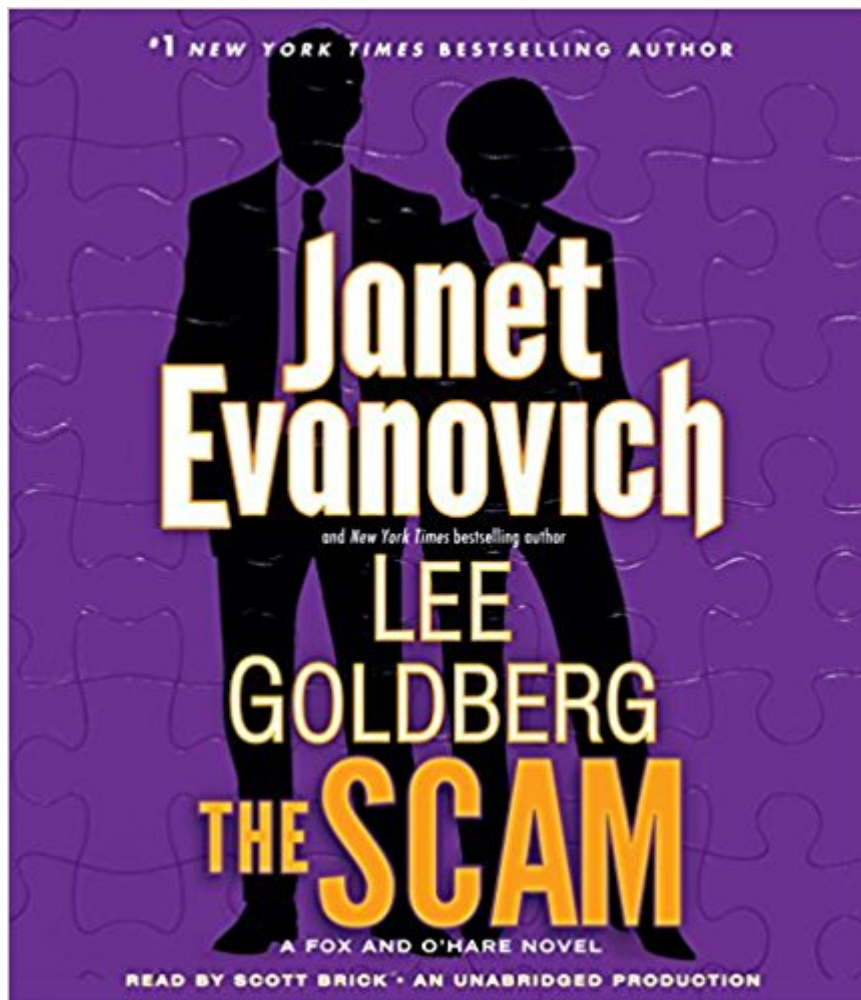




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The Scam: A Fox And O'Hare Novel



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
Nicolas Fox is a charming con man and master thief on the run. Kate O'Hare is the FBI agent who is hot on his trail. At least that's what everyone thinks. In reality, Fox and O'Hare are secretly working together to bring down super-criminals the law can't touch. Criminals like brutal casino magnate Evan Trace. Evan Trace is running a money-laundering operation through his casino in Macau. Some of his best customers are mobsters, dictators, and global terrorists. Nick and Kate will have to go deep undercover as high-stakes gamblers, wagering millions of dollars and their lives in an attempt to topple Trace's empire. It's a scam that will take Fox and O'Hare from the Las Vegas strip, to the sun-soaked beaches of Oahu's North Shore, and into the dark back alleys of Macau. Their only backup—a self-absorbed actor, a Somali pirate, and Kate's father, an ex-soldier who believes a rocket launcher is the best way to solve every problem. What could possibly go wrong?

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Customer Reviews

Janet Evanovich is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of the Stephanie Plum series, the Fox and O'Hare series, the Lizzy and Diesel series, the Alexandra Barnaby novels and Troublemaker graphic novel, and How I Write: Secrets of a Bestselling Author. Lee Goldberg is a screenwriter, TV producer, and the author of several books, including King City, The Walk, and the bestselling Monk series of mysteries. He has earned two Edgar Award nominations and was the

2012 recipient of the Poirot Award from Malice Domestic.From the Hardcover edition.

