money for safekeeping, begins to undergo a change that is seemingly uncharacteristic of one who is outwardly so respectable, rational, and benign of countenance. As the issue of the money begins to divide the three accomplices, greed and betrayal bubble to the surface, to culminate in a series of chilling, cold blooded murders. Meanwhile, Hank, manipulated by his Ma Barker of a wife, Sarah, begins a personal downward spiral, succumbing to an evil so profound, that it will leave the reader open mouthed. What happens to them all makes for an amazingly powerful and riveting story of psychological suspense. Written in clean, spare prose, this well crafted novel is a riveting page turner that grips the reader from the inception, holding the reader in its thrall until its climactic conclusion. The ending serves to show the reader that what goes around, does, indeed, come around.

This book sat in my bookcase for months until I finally decided to read it. What an excellent decision! The story was absolutely mesmerizing with a fantastic plot and very well written. It was tightly constructed with no obvious loose ends. This first novel held my interest as the narrator Hank, an accountant, reveals how he, his older brother Jacob and Jacob's friend Lou accidentally discover a crashed plane and over \$4 million hidden within its fuselage. From the decision to take the money, Hank reveals the thoughts and emotions, the fear, anxiety and the development of sociopathy with rationalization and self-preservation justifying increasingly violent and irrational behavior. The story has the ability of allowing the reader to think along with Hank and his wife Sarah and compare their decisions to what the reader may have done in similar circumstances that makes this a great exercise in values clarification.

Many people were disappointed by Smith's most recent novel, "The Ruins" (although I wasn't one of

them) so I knew I had to read Smith's first novel to see how it compared. The truth is there is no comparison that can be made as "A Simple Plan" is as far removed from "The Ruins" - genre-wise, story-wise, everything-wise- as a novel can be. If there could be a true comparison made for this book, it would be Woody Allen's film, "Crimes and Misdemeanors." That an author can write two such different novels AND succeed with both is an achievement. Smith is a damn good writer and this tale, a story as simple as Hank Mitchell's plan, is riveting. There wasn't one point in this novel where I wasn't worried that if I turned the page, everything would come out in the open. Between Hank's simple plan, his wife Sarah's murderous lucidity and the growing body count, there is never a dull moment. I do confess that by the end of the book, I was starting to feel like the widening circle of death was getting a bit too extreme (for those who only know the film version of the novel, they diverge in a major way halfway through so the book will be a new experience) but at the same time, if I was Hank Mitchell, what would I have done? That's a question I kept asking myself and still do.

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