



# The Professor

*Robert Bailey*

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## The Professor Robert Bailey

Law professor Thomas Jackson McMurtrie literally wrote the book on evidence in the state of Alabama. But when a power-hungry colleague uses a recent run-in between McMurtrie and headstrong student Rick Drake to end his career, he is left unsure what to do next.

Meanwhile, a devastating trucking accident in Henshaw, Alabama, leaves a young family dead. Drake, now a fledgling lawyer, takes the case against the freight carrier and soon begins to uncover the truth behind the tragedy that is buried in a tangled web of arson, bribery, and greed. On the eve of the trial and with his case unraveling in the midst of a dangerous cover-up that threatens to silence his star witnesses, Drake realizes that only his estranged mentor, Professor McMurtrie, can help him now.

With everything to lose and only justice to gain, will McMurtrie and Drake overcome bad blood to defeat a ruthless adversary? Can the Professor turn back the clock and recover all that he's lost?

**Revised edition: This edition of *The Professor* includes editorial revisions.**

## The Professor Details

Date : Published August 18th 2015 by Thomas & Mercer (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN :

Author : Robert Bailey

Format : Kindle Edition 430 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Legal Thriller, Mystery Thriller

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# From Reader Review The Professor for online ebook

## Kenneth Eade says

### Great first novel

I read this all in one sitting. It was exciting, evoked emotion, had great character development and just the right amount of courtroom drama. Bravo!

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## Liz Barnsley says

Coming February from Angry Robot Ltd – Exhibit A

Thank you to the author and publisher for the advance reading copy via netgalley.

Thomas Jackson McMurtrie is a living legend scorned. Forty years ago, he gave up a promising career as a trial lawyer to become a law professor at the University of Alabama at the request of his mentor. Alabama football Coach, Paul “Bear” Bryant. Now Tom is forced into retirement, betrayed by both a powerful colleague and his own failing health.

Meanwhile, the young family of one of his oldest friends is killed in a tragic road collision. Believing his career is over, Tom refers the case to a brilliant, yet beleaguered, former student, who begins to uncover the truth behind the tragedy, buried in a tangled web of arson, bribery and greed.

It has been a while since I found a great legal thriller to read – I was a huge fan of Steve Martini’s Paul Madriani series until they became way too political and conspiracy theory based, and Grisham became the same although I do peripherally enjoy those still. So when I recently read Nick Stone’s “The Verdict” which was excellent it put me firmly back into the mindset of wanting to read more of this type of novel. So when I came across “The Professor” on netgalley it seemed to be the perfect solution and it was.

Thomas Jackson McMurtrie has been a long term law professor, at the behest of his coach and mentor many years ago. Betrayed and let down by a colleague he is suffering ill health and retires to lick his wounds. When an old friend asks for his help he refers her to Rick Drake, an ex student who has his own problems...Rick believes he has a solid case but as it all starts to fall apart around him he realises he needs help. And there is only one man for the job...

I found this absolutely gripping and fascinating from page one, filled with wonderfully drawn intriguing characters and an engaging and captivating storyline that twists and turns its way to a satisfying conclusion, this is the start to what promises to be one of my favourite legal series. I simply cannot wait to see what is next for team McMurtrie and Drake.

This is a true David versus Goliath tale – up against a firm that will do anything to cover up their complicity in a terrible accident, Rick has his work cut out for him. Some of it is scary stuff – you can easily imagine this sort of thing happening in real life, it has an absolutely authentic feel to it throughout. Without giving too much away I can say that you will never be sure who is going to come out on top – the author keeps you guessing and at times my heart was pounding.

Extremely well written with a beautiful flow to it, this was one of those books that you don't want to put down until you have finished – and one that your mind keeps drifting back to while you are out in the real world doing all the mundane routine things that keep you away from your books. I loved it and if you are a fan of legal thrillers you will as well.

Highly Recommended.

Happy Reading Folks!

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## **Erin says**

I love a good, juicy legal thriller, particularly one set in the American south. It goes back to *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, I imagine. Few reading experiences can compare with getting knee-deep into a case with a lawyer and his staff, following along with them to the inevitably dramatic conclusion.

Is it a formula? Sure. I fail to see anything wrong with that (I do, however, see everything wrong with people who glare down their prissy noses at any story they deem formulaic). Just as a recipe for, say, chocolate cake can result in something delicious or inedible, a legal thriller can be well executed or not.