Chapter One Kate O'Hare bought her Ford Crown Vic at a police auction for abused cop cars. The dented, Bondo-patched four-door beast wasn't the kind of ride that usually appealed to attractive, professional women in their early thirties. Of course, most of those women didn't accessorize their wardrobe with a Glock, an FBI badge, and a small belly scar from a knife fight with an assassin. Kate liked used cop cars because they were cheap, low-maintenance, and had options that weren't available on a Prius. Options like Kevlar-lined doors that were great for cover in a gun battle, monster V-8 engines that were perfect for high-speed chases, and steel ramming bars on the front grill that came in handy for pushing cars out of her way. She'd been heading north on the 405 freeway through the Sepulveda Pass when her boss, Special Agent in Charge Carl Jessup, called. Nicolas Fox, fugitive number nine on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list, was trying to make his way up to number eight. "I've been thinking that maybe it wasn't such a bright idea for us to help a world-class con man and thief escape from prison," Jessup said in his amiable Kentucky drawl. "And an even worse idea to give him access to the money we secretly plunder from bad guys and use to pay for our covert ops. Both Nick and a million dollars of our money seem to be unaccounted for." "I'm sure there's an innocent explanation," Kate said. "There's nothing innocent about Nicolas Fox." Kate knew that better than anybody. She was the FBI agent who'd chased Nick for five years before she finally put him in prison. Unfortunately, to Kate's horror, Jessup and Deputy Director Fletcher Bolton had Fox back on the street in record time. They had a plan. Fox would work undercover for the FBI. And Kate would partner up with Fox to keep him honest. Together they were tasked with going after major-league criminals who couldn't be caught through legal means. So Nick remained a major-league criminal himself, secretly working for the FBI, and Kate remained a top FBI field agent, secretly working with an international fugitive. And that's why Kate was currently taking the curves on Sunset like it was the Talladega Superspeedway. She was hoping to catch Nick in his Sunset Strip penthouse. Technically, the penthouse wasn't Nick's. The IRS had seized it from a rapper who'd neglected to pay his taxes, and then the IRS had left it unoccupied pending sale. Nick had posed as the listing agent and quietly moved in. Thanks to rich tax cheats, Nick could always find a swanky place to stay that didn't require him to show a credit card or his face to a desk clerk. Kate skidded to a stop in front of the fifteen-story building, jumped out of her car, and ran to the locked

lobby door. She rang all of the tenants, held her badge up to the security camera, and looked into the lens with as much authority as she could muster. "FBI! Open up!" A tenant with a sense of civic duty, and too much trust, kindly buzzed the door open. Kate charged into the lobby only to come face-to-face with an "Out of Order" sign taped to the elevator. Just her luck. She dashed into the stairwell and sprinted up the stairs. In a training exercise, it had taken her and a dozen other elite military commandos in full assault gear twenty minutes to rush up to the eighty-sixth floor of the Empire State Building. Kate estimated it would take her three minutes to get up to the penthouse in her sensible shoes. Her cellphone rang between the fifth and sixth floor. Kate touched the Bluetooth device in her ear and answered the call as she climbed. "O'Hare," she said. "Where are you?" It was Megan, her younger sister. "Dad's waiting for you to take him to the airport." "I am on my way." Their father, Jake, lived with Megan, her husband, Roger, and their two grade-school-aged kids in a gated community in Calabasas. That was where Kate had been headed when she received the call from Jessup. "I told you two weeks ago that the kids have a big soccer game today and it's our turn to pass out the sliced oranges at halftime," Megan said. "You promised me that you'd take him." "Relax, Megan. I'll be there." "Why are you huffing and puffing?" The stairwell began to rumble with the unmistakable sound of a helicopter closing in overhead. Kate felt a pang in her stomach, and it wasn't from the exertion of climbing twelve stories in two minutes. It was a powerful case of déjà vu and the dread that came with it. Kate had once chased Nick across a rooftop just as his accomplices were lifting off in a helicopter without him. As the chopper flew away, Nick had leapt off the building and grabbed onto a landing skid to make his triumphant escape. Her fear now was that he was going to try to repeat that death-defying performance. "I've got to go," Kate shouted to her sister, ending the call and taking the remaining flights two steps at a time, past the penthouse and up to the rooftop. She burst out of the door to see a green helicopter embossed with a U.S. State Department seal idling on the roof. Nicolas Fox was running toward it, his suit jacket flaring like a cape. To Kate's relief, the helicopter pilot waited for Nick this time. Nick opened the door to the passenger cabin and turned to Kate as she ran up. There was a boyish grin on his face and a sparkle in his brown eyes. It was pretty much a confession that he was up to no good and enjoying it too much. He was wearing the kind of off-the-rack, basic blue suit that Jos A. Bank regularly sold two for the price of one. It was very un-Nick-like. He was a stylish six-foot-tall man with a keen and very expensive fashion sense. This suit made him look like an underpaid bureaucrat. She assumed that

