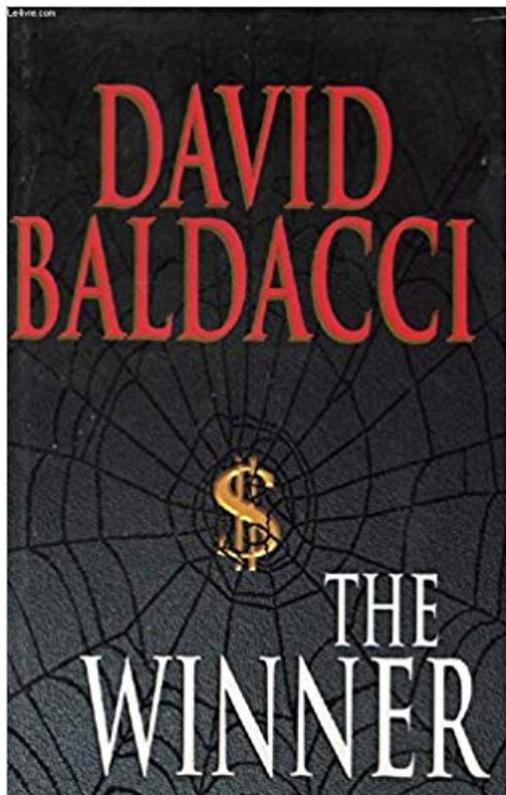


The Winner *by* David Baldacci



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Reviews of the *The Winner* by David Baldacci

• Painwind

One of Mr. Baldacci's stand-alone novels.

LuAnn Tyler of Georgia is a broke, penniless, unskilled, dead end job waitress at a truck stop. She and her live in boyfriend, Duane, live in a broken down trailer with their young baby. Duane's prime function in life is to merely get drunk and deal some drugs. LuAnn has her looks, but nothing else. Enter Jackson. Between them, she hits the lottery; as Jackson has rigged it. She must meet certain specifics to keep her money. She doesn't.

Jackson, though having a brilliant business mind, is completely psychotic. LuAnn has basically double-crossed him by not keeping her end of the agreement. Since no one crosses Jackson, the cat and mouse chase begins.

I found the plot to be novel and different. The characters seemed to lack depth and were somewhat one-dimensional.

Typically along the way a few murders do occur as does a new love interest for the beautiful LuAnn. Actually, he's a bit of knight in shining armor, as well.

The ending, though it does have a twist included, is quite predictable.

All in all, it's an entertaining, suspenseful read. Mr. Baldacci's talented writing also helps.

- **IWantYou**

During the drought season of new releases at the beginning of the calendar year I revisited a number of best-selling books that I had read many years ago. THE WINNER is the third standalone book by David Baldacci released in 1998 which immediately became a best-seller. It is still a pretty good read and an entertaining fantasy thriller.

The fantasy setting has dirt-poor single mother LuAnn Tyler winning about \$100 million in the national lottery. The real fantasy is that LuAnn had been selected by a clever sociopath who could fix the winning numbers. LuAnn had been given a deadline to accept the offer and the sociopath ("Mr Jackson", a master of disguise) had arranged for her to be eliminated if she didn't accept on time.

Minutes before accepting LuAnn walks into her run-down trailer and finds her deadbeat partner has just been shot over a drug deal. She hits the assassin with a phone and thinks she has killed him. On the run, she calls Jackson and agrees to the deal. Jackson helps her with a disguise and a new identity and she and her daughter escape to live overseas with an understanding that she will never return to the USA. Over several years, Jackson invests the money very successfully and shares the gains with her so LuAnn becomes a very wealthy person.

Jackson reminds her that she should never come back to the US. But after 10 years LuAnn is sick of living overseas and desperately wants to return to the US. When she does this without Jackson's knowledge he is very angry and threatens to punish her and her daughter. The plot then twists and turns as the FBI and the IRS are searching for her in connection with the lottery scam and tax avoidance and Jackson tries to take retribution.

The only help comes from the mysterious Matthew Riggs who has contracted to build a security fence for her. Of course, a strong attraction builds between Riggs and LuAnn.

This is an entertaining fantasy thriller with an unbelievable and very dangerous sociopath pulling the strings. Baldacci went on to write many successful series but some of the early standalone ones are still among his best.

- **Anarawield**

Have you ever thought about winning the lottery? Think about all those items on your wish list you could buy? I know I have, and would bet most others have also. What if you knew the game was fixed to give you the winning numbers? Would the fact that the money was essentially stolen curb your enthusiasm? Would your ethics be strong enough to turn down millions in tainted money? This is the dilemma facing single mother LuAnn Tyler in David Baldacci's page turner of a novel "The Winner."

Almost everyone in Rikersville, Georgia, grew up poor and would remain poor, perpetuating a cycle of poverty from one generation to the next. Lu Ann Tyler was no exception. Like most other girls her age, she quit school in 7th grade in order to get a job. After her mother's death left her with no place to stay, she moved in with loser-with-a-capital "L" Duane Harvey, and barely out of her teens soon

had a baby girl, Lisa. Lisa became Lu Ann's pride and joy and reason for living. However working as a waitress at a truck stop brought in little more than enough to pay the bills. Most women in Lu Ann's position would resign themselves to living their remaining years with little to look forward to. But Lu Ann had a few things most others did not: despite her 7th grade education, she had an above average intelligence; extraordinary attention to detail; a stubborn streak and iron will; and exquisite beauty.

Lu Ann received a telephone call for a job interview at a rented storefront in the local mall. The man on the phone said the pay would be \$100 dollars per day for two weeks, maybe longer. With the \$1,000 that she would make, Lu Ann was planning her getaway from Duane and Rikersville. However, at the interview Jackson, the man she had spoken to on the telephone, offered her a more enticing option: Guarantee of winning the lottery, no less than \$50 million. Jackson did not tell her if she refused he would have her killed. Lu Ann knew if she accepted the money there would be conditions that went along with the payout. Nobody offers millions of dollars out of the goodness of their heart. But the thing that bothered her most of all was it would be no different than stealing, and Lu Ann was intrinsically an honest person.

Jackson had given Lu Ann a deadline, after which the offer would expire. Lu Ann had resigned herself to follow her honorable instincts when certain events unfolded leaving her with the desire to leave Rikersville sooner rather than later. Lacking enough money to go anywhere, Lu Ann accepted Jackson's offer with only minutes to spare. Romanello, the assassin hired by Jackson, was in position to kill Lu Ann and was called off by his employer in the nick of time. Sensing there was something far bigger going on, Romanello decided to follow Lu Ann. When Jackson discovered the trouble Lu Ann was in, he was not pleased. Pursued by the authorities and a lethal assassin, Jackson agreed to help her change her name and get her out of the country as soon as she collected her lottery winnings, with the caveat that Lu Ann never return to the United States. But her desire to give Lisa a somewhat normal life caused Lu Ann, after an extended period of time, to reconsider the deal she had struck with Jackson.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The pace was steady and picked up gradually until the very exciting conclusion. There was no cliff hanger as I expected the outcome that was presented, however the story was compelling enough to keep the pages turning. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes to root for the underdogs in this world.

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