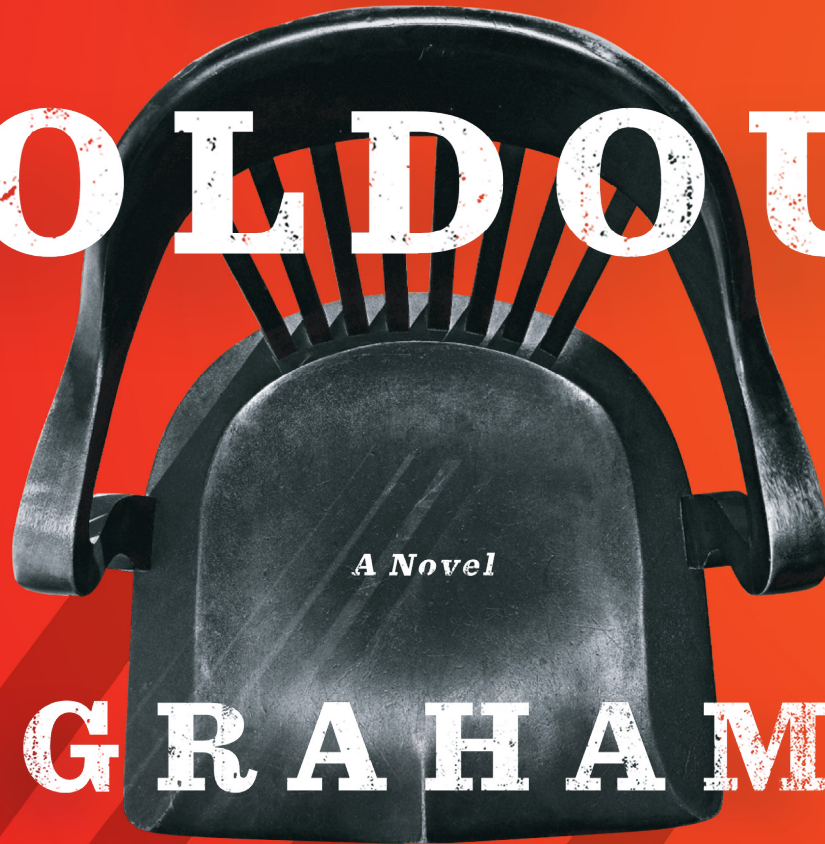


ONE JUROR CHANGED THE VERDICT. WHAT IF SHE WAS WRONG?

THE HOLDOUT



A Novel

GRAHAM
MOORE

*Book Club
Kit*

READ

A LETTER FROM AUTHOR GRAHAM MOORE

In the spring of 2008 I received a summons for jury duty. At the time, I was an unemployed aspiring novelist, living in New York, scraping together odd jobs here and there to pay my rent. When I opened the envelope and read the date on the summons, my first thought was honestly, “well, I don’t have anywhere else to be that day . . .”

I checked a box and promised the State of New York that I’d be at the courthouse at the appointed time. I assumed there’d be a lot of waiting around—which there was—so I brought my laptop. I figured I could do some interesting people-watching and maybe get some material I could use for my first novel, which I was then in the middle of writing.

I arrived early on a Monday morning and, to my shock, was quickly assigned a spot on the jury in a case of attempted murder. The trial went on for two weeks. When it was over, my eleven fellow jurors and I spent days engaged in an impassioned, searing debate about the evidence we’d heard. Our opinions ran the spectrum from those assured of the defendant’s innocence to those convinced of his guilt.

When our deliberations finally ended, all 12 of us voted to convict.

Later, I would learn that the judge gave the defendant a life sentence.

It’s been eleven years, and I still think about our decision every day. I remain confident that we were right. I sure hope that we were right. But every now and then, late at night as I lie in bed beside my wife and my dog, wrapped in the comfortable, happy life I’m so fortunate to enjoy, I can’t help but become overwhelmed with terror: What if we were wrong?