was the point. “Perfect timing,” he yelled over the sound of the helicopter blades whirring above them. “I’m glad you could make it.”

CHAPTER 2

Kate climbed into the chopper and took a seat. “Where are we going?”

“Malibu.” Nick secured the door and sat beside her. They slipped on microphone-equipped headsets so they could hear each other over the noise. Kate wasn’t surprised to see Wilma “Willie” Owens in the pilot’s seat. Willie was a fifty-something bleached blonde with enhanced boobs that looked like basketballs with nipples. Her typical outfit was a halter top and Daisy Dukes, but today she wore aviator shades, a white shirt with epaulets, and crisp blue slacks. It was an outfit suitable for a licensed pilot, although she wasn’t one. She was a Texan with a natural talent for operating any vehicle on land, sea, or air and an unlawful tendency to steal them for joyrides.

“Have you ever flown a helicopter?” Kate asked her.

“Once or twice,” Willie said.

“Which is it?”

“That depends, honey. Does this flight count?”

Kate tightened her seatbelt and turned back to Nick. “We aren’t going anywhere until you tell me why you’re pretending to be a diplomat and what happened to our million dollars.”

Nick pressed a button on his headset that cut Willie off from the conversation.

“Most of the money went into buying and repainting this chopper,” Nick said.

“The rest went to sending a lucky young man on an all-expenses-paid trip to the Caribbean. It was the grand prize in a contest he didn’t even know that he’d entered.”

“Or that he was the only contestant.”

“You catch on quick. He’s staying at a very exclusive, very remote island resort that bills itself as ‘the true Gilligan’s Island experience.’”

“No phone, no lights, no motor car, not a single luxury,” Kate said, referencing the show’s catchy theme song.

“You’re keeping him off the grid. Who are you hiding him from?”

“His grandfather, Stuart Kelso, the king of ‘the grandparent scam.’ Are you familiar with it?”

“Yes. A grandparent gets an urgent email, or phone call, from an official with the terrible news that their grandchild has been arrested, robbed, or badly injured while traveling abroad. The fake official tricks the old and easily confused grandparent into wiring tens of thousands of dollars overseas to get the kid out of trouble.”

“That’s the one. As fate would have it, Stuart Kelso was recently notified by the State Department that his grandson, Ernie, has been arrested in Cuba on a drug-smuggling charge. The bail is five million dollars. Ordinarily he might have not fallen for his own con, but we had inside information about his grandson. And we landed a State Department