In *THE PROFESSOR*, Robert Bailey takes a classic, yes, formula, and uses it to create one of the most compelling legal thrillers I've read in a long time.

What makes it work so well? The details. The ambiance. The richly drawn (without being overwrought) characters. Good guys who are virtuous without being perfect and bad guys who are the kind of bastards we all encounter far too often.

I read *THE PROFESSOR* without reading the jacket copy, and I'm awfully glad I did, because the story is absorbing, and it doesn't need an adjective-filled paragraph to prop it up. That said, you probably want to know what it's about...so here's my spoiler-free attempt at explaining it:

The titular Professor is one Tom McMurtrie, who teaches law (evidence, specifically) at the University of Alabama. When the family of a dear friend of Tom's is killed in a horrific car crash, he refers the case to a former student. It all sounds pretty simple, but there are numerous sub-plots and side stories that give *THE PROFESSOR* the kind of richness one finds all too rarely.

Side note: one of these side stories involves football coach "Bear" Bryant. I know who Coach Bryant was, but his involvement in the story was never going to be a selling point for me. I think it's unfortunate that this is positioned as a more important aspect of the story than it is for those of us who aren't into football. My point is that if you're not a fan of Coach Bryant or Alabama football, it won't take away from your enjoyment of this story at all.

*THE PROFESSOR* takes place in the south, but it's not a southern story any more than *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* is. Which is to say, it is, but it so being won't detract from your enjoyment of it if you have no experience of or interest in the south. While the bulk of the marketing focus is (rightly) on the lead male characters, I think it's important to mention that Bailey has created some of the strongest and most interesting female supporting characters I've met.

I had to read the last few pages of THE PROFESSOR standing up, because I was far too emotionally involved in the story to be able to sit. It is just that good.

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### **a\_tiffyfit says**

If you've been reading my blog for any amount of time, you would have come across me raving about the publishing house, Angry Robot and the subdivision Strange Chemistry (young adult). This is an Exhibit A book, another subdivision (is that even the right word? Imprint? I don't know. All I know is...CONTINUING TO BE AWESOME) of Angry Robot. I have not had a disappointing read from Angry Robot yet. I don't understand how this is possible at all, but it's come to the point where I'm barely reading blurbs. I just fall to my knees and beg for an ARC to read or just fork over money to buy the book.

This book...is no exception to the Angry Robot Rocks A\_TiffanyFit's Socks rule. Incredibly satisfying, THE PROFESSOR revolves around legal drama and the human condition. Men and women alike will enjoy this superb, fantastic story. Can I toss in any more adjectives? Okay, but then I might lose your attention. Moving on...

The cast of characters, every single one, are relatable in that their personalities are recognizable as someone familiar to you, whether from your own life or movies, and that makes them believable. You connect with them in some way very quickly. They are incredibly well-developed and fully nuanced.

The main character of this story, the professor, is a man you wish all men were like. He is a man of great reputation, highly respected not only among his peers, but also by those who are outside of his career, well into their lives and life experiences: judges, other professors, students, businessman, townfolk in general, and many many more. Even with all of that kind of deference and minor "stardom", the professor remains a humble man of principle to the core of his being. He is a man who had loved his wife throughout their long marriage and continued to do so even long after her death, remaining loyal and loving of her still with memories. How can we, the women readers, not adore that and be wistful and wanting of the same? How can a male reader read that and not want to emulate?

The story opens around a law case and of a circumstance involving his professorship. Within this circumference, the reader gets to know him, the professor, Tom McMurtrie - ex-attorney, husband, father, and the man. The case and circumstance at the university where he teaches tests all that makes up the man, especially his honor and reputation. I found the courtroom scene suspenseful and heart-pounding. I was utterly captivated by this story and bruised my kindle turning the pages as I became deeply enraptured and involved.

As with all the great kindle bruising novels, there is of course the villain and his cronies whom you love to hate and wish on them a horrible end. These villains also spring from the page in these wholly recognizable, incredibly believable characters. You can't believe, at first, that they are real human beings and yet at the same time you know that they are.

Although you cannot wait for the end of this book to discover what has happened, you wouldn't dare skip a single word because you do not want to miss any of the deliciously palpable details. Not a morsel.

