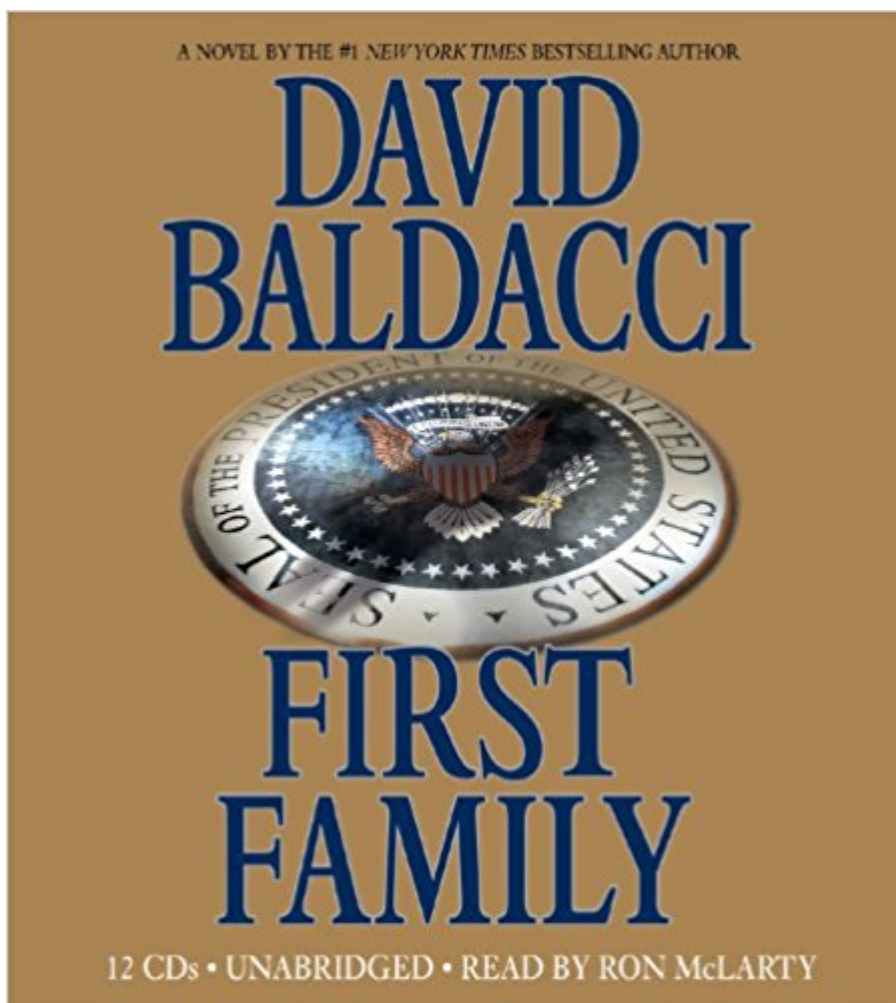




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First Family



Synopsis

Sean King and Michelle Maxwell, back from their harrowing and near-fatal adventure in the blockbuster #1 bestseller *Simple Genius*, return in a mesmerizing new thriller. A daring kidnapping turns a children's birthday party at Camp David into a national security nightmare, but the hostage is not who anyone would expect. The First Lady enlists the services of King and Maxwell to bring the child back safely. Years ago, King saved her then-senator husband from an assassin's bullet; whether they shared anything else is their secret. With Michelle still recovering from her own demons the pair are pushed to the limit, with forces aligned on all sides against them, and the line between friend and foe impossible to define...or defend. (2009)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Plenty of intense action drives bestseller Baldacci's stellar fourth novel to feature former Secret Service agents Michelle Maxwell and Sean King (after *Simple Genius*). Maxwell and King, D.C. PIs, step on the toes of everyone, including the FBI and the Secret Service. They even manage to bruise the ego of First Lady Jane Cox, who hires them after her 12-year-old niece is kidnapped following a birthday party at Camp David. Baldacci excels at making the improbable believable as one obsessed man, 62-year-old Sam Quarry, takes on the best security the U.S. can muster from his Alabama redoubt. Even more impressive than Quarry's determined campaign is the ingeniousness with which Baldacci manages to disguise both Quarry's precise motivation and aims. Meanwhile, Maxwell has to deal with her mother's death and a host of other personal issues. Baldacci's careful plotting and confidant depictions of national security procedures make this a

thinking man's thriller. (Apr. 21) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Ron McLarty is the perfect choice to present Baldacci's latest thriller. His clear, strong voice shifts effortlessly among the story's varying passages of sadness, anger, and irony. His facility with multiple characters of both genders and many ages, races, and regional accents enables the listener easily to keep track of everyone. Music and sound effects, used liberally in the opening sequences, trail off as the story progresses, becoming less frequent and lower in volume with each chapter. Too bad-their use enhances the story." (AudioFile)

I think the book was as I rated it. Lots of gaffes as mentioned by another reviewer. I was asked to rate this book before I read it (I ordered a few at once and finally got around to reading it) much to my chagrin. As I discovered when I got around to reading it , after chapter 78 the chapters were duplicated and a lot was left out toward the ending. The book was relatively new and I suspected nothing until I got to that chapter. Too late to return it. You can bet I'll read and check all in the future before rating them.