helo on his front lawn. Nick grinned, and Kate tried her best not to grin. It was genius and well-deserved poetic justice, and it was totally illegal. It felt oh-so-right but also oh-so-wrong. . . much like her attraction to Nick. And the worst part was that he'd pulled it off under her nose. "Why didn't you tell me about this con until now?" she asked, eyes narrowed, blood pressure edging up a notch. "It was just a lark, something to keep myself amused between jobs. Kelso is small-time compared to our usual targets. I didn't think you'd approve." "So you sneaked around behind my back." "Yeah." "We're supposed to be partners. You just made me look like the village idiot." "Don't take it so personal," Nick said. "How else am I supposed to take it? I'm responsible for you. My career hinges on my ability to control you and your larcenous personality. You're only allowed to break the law when you have permission from the FBI. You can't go around breaking the law on a lark." "I like when you get all worked up like this," Nick said. "It puts a sparkle in your eyes." "If you go down, I go down, too. Rest assured I'll do everything I can to make sure it's not a pleasant experience for you. I'll make sure you're locked up and the key is thrown away." "So you're in on the con?" Nick asked. Kate blew out a sigh. "Yes." "Excellent," Nick said. "Can you play an FBI agent?" "I'll give it a try," Kate said. "But only if we can pick up my dad and drop him off afterward at LAX." "No problem," Nick said. * * * Jake O'Hare was waiting for Kate and Nick in his gated community's private park. He was wearing a white golf shirt and tan chinos, his hands in his pockets, casually watching as Willie set the helicopter down on the grass. Jake had spent most of his life in the Army, doing covert ops for the government, but those days were long gone. Now he was in his sixties and most of his battles were fought on the putting green. "Thanks for the lift," Jake said as he climbed in. He took a seat and put on his headset. "Where are your suitcases?" Kate asked. "I don't have any. I'll buy what I need when I get there and leave it behind when I go." "You're going to Hawaii to visit an old Army buddy. It's a vacation, not a covert op." "Says the woman taking me to the airport in a phony State Department helicopter," Jake said. "Good point," Kate said. Her father was the only one, outside of Jessup and Deputy Director Bolton, who knew the truth about her and Nick. "Actually, we have an errand to run before we get to the airport." "That's what I figured," Jake acknowledged.

Nick with a friendly nod. “What can I do to help?” “Do you have any experience getting American captives out of foreign countries?” Nick asked. “Extensive,” Jake said. Nick smiled. “Then just be yourself.” “I can do that,” Jake said.

CHAPTER 3

Thirty years ago, Stuart Kelso was an insurance salesman in Dearborn, Michigan, when he got a call in the middle of the night from a cop in Istanbul. Kelso’s pot-smoking teenage son Bernie, who was on a backpacking trip through Europe, had been arrested for drug smuggling. If Kelso didn’t send the cops \$10,000 in twenty-four hours, they’d throw Bernie in a Turkish prison for five years. Kelso did as he was told and his son was put on a plane back to the United States. It was only later, once Bernie was home safe, that Kelso realized how stupid he’d been to act so quickly. What if it had all been a con? It was an epiphany for him . . . and the grandparent scam was born. Kelso chose to target grandparents because the elderly were less likely to think clearly under pressure, and often had access to fat retirement funds. It was a smart move, because now he was ten times richer, fifty pounds heavier, and lived in Malibu with his third wife, Rilee, an aspiring model, in a Southern Colonial mansion on a bluff overlooking the Pacific. When the U.S. government chopper landed in his backyard two days ago, he was sure the feds were coming to arrest him. Thankfully, he was wrong. It turned out to be a frantic State Department bureaucrat named Nick Burns arriving with bad news. Kelso’s twenty-one-year-old grandson Ernie had been arrested smuggling dope into Havana. The Cubans wanted \$5 million to set Ernie free or they’d put him on trial to embarrass the United States. Kelso couldn’t believe the cosmic unfairness of it all. History was repeating itself. Burns urged Kelso to make the payoff for the sake of his grandson and the good of his country. Kelso didn’t care about Ernie or Uncle Sam, but he was afraid that the media spotlight might reveal his own crimes. That’s why every dollar Kelso had was packed into the four suitcases that were currently standing beside him, waiting to be loaded into the State Department helicopter that was landing in his backyard again. Burns emerged from the chopper, checking his watch as he approached. He was accompanied by a stocky older guy and a fit young woman in a gray pantsuit with her jacket open to show off the gun on her belt. “Good morning, Mr. Kelso,” Burns said. “Is that all of the money?” “The only cash Kelso had outside the suitcases was the twenty-eight dollars in his wallet. All of his other assets were tied up in debt and ex-wives. It was as if the Cubans wanted to clean him out. He could no longer run his business, pay his mortgage, or support his third wife and her posse of yoga instructors, hairdressers, stylists, and personal shoppers. But at least he wouldn’t be going to jail.” “It was hell getting it all together,” Kelso said.