This is a must-read novel for me. One that I would recommend whole-heartedly to anyone who knows how to read. Yeah, that's right. Not just the genre junkies, but anyone. If I were teaching still, I'd probably make

this a required reading of my high school students for the strength of character the professor has alone. This is one of those books that you want to read and discuss. And you'd even learn a little about our court system, especially the civil courts. In case you haven't noticed yet...I thought this was a fantastic read. :)

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## **Katy says**

**Book Info:** Genre: Legal suspense/thrillers

Reading Level: Adult

Recommended for: Fans of legal suspense/thrillers

Trigger Warnings: murder, rape, violence, blackmail

**My Thoughts:** Let me state right off that this is not a mystery. In a mystery, neither the reader nor the characters know “whodunit” and the book is a journey to discover who that is. This is a suspense/thriller book in the legal field, which means the reader, at least, knows who is involved and how, but we watch as the characters try to legally prove what they are learning.

This book is described as “the first McMurtrie and Drake Investigation,” so although I don't know when or how many, there will be more book in this series. I think the idea has merit, but there are things I'd like to see in future books, such as: how the lawyers and their staff go about gathering information; acknowledgment that lawyers never work on just a single case at any given time; the distressing tendency of lawyers to put everything off until the last minute and the effect that has on their staff. In essence, I'd like a bit more realism.

All that said, this was an entertaining read, and fans of legal thrillers/suspense should enjoy it. While it didn't blow me away, I did enjoy it well enough and will likely watch for future books in this series to see where the author plans to go with this. If this sounds like something you'd like, check it out.

**Disclosure:** I received a copy of this book from JKS Communications (this author's publicist) in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

**Synopsis:** Thomas Jackson McMurtrie is a living legend scorned. Forty years ago, he gave up a promising career as a trial lawyer to become a law professor at the University of Alabama at the request of his mentor. Alabama football Coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant. Now Tom is forced into retirement, betrayed by both a powerful colleague and his own failing health.

Meanwhile, the young family of one of his oldest friends is killed in a tragic road collision. Believing his career is over, Tom refers the case to a brilliant, yet beleaguered, former student, who begins to uncover the truth behind the tragedy, buried in a tangled web of arson, bribery and greed.

But as the eve of trial approaches, the young attorney's case begins to unravel. In over his head and at the end of his rope, he realizes there's only one man who can help...

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## **?Susan? says**

A good courthouse drama surrounded by corruption and murder. Wonderful character development and

interesting litigating tactics.

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## **Autumn Is Azathoth The Haunted Reading Room says**

THE PROFESSOR by Robert Bailey

THE PROFESSOR is an incredibly polished, truly larger-than-life novel. I'm not fond of converting books to film, but the nature of this novel is so vast that in itself, it resembles the Big Screen. From the first episode, I felt as if I viewed the events, not visualized them. Secondly, there's so much here that in a lesser hand than author Robert Bailey's, would have been rendered trite and flat, two-dimensional. Good VS. Evil. Greed vs. Common humanity. Lust vs. Integrity. Instead, it is all fully rendered, consuming, encompassing, and engrossing.

I won't go into deep detail--the novel speaks for itself--but you owe this immense reading experience to yourself.

According to the author note, Mr. Bailey went through 3 complete rewrites. Whatever he did produced a seamless and perfect narrative. I can't speak to the legal matters, nor to the Alabama settings, but characterization rings true and powerful, and the pace, especially during the trial, is rapid-fire. I recommend THE PROFESSOR wholeheartedly and without reservation! It ought to be required repeated reading for all debut and budding authors: THIS is how you polish the craft.

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## **Patrice Hoffman says**

There's something about a good legal thriller that always gets my juices going. I find trials to be fascinating and gripping. I'm one of those people who can watch hours and hours of Law & Order so when The Professor by Robert Bailey became available on Netgalley, I crossed my fingers that my request would be granted. Thank you Angry Robot for accepting my request.

The Professor follows a harrowing trial where the defendant provides one vicious hurdle after another in an effort to get a verdict that will not cause the Willistone Trucking company to jeopardize a multi-million dollar merger. The only thing Jack Willistone never counted for was The Professor.