My third novel, *The Holdout*, is my attempt to come to terms with what happened eleven years ago. It is, I need to emphasize, fiction. The case depicted is imagined, though most elements have been taken from a number of real crimes. The main characters have been invented, though many are based on people I met during my jury service. Their debates, and their dynamics, represent heightened versions of ones I witnessed—though honestly, in some cases, not that heightened.

Maya Seale, the novel’s protagonist, is in some ways very much like me and in other ways not like me at all, but perhaps our greatest similarity is that neither of us *wanted* to go back and revisit what we were a part of a decade ago. But somewhere deep inside, I think we both knew that we had to.

I hope that you enjoy the novel and that it gives you a lot to talk about. I can promise you that it’s given me quite a bit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Graham Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "M".

LISTEN

THE HOLDOUT PLAYLIST

Listen to these true crime-inspired songs while reading *The Holdout*, or play them in the background while hosting your book club.

1. “Georgia Lee” by Tom Waits
2. “Jenny Was a Friend of Mine” by The Killers
3. “Ohio” by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
4. “Polly” by Nirvana
5. “Hurricane” by Bob Dylan
6. “Helter Skelter” by The Beatles
7. “Nebraska” by Bruce Springsteen
8. “Tom Dula” by Neil Young & Crazy Horse
9. “Suffer Little Children” by The Smiths
10. “Shankill Butchers” by The Decemberists
11. “John Wayne Gacy, Jr.” by Sufjan Stevens

TRUE CRIME PODCASTS

Can't get enough of *The Holdout's* riveting true crime feel? Check out one of these hit podcasts about true crime and bungled justice.

1. *My Favorite Murder*
2. *Serial* (Season 1)
3. *Dirty John*
4. *In the Dark*
5. *Criminal*
6. *Up and Vanished*
7. *Missing & Murdered: Finding Cleo*
8. *Bear Brook*
9. *Believed*
10. *Undisclosed*

DRINK

RED WHITE AND BLUE COCKTAIL

Ingredients

- 1 oz. grenadine
- 3 oz. lemonade
- 1 oz. vodka
- 1 oz. blue curacao
- ice

Instructions

- 1.** Add grenadine to a glass, then fill with ice. This will create the red layer.
- 2.** In a cocktail shaker, shake lemonade and vodka together, then gently pour the mixture over the back of a spoon into the glass. This will create the white layer of the drink.
- 3.** Cascade blue curacao over the back of a spoon to make the final blue layer. It's helpful to use a measuring cup with a spout to pour the liquid, instead of a shot glass.

[Source: creativeramblingsblog.com/red-white-blue-layered-cocktail](http://creativeramblingsblog.com/red-white-blue-layered-cocktail)



WATCH

There are twelve jurors in *The Holdout*. After you've finished reading, why not watch one of these twelve movies about other groups of twelve?

1. *The Dirty Dozen* (1967)
2. *12 Angry Men* (1957)
3. *12 Monkeys* (1995)
4. *12 Years a Slave* (2013)
5. *Ocean's Twelve* (2004)
6. *Twelve* (2010)
7. *Short Term 12* (2013)
8. *12 and Holding* (2005)
9. *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949)
10. *The Twelve Chairs* (1970)
11. *12 Dates of Christmas* (2011)
12. *Cheaper by the Dozen* (2003)

DISCUSS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *THE HOLDOUT*

1. While you were reading the book, did you ever doubt that Maya voted the wrong way in the case against Bobby Nock?
2. Were you surprised by the ending to Bobby and Jessica's story? At any point, did you have suspicions that the book would end this way? What did you think might happen?
3. What do you think *The Holdout* says about the American justice system at large? Did it make you believe that just justice can still be served, or did it cause you to have doubts?
4. Discuss the docuseries that gets the group back together. What does this say about the performative nature of the law? How would you feel if you had been one of the members of the jury?
5. How does Maya's past help her in her career as a defense attorney? Does it hinder her in any way?
6. Maya and Rick aren't the only ones affected by the case. Discuss how the other jurors' lives were forever changed by their involvement.
7. Maya's parents stand by her side when the allegations come out against her. How does that support help Maya throughout the course of the narrative?
8. Jessica's mother makes questionable choices towards the end of the book. Can you empathize with or make sense of her actions? What would you have done in her position?