“I still don’t see why it had to be in cash.” The stocky guy spoke up.

“Let’s be honest here, Mr. Kelso. You aren’t posting bail. It’s a bribe being paid to corrupt cops. Bribing is a cash business. Cash doesn’t leave a trail.” Kelso looked at Burns and gestured to Kate’s dad. “Who is he?”

“Jake Blake. The bag man who is going to spread the bribes around Havana for you,” Burns said. “He’s done this kind of thing for us before. For obvious reasons, we can’t do it ourselves.”

“What’s to stop Blake from running off with my money?”

“Me,” the woman said, flashing an FBI badge. Kelso felt his bowels seize up with fear. He’d had nightmares about seeing one of those badges in his face.

“I’m Special Agent Kate Houlihan. I’ll be with Blake every step of the way.”

“You don’t trust me, Houlihan?”

Blake asked. “The problem with mercenaries is that they are mercenary,” she said.

“Loyalty is not in the job description.” She shifted her attention back to Kelso.

“I’m also the one who will make sure your grandson gets safely out of Cuba.”

“I don’t know what that stupid kid was thinking,” Kelso said.

“The only reason I’m going to bring him to your door and not to prison is because the State Department doesn’t want this episode ever coming to light,” Houlihan said.

“But if I were you, I’d let him know he just used the only get-out-of-jail-free card he’s ever going to get.”

“I will,” Kelso said.

“We’ve got to get moving.” Burns looked at his watch again.

“We need to catch a flight to Guantánamo. They’re holding a plane for us at Vandenberg.”

Houlihan and Blake each picked up two suitcases and carried them back to the chopper. Kelso watched them go. He’d have to crack the whip on his boiler room full of poverty-wage workers in the Philippines and get them to send out twice as many scam emails as usual. He needed to generate as much cash as he could before the workers realized there was no paycheck coming, stripped the place of anything of value, and walked out on him.

Kelso turned to Burns. “When will I hear from you?”

“You won’t. If it all goes well, your grandson will show up at your door. If it doesn’t, you’ll see him on the news being perp-walked in Havana. Either way, this meeting never happened. The U.S. government was never involved. Are we clear?”

Kelso nodded. “Thanks for your help.”

“It’s what you pay your taxes for.”

Actually, Kelso didn’t pay his taxes, because he had no legitimate income to declare. It was one more reason he’d paid the outrageous bribe to the Cubans. Burns jogged back to the helicopter

and climbed in beside the pilot. The chopper lifted up, veered off over the Pacific, and headed north toward Vandenberg. As the sound of the chopper receded, Kelso heard a car coming up the driveway. He walked around to the front of the house to see who it was. A black Lincoln MKT with livery plates came to a stop, and a lanky guy in a loose-fitting tank top, board shorts, and sandals hopped out of the backseat with a big smile on his sunburned face. It took Kelso a second to realize it was his grandson Ernie. “Wow, what an amazing trip,” Ernie said. “Thanks for sending the limo, Grandpa. How did you know when I was coming back? Did the contest guys call you?” The enormity of what this meant hit Kelso like a sucker punch in the gut. He staggered, leaning on the house for support. Ernie rushed over, grabbed him, and held him upright. “Grandpa, what’s wrong? Are you okay?” The helicopter came back and circled low over the house. For a moment, Kelso couldn’t breathe. All he could do was gasp for air and look up into the sky. How could I have been so stupid? The Scam Copyright © 2015 by The Gus Group, LLC. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews. For information address Random House, Inc., 1745 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019