After being ran out of a cushy teaching job as an *Evidence* professor, Tom McMurtrie is taking a break. His health is failing him and the salacious scandal that follows him to no end gives him cause to take a break. With all intentions of staying out of the lime light he is given the opportunity to represent a woman Ruth Ann Wilcox, who lost her daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter in a collision with a Willistone driver, he gives the case to a former student of his. Before long, the case starts to unravel.

Robert Bailey presents readers with a riveting plot that never skips a beat. The Professor is a quick read that never lets ease off the gas. The villain is a man that will stop at nothing to get the verdict he wants. His actions push many characters to question their loyalties or risk secrets being revealed. As the bodies and questionable circumstances disproportionately tip the scales in the defendants favor, I admit he gave this novel life... for me at least.

Although the characters are real and well defined, I almost felt that Tom McMurtrie was a little boring. The young lawyer that he refers the case to, Rick, was much more interesting. It was a good thing that Bailey allowed him to take center stage for a good portion of the novel. The professor was not very interesting. He sort of started strong but ended flat for me. I loved that he was one of those cutthroat kinda professors that students dread crossing paths with, but then he does a 180 and becomes dull.

Overall, I really enjoyed reading The Professor and look forward to Robert Bailey honing his craft and finding him up there with the Turow, Connelly, and Grisham's of legal thrillers. This debut effort was well worth the time spent reading it. I look forward to the upcoming novels in this McMurtrie and Drake series.

*Copy provided by Angry Robot via Netgalley*

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## **Jean says**

This is the debut novel of Robert Bailey. For a first book I am impressed and if he writes more books I will buy them.

I found it exciting to have a different type of protagonist in this story. Not the usual handsome young, know it all, action hero but in this story we have a sixty-eight year old male law professor, Thomas Jackson McMurtrie. He was a former college football star who went on to become a professor and scholar. His wife has died recently; he has been diagnosed with bladder cancer. The new young head of the law school is forcing the entire older faculty into retirement and now it has happening to him.

Professor McMurtrie joins with one of his former law students, Rick Drake, in a wrongful death case against a trucking company. Drake is headstrong, passionate and in over his head. McMurtrie is experienced, even tempered, and of exceptional integrity and most of all he wrote the textbook on evidence law in Alabama. The story takes place in Alabama. McMurtrie gives his former student teaching assistant, Dawn, a job as law clerk for Drake.

The book is superbly written, the protagonists are engaging and the pace is fast. There is lots of action in and out of the courtroom. The plot is tightly woven and unfolds with well paced scenes. The bad guys are really bad which helps make for a dramatic story. Bailey is an attorney and that comes through in the writing.

I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. Eric G. Dove does a great job narrating the story. Dove is a multiple Audiofile Earphone Award winning narrator. He is also an author (Ghosts of Royston) a singer and songwriter.

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## **Ed says**

I purchased this book on my new GR friend Chuck's recommendation and I'm glad I did; think "Rocky" for old white guys in their sixties (which group I include myself in - BTW). Let's face it folks, old white guys are not exactly media darlings these days which made "The Professor" such a charismatic lead in this tightly written, well paced legal thriller. A 40 year law professor who wrote the definitive book on evidence in Alabama and played on the legendary football coach "Bear" Bryant's 1961 National Championship team as a



student, is betrayed and forced out by a Dean who wants a "younger" staff. Battling bladder cancer, Tom struggles to get things together enough to win an actual trial of a lawsuit involving the death of a family at the hands of a speeding trucker hauling gasoline and represented by the same attorney who befriended Tom, then betrayed him to the University board.

This is a debut thriller by a very talented writer who I sincerely hope spends less time in the courtroom and more time on his laptop writing sequels to this outstanding first novel. ....Ed

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## **Judy Collins says**

*A special thank you to Thomas & Mercer and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review. 3.5 stars*

**THE PROFESSOR**, set in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in 1969, *Robert Bailey* delivers his debut, a Southern taut legal suspense thriller mixed with a football icon, Paul "Bear" Bryant, an American college football player and coach— best known as the longtime head coach of the University of Alabama football.

**Thomas Jackson McMurtrie** wants to be a trial attorney, and had just been approached the previous week by a top firm. Now the coach, his former mentor wants him to be a law professor. Before he had reached Birmingham, Tom knew just as he had known all those years ago when he was playing football, the Man had called, *and he must answer*.

