

Book Review

Review of *Acts of Omission* by James S. Bostwick

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Set in San Francisco, California, Matt Taylor, a talented personal injury lawyer, meets a young man who suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury that has left him paralyzed. The lawyer is intrigued by Todd Gleason's story and is hoping for redemption after a poor outcome from his last heartbreaking case. *Acts of Omission* by James S. Bostwick chronicles the courtroom drama of a medical legal case and its repercussions for both the self-sacrificing prosecuting attorney and his paralyzed client.

The courtroom his stage, or perhaps his battleground, Matt Taylor takes on one of the most famous and prolific trial lawyers in the state. Taylor argues that this lawyer did not manage Todd Gleason's case appropriately when it was initially tried, resulting in the young man missing out on millions of dollars imperative to supporting his care at home.

This particular case drives the questions: What is the value of a life? What is the cost of living with a paralyzing injury? What is the price of suffering when someone else is at fault? The courtroom is where these impossible questions meet their often disheartening answers.

Resting everything on this precarious case, Taylor faces betrayal, love, and loss of a family property to make ends meet. His rivals want him dead. He recently went through a divorce. He doesn't know who to trust. Taylor gets by with the help of his

associate Adrienne and a few encouraging glances from an unexpected courtroom regular by the name of Hairy Harry.

The author expertly weaves the dialogue from the opening to the closing arguments and everything in between, clearly from reflecting on years of his own experience. *Acts of Omission* is a plot-driven, fun and dynamic read, exposing the conversations inside the courtroom walls that alter the courses of people's lives. Weaknesses of the narrative include poor transitions after scenes of action, such as a blizzard road rage accident and a white-water rafting mishap, making these particular scenes seem less skillfully incorporated into the rest of the storyline.

One theme of the book is that the fate of this young man's life seems to be determined by everyone but himself. Starting with being the passenger in a rollover crash, to getting evaluated by the Emergency Physician, to having his films read by the radiologist and receiving care from the ICU nurses, the patient has no control. The patient's quality of life is drastically impacted by lack of communication between providers. Then a powerful lawyer does not adequately manage his case and he is left with next to nothing to support himself. Matt Taylor understands this vulnerability from his first meeting with Todd Gleason, which is why he risks everything for this client.

The author reminds the reader that oftentimes people go into medicine and law to advocate for their patients and clients. After arduous training and participating in a frustrating system, those initial sparks

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and calls to action can be lost. *Acts of Omission* serves as a story, a reminder, and a plea for advocacy and justice for those who are most medically and legally vulnerable in modern society. The book is recommended to anyone wanting to become a trial lawyer. There is also utility for those in medicine to glimpse

into the medical legal world and see it as yet another avenue to advocate for patients.

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest or funding to report.