The Scam by Janet Evanovich and Lee Goldberg is the fourth Fox and O’Hare book and it was amazingly awesome. I give this book a five butterfly rating because this book just like all of the others is fabulous. I love that in this one just like the first three, it starts with these little cons leading into the big one that they are going to end up doing. Their first con is in Hawaii mostly because that’s where Jake is when he needs Kate’s help and they figured might as well start conning the Oahu mobster first, then that leads them into going to Las Vegas where they see Evan Trace and that starts the big con that way. That leads them into going to Macau with two other guys that they had help them before and eventually they get the Hawaiian mobster in there. They had to then turn things around when Evan Trace decided to ask their two friends, and the Hawaiian mobster into doing something for another casino he has going up in Macau which led them into doing a 180 turn with their own con. That got them to get their big con going really well. Overall though they got two bad guys for the price of one in witness protection and they got everyone that Trace was laundering money for. It was an awesome book that was filled with a lot of awesome scenes, funny antics. I am quite happy with The Scam by Janet Evanovich and Lee Goldberg. I will highly recommend this series to my friends. Anyways until next time enjoy this book review brought to you by Baroness O’Hare Book Trove. To read more book

reviews like this one please visit my site: baronessbooktrove.com

The book is great. I love this series and have all the books including the online exclusives. I love the characters. The story is very good. I have read all the one star reviews because it shocks me that it received ones. I am going to address two solo and the rest generally. Okay the general address is that yes it was written by Goldberg and Evanovich. Most writers use several styles it is just other as comedy based as The one for... series and definitely not as monk. Also you will never find a book that I saw not hated by someone. The fact that it only had six at 530 plus, one of them said it should be a five, should show it is a good book. The first review I want to deal with is the lack of morale titles oh bother. The book series is about conning criminals so they are put away you can't do that on a shoe string budget. Also since when is spending money the same as terrorism, murder, and drugs. Besides hello it is fiction. Now about the one that said it deserves five but because of the cliff ending it got a one. I get it a ending that leaves one of the main characters hanging like that sucks but it had to happen SPOILER ALERT. If you look at the highlights you will see Nick tells Kate she is his everything. Kate still does not want to face up especially to herself just what Nick means to her. This makes her it is probably the only thing that would. Yeah author could try to throw in a moment like that into the middle but it would take away from the story line and not be half as good. I love it even though I hate it. The twist is going to allow them to grow the relationship develop all the characters even more and it is a necessary moment not a ploy. Good job authors. The next book will be released in June..

I love the whole series my only issue with this book was the ending. I don't mind a cliff hanger but since this book was published a while ago I have fears that we will not see a followup. I will miss all of the characters

I love ANYTHING by Janet Evanovich, and collect ALL of her books...This series is reminiscent of the 'White Collar' TV series (but with a female FBI and male 'Challenge' - but throw in the forbidden, but mutual lustful admiration of the Stephanie/Ranger early days - Think 'Castle and Beckett' embers - with a little of Lee Goldberg 'Monk' humor and twists thrown in - and you have this book 'The Scam' - part of the series (read them ALL)Great combination of the kind of reading I like....Thank you, Janet and Lee for some great reading fun....(and Janet alone, or with Charlotte, or whomever else she partners with - it always comes out good)

The Scam is the 4th book of conman Nick Fox and FBI agent Kate O'Hare, who work together secretly to bring down big adversaries all over the world. What I really enjoy about this series is the outstanding writing of the characters, their back and forth dialogue, funny exchanges, innuendo between them. The supporting characters also return and they are funny as usual. This is a fun and exciting read. There are many twists and turns. All the books in this series are written in that same fashion. Book is hard to put down. Fox and O'Hare series is my favorite books and I'm looking forward to the next book in this series. I most definitely recommend this book to those who enjoy mystery/thriller books. I'd also recommend the series as well.

I love Janet and have read most of her books. The only thing I don't like about the Lee Goldberg books are they always leave you with an unexplained question--probably so you will read the next book but I didn't get a satisfactory beginning on the next one.

Really enjoy Janet's new series, have all of them so far. Waiting for a new release of the next one

If you've read the other books in this series, then keep on reading. A great , fun and fast moving plot.

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