

Jude



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Starred Review. Grade 8 Up—Fifteen-year-old Jude believes that his mother abandoned him at birth. When his heroin-dealer father is murdered, the authorities discover that he is the son of DA and mayoral candidate Anna Grady, and that he was kidnapped by his father at three weeks old. His mother welcomes him into her comfortable life and sends him to an exclusive prep school. When a schoolmate dies of an overdose, Jude, though innocent, is implicated. His mother's boyfriend, Harry, the deputy police commissioner, convinces him to take part in an elaborate charade to help Anna get elected on an anti-drug platform. Harry promises that once she's elected he will come forward with evidence that Jude is innocent. Instead, Jude is tried as an adult, sent to the state penitentiary for five years, and finds that Harry never meant to get him out at all. The plot is tight, deliberately paced, and full of delicious twists. Unlike many suspense novels, the characters are as thoroughly developed as the story. Jude, especially, is lovingly written—self-conscious and highly moral, with an angry toughness that balances him into believability. The dialogue, especially between Harry and Jude, is fluid, charged, and revelatory instead of expository. Only Anna is flat; she's merely a symbol of Jude's need for love. The somewhat tiny font makes the prose seem dense,

but the story is quick and action packed enough to engage reluctant readers, especially older boys.—Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library

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