King and Maxwell are such a good team. Of the 3 - 4 books I've read involving this team, I like this book the best. It was so interesting and I liked much of the dialogue between Sean and Michelle. They're so comfortable with each other. Their banter is fun to hear and occasionally they ribbed one another - particularly in this book. We also sometimes know their inner thoughts - including dread or fear at times. Very near the beginning, King and Maxwell come across Tyler - a teenager - who was thinking about running away from home. Initially, almost against their better judgement, they take to him and become involved in helping him with what turns out to be huge; at the same time, they know he can't really pay them. As they become more involved, and some threats were made against them, Sean quipped to Michelle: "In for a dime, in for a dollar." Michelle replied dryly, "I'm just wondering when we're going to run out of change." Eventually their sheltering Tyler and their wanting to understand more about some mysterious events unfolding led them in several different directions. The plot kept going and going: in the first third of the book it seemed as if nothing was really going to happen. Plus at times too much explanation was given about what they were doing. Then it suddenly picked up. I'm so glad I continued the book. Of course some bad guys were involved; we're kept in the dark for quite awhile about how exactly are the "bad guys".

This was a very interesting book. The protagonists, King and Maxwell, are a likable pair whose relationship has been developed over the past three books in the series. The story may have been a bit fanciful but was engaging and held my interest to the very end. It is a recommended book.

Baldacci is one of my favorite authors. Anything he writes, I am eager to read and always enjoy particularly the political plots. This one was intriguing in that he did NOT try to paint the President and the First Lady as perfectly innocent and untouchable but instead as real people with real faults and problems. The picture of the First Lady as responsible for her husband is one that too many women understand too well. King and Maxwell are, as usual, bigger than life in some ways, but that is what we like about them. Their dedication to one another is particularly attractive. King's trip to Maxwell's home town is particularly touching and their dedication to that mystery in the middle of the Presidential kidnapping was a glimpse into their real character. The exposure to the little place in Alabama was a character sketch in itself. My heart understood the Quarry family as well as Ruth Ann and Gabriel and their devotion. In short, the plot within a plot is pure Baldacci at his best and the end is absolutely AMAZING! When I finished the book, I put it down absolutely exhausted but totally pleased with another finely tuned mystery that teased my brain and taught me a lesson. I highly recommend it to readers who love to be challenged and want to feel the energy.

A good author knows how to write complex interwoven plot lines, flesh out characters so they seem real, make the reader care about what's happening, keep them guessing, and not rely on coincidence. Baldacci is a very good author. For all its action and adventure elements, the story unwinds slowly, giving us plenty of "what the heck" issues followed by small glimpses of the truth. The convenient mechanism is a team of private detectives, both former Secret Service agents, who are called in to assist when the First Lady's favorite niece is kidnapped. Why was she (and not any of the rest of her family) kidnapped? Why was her mother, the First Lady's sister-in-law, killed and her father, the First Lady's brother, knocked out, during the kidnapping? Who did the kidnapping? What was their motivation? Can she be rescued alive? Will the FBI and the Secret Service and all the other feds crawling all over the case only make matters worse? We get a bit of this at a time, including getting to know the kidnapper early on, and a little bit about his motivation. We find that he is not, apparently, a cruel person, but that something compels him to this. What? That takes a long time to bring out. What is the meaning of the letters written on the arm of the girl's dead mother? What do the various characters know that they will not reveal? Why will they keep important information secret when it could easily cost the life of a pretty, smart, lovable little girl? Certainly any

mystery has plenty of questions, but few authors other than Baldacci could wrap them up so well. In the process, we get a close look at the Secret Service, the impenetrable fish bowl that surrounds the First Family, and how it affects those who are close to them but outside the bubble.

great plot, interestingly complex, characters have a well-developed depth that makes this thriller unusual it's more than just one or two characters in depth it's a number of characters in depth

I found this very entertaining. I was always on the edge of my seat. The author can keep you guessing just when you think you know what is about to happen there is a twist.

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