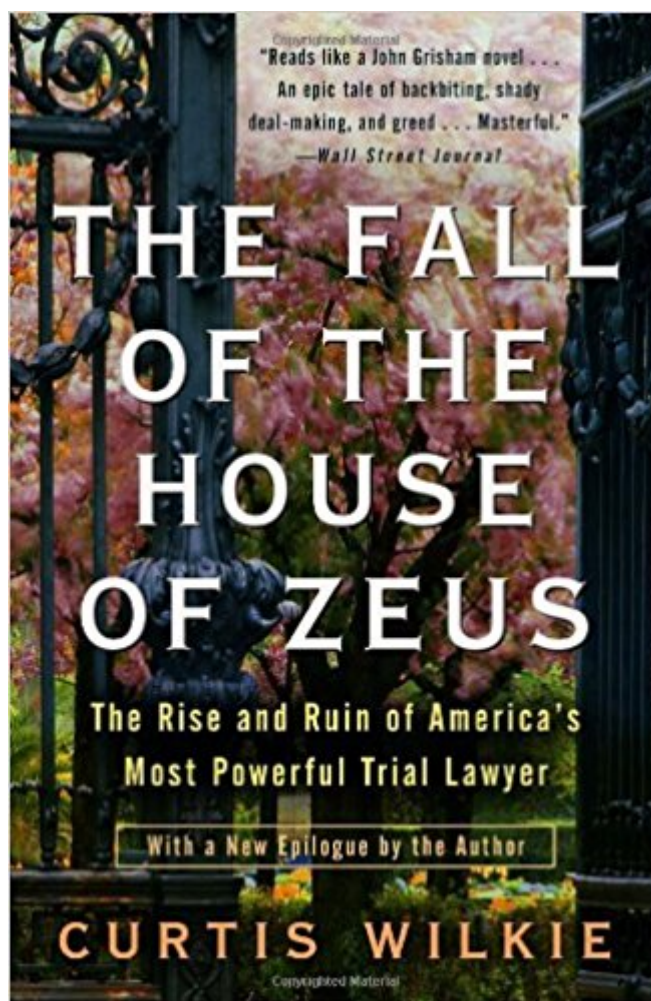


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# The Fall Of The House Of Zeus: The Rise And Ruin Of America's Most Powerful Trial Lawyer



## Synopsis

“Over the past four decades no reporter has critiqued the American South with such evocative sensitivity and bedrock honesty as Curtis Wilkie. • Douglas Brinkley’s *The Fall of the House of Zeus* tells the story of Dickie Scruggs, arguably the most successful plaintiff’s lawyer in America. A brother-in-law of Trent Lott, the former U.S. Senate Majority Leader, Scruggs made a fortune taking on mass tort lawsuits against “Big Tobacco” and the asbestos industries. He was hailed by *Newsweek* as a latter day Robin Hood, and portrayed in the movie, *The Insider*, as a dapper aviator-lawyer. Scruggs’s legal triumphs rewarded him lavishly, and his success emboldened both his career maneuvering and his influence in Southern politics—but at a terrible cost, culminating in his spectacular fall, when he was convicted for conspiring to bribe a Mississippi state judge. Based on extensive interviews, transcripts, and FBI recordings never made public, *The Fall of the House of Zeus* exposes the dark side of Southern and Washington legal games and power politics: the swirl of fixed cases, blocked investigations, judicial tampering, and a zealous prosecution that would eventually ensnare not only Scruggs but his own son, Zach, in the midst of their struggle with insurance companies over Hurricane Katrina damages. In gripping detail, Curtis Wilkie crafts an authentic legal thriller propelled by a “welter of betrayals and personal hatreds,” providing large supporting parts for Trent Lott and Jim Biden, brother of then-Senator Joe, and cameos by John McCain, Al Gore, and other DC insiders and influence peddlers. Above all, we get to see how and why the mighty fail and fall, a story as gripping and timeless as a Greek tragedy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Former Boston Globe reporter and Mississippian Wilkie charts the meteoric career of lawyer Richard "Dickie" Scruggs in this riveting if labyrinthine account that in Wilkie's telling, involves treachery, professional jealousy, and zealous prosecution. Known as the "King of Torts," Scruggs had made a fortune with class action lawsuits involving asbestos claims in Pascagoula, Miss., and then tobacco lawsuits in the mid-1990s. But with fame and fortune came enemies in the small Mississippi world of law and politics, and also contact with what Scruggs once dubbed "the dark side of the Force," people who carried out business best done behind the scenes. In 2007, while handling a Katrina victims' class action suit against insurers, Scruggs and his associates asked someone to approach a judge in a case filed against Scruggs by a disgruntled former colleague. The intermediary offered the judge money. Scruggs himself was eventually indicted on bribery charges and after a contentious federal investigation pleaded guilty; he's serving a five-year sentence. Wilkie (Dixie) carefully tracks the maneuverings of Scruggs and his associates and enemies in a remarkable illustration of how far the mighty can fall. 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.