**As a law professor**, Tom finds himself in the middle of some major issues. He is being forced out; a scandal, betrayed by both a powerful colleague and his own failing health.

**At the same time**, someone from his past, a girl he dated approaches him, with a legal problem. A few months prior her daughter and husband were in a car accident around Henshaw. They had hit a tractor-trailer truck head-on. Her granddaughter was in the car too and died. They all died, even the trucker.

The trucking company was one in Tuscaloosa- Willistone Trucking Company in 2009 involving a Willistone rig hauling Ultron gasoline and a driver named Harold Newton. A witness says her son-in-law turned in front of the rig, but she does not buy this.

**Ruth Ann Wilcox**, had never filed a lawsuit before, and she had not one else to call. Tom had not tried a case in year and encouraged her to take it to someone else. He agrees to look at the case. From excitement to guilt. Rick Drake from Henshaw? There is bad blood connected with the two. *Rick is now Richard Drake, Esq. Law Firm*.

Tom offers the case to **Rick Drake**. Rick had often daydreamed about chance confrontation with the Professor. The nerve of him coming here after what he had done? He was fired because of him. The Professor thinks this would make up, for how he had hurt his career?

However, could he turn down a multimillion-dollar death case? His only chance was to be a plaintiff's lawyer and have a million-dollar case walk in the door; that just walked out. *He has second thoughts*.

**Drake, takes the case** against the freight carrier and soon begins to uncover the truth behind the tragedy that is buried in a tangled web of arson, bribery, and greed. On the eve of the trial and with his case unraveling in

the midst of a dangerous cover-up that threatens to silence his star witnesses, Drake realizes that only his estranged mentor, The Professor can help.

With everything to lose and only justice to gain, will Tom and Drake overcome bad blood to defeat a ruthless adversary? Can they work together and put the past behind them. More importantly, can a sixty-eight year old law professor who has not tried a case in forty years hit the largest verdict in West Alabama history? Vindication, for being forced to retire by the law school?

**A fast-paced legal suspense,** of the evil corruptions combined with a seasonal legal professor and his young protegee, making for a powerful fight for justice, with some compelling emotional dynamics.

I was initially drawn to the title and author, as a native of the Davidson, NC area, (*quaint small college town, having visited a few weeks ago*), where the author attended college, as well as a southern legal crime thriller fan.

Look forward to more from the new entertaining southern author, as we continue with *McMurtrie and Drake series*.

JDCMustReadBooks

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### **Julie Schoerke says**

Love John Grisham's early work? You've got it in this Alabama thriller that pulls together a legal thriller with 'bama football. I'm not a big football fan, but LOVED this book - this is easily going to be a popular novel for men and women in 2014. Be among the first to discover this book and the new author (who, like Grisham, is an attorney and writes what he knows).

I can't recommend this book highly enough.

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### **Lisa says**

I enjoyed this courtroom drama filled with underdogs and slimy people.

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### **Lynn Pribus says**

Astounded this is rated at more than 4 stars here. I was a bit suspicious when the only blurbs on this trade paperback were from two obscure writers -- not Publisher's Weekly or even a newspaper I'd heard of -- and suspicions were well-founded.

The guy who compared him to Grisham was clearly peddling FAKE NEWS. The writing was very ordinary and larded with long segments in italics like a romance novel. No legal subtleties, except one obscure rule of evidence that this lawyer author was evidently eager to build his novel around.

A great deal of interest in male plumbing and loading up the Old Hero with bladder cancer, vindictive college staff, and false accusations of sexual misconduct. The Young Hero is plagued by fast temper and insecurity. The Sweet Young Thing is also beset.

Outcome never in doubt. The Bad Guys simply murder or threaten potential plaintiff witnesses.

Not even redeemed by constant references to "Bear" Bryant and Alabama's great bowl appearance in the 1960s.

PS. Started reading a "legal thriller" by Marcia Clark right after finishing this one and there is simply no comparison in the writing. Hers is clever, witty, and quick, always pulling you into the next chapter. Still surprised at the high rating for this novel filled with black and white characters. And I don't mean that racially!

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### **Jool says**

Best. Legal. Thriller. Ever. This author is a rival to John Grisham in every sense of the word. This was a gripping legal novel I could not put down. Excellent. Highly Recommend!

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