"The Fall of the House of Zeus is a riveting American saga of ambition, cunning, greed, corruption, high life and low life in the land of Faulkner and Grisham. These are good ol' boys gone bad with flair, private jets, and lots of cash to carry. Curtis Wilkie, a child of the South and a reporter's reporter, is the perfect match for this wild ride." —Tom Brokaw

"Addictive reading for anyone interested in greed, outrageous behavior, epic bad planning and character, lousy luck, and worst of all, comically bad manners. Wilkie knows precisely where the skeletons, the cash boxes and the daggers are buried along the Mississippi backroads. And he knows, ruefully — which is why this book demands a wide audience — that the south, no matter its looney sense of exceptionalism, is pretty much just like the rest of the planet." —Richard Ford

"The legendary yet factual Curtis Wilkie has been the right man in the right place at an uncanny number of extraordinary times." —Roy Blount Jr.

"I can think of no one more qualified to write about the modern South than Curtis Wilkie." —Willie Morris

"Reads like a John Grisham

novel. An epic tale of backbiting, shady deal-making and greed. Masterful. Wall Street Journal.com “Fascinating, breath-holding action. The undisputed accuracy of recorded dialogue will fan embers that will keep this story alive for decades not only in Mississippi but anywhere obscene wealth, arrogance, and narrow-mindedness grant us human beings a look into the darkest rooms of our hearts. Clyde Edgerton, Garden & Gun “In telling a great legal story about a great legal story teller, Wilkie has produced a page-turning masterpiece that explores power, greed, hubris and the human condition. The Fall of the House of Zeus is a Greek Tragedy set in the modern south. Lawyers, clients and anyone interested in seeing how the sausages of justice get made will love this book. Alan Dershowitz, Author of The Trials Of Zion “An absorbing political fable. The story of all that rolling money, and tales of the bit players with dank palms who roam the subplots, make THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF ZEUS a standout read. Jason Berry, Politics Daily “Equal parts biography and legal thriller. Roll Call “Wilkie provides a nuanced inside account of the fall of Mississippi trial lawyer Richard “Dickie” Scruggs, now in federal prison. St. Louis Post-Dispatch “Curtis Wilkie is a superb writer. There are few books which have ever motivated me to read every word written by the author. Wilkie’s book is such a book. For anyone interested in the confluence of money, power, and politics, The Fall of the House of Zeus is a must read. Thomas Naylor, Professor Emeritus of Economics, Duke University, Counterpunch “A fascinating and eye-opening modern day account of politics, greed, hate, and their power over men. Memphis Lawyer “Whether it’s read for entertainment or studied as a cautionary tale, The Fall of the House of Zeus and its author deserve their place among Mississippi’s great enduring literature. Delta Magazine “Almost feels like a John Grisham novel but at no point is it fiction. The Fall of the House of Zeus is a great read. Desoto Times Tribune “Riveting, a remarkable illustration of how far the mighty can fall. Publishers Weekly (starred review) “A meaty biography extolling the rise and fall of an infamously lucrative trial litigator. Wilkie charts his subject’s serpentine legal and political machinations with dense, rich prose. Kirkus “Not since Willie Morris has anyone written so poignantly about the South.” John Evans, proprietor of Lemuria Books, Jackson, MS in Mississippians magazine.

"Wilkie's book is well-researched and well-written, and also completely engaging." — Biloxi Sun Herald

Excellent book. Too bad the Sharks decided to eat each other. As bold and brazen as Mr. Scruggs was he did not deserve to be "set-up" by peers who wanted to "take him down a notch". Black robe syndrome at its finest...

I was absolutely captivated by this book, couldn't put it down. True story that reads like a novel

Having lived and worked alongside the principal characters of Curtis Wilkie's novel it was like going to an old time family reunion. Curtis has written an outstanding description of how greed can be blinding and all encompassing. "The Fall of the House of Zeus" takes one completely through the rise of power all the way to the ashes of an empire. In the final chapters one experiences the desperation and overwhelming sense of failure. As the prison doors close the feelings of despair and loneliness sweep over the reader as they think back from the beginning, the thrill of riding the wave of success and then the abject sadness of accepting total and complete loss. The lives that have been ruined, families split apart and friendships destroyed. This reader can think of no better way to spend some free time than by reading this honest and complete novel, Curtis Wilkie has given us a prize winning piece of work.

Curtis Wilkie has had a remarkable career as a journalist, from his days as a cub reporter at the Clarksdale Press Register to his work for the Boston Globe and now as a professor at Ole Miss. He is a born story teller and the Fall of the House of Zeus is a wonderful work of contemporary history. Unlike some of the other reviewers on Amazon, I would not compare him to Grisham -- Wilkie is a far better story teller. In addition, he tells a remarkable story about Dick Scruggs, making Scruggs into a human being, not quite Atticus Finch but a sympathetic human being, with real virtues. Congratulations to Wilkie for telling a remarkable story about corruption in politics, about Mississippi, about humanity.

Too many characters to track.

It is well written and put together by the author Curtis Wilkie. It gives a great inside look at the law, especially Mississippi. It is a great story about lawyers who win big tort cases and their ego and how

they can never have enough toys and the one showmanship that prevails in the legal world. It also demonstrates how judges can be influenced and bought for just a pittance what the lawyers are reaping. The book also shows how the government can be ruthless in pursuing lawyers and judges. It puts a whole different perspective for me on law and how the government will pursue those they dislike. Both have their own agenda and it is never the client.

This book is so well written. I knew the plot line from the news so I was not excited about reading the book. The author has so much inside info about the persons involved and has such a great style that the book becomes a nail biter even though the reader knows the outcome. Very highly recommended.

Thrilling true tales of power, greed and deceit. Curtis Wilkie shows how someone so successful can be tempted by more.

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