

Windermere Press, Inc., 1465 Rte 23 So., #190, Wayne, NJ 07470
Media@WindermerePress.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Media@WindermerePress.com

SILENT COUNSEL

By Ken Isaacson

On Sale: September 5, 2007

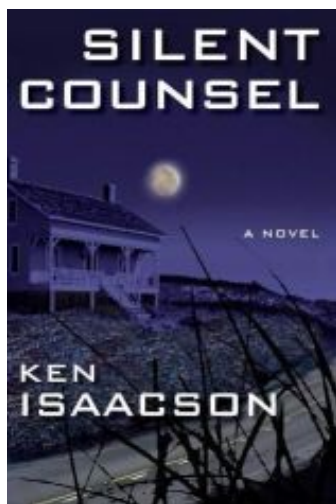
Hardcover – 6X9

\$24.95

ISBN-10: 0-0788622-4-4

ISBN-13: 978-0-9788622-4-4

Distributed by Independent Publishers Group (IPG)
Small Press Selection



“[*Silent Counsel*] boasts a complex story and heart-pounding climax that will have readers looking forward to Isaacson’s next.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Ken Isaacson’s first legal thriller...is on a par with the works of John Grisham”

—*The Mystery Gazette*

Suppose the unimaginable: What if your child were killed in a hit-and-run? And the one person who knew the driver’s identity—his lawyer—couldn’t tell you his name because of a legal technicality?

Silent Counsel is the story of just such a nightmare. After Stacy Altman’s six-year-old son is run down in front of their house, with no witnesses to the tragic accident, she learns that the driver has hired attorney Scott Heller to negotiate a plea arrangement with the prosecutor. But he’s instructed Scott not to reveal his name until a satisfactory agreement is in place. The prosecutor refuses to make a deal, and the court rebuffs Stacy’s efforts to force Scott to tell her—or even the authorities—who his client is, holding that the information is protected by the attorney-client privilege.

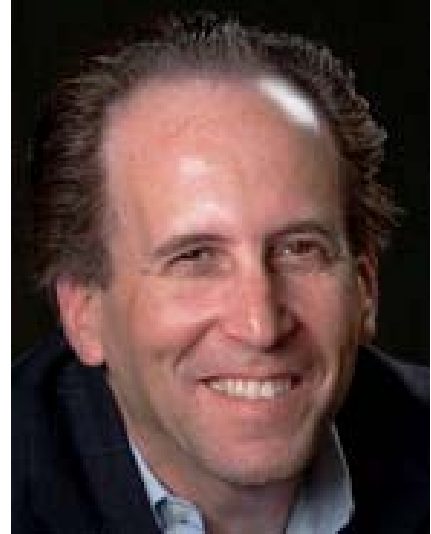
Since the court won't do anything to help Stacy track down her son's killer, she takes matters into her own hands. And she's determined to make Scott talk—at any cost...

When Stacy's stalking of Scott's young daughter escalates into a kidnapping, Scott makes the only reasonable choice a parent can—cooperate and give up the client. That's when Scott discovers that doing the right thing isn't as easy as he thought—and now the mother isn't the only one looking for the child's killer.

About the Author:

Ken Isaacson has been a practicing attorney for more than twenty-five years. Born and raised in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and went on to earn his law degree at Columbia Law School. He began his legal career at a major Wall Street firm, and continues to practice law today as in-house general counsel to an international transportation company.

The idea for *Silent Counsel* came to Ken upon reading a true account of a hit-and-run incident along a highway in Florida some time ago. In that case, the driver hired an attorney and charged him with the task of negotiating a plea agreement while at the same time keeping his (the client's) name secret under a claim of the attorney-client privilege. A court battle ensued, testing the bounds of the time-honored doctrine of attorney-client confidentiality: Could the simple name of a client be "privileged information"?



That case resolved itself before the novel legal question was answered by the courts—the driver ultimately came forward on his own. But the magazine article got Ken thinking. What if the court were to hold that a lawyer attempting to negotiate a plea agreement for a hit-and-run driver didn't have to reveal his client's identity? The prosecutor, no doubt, would refuse to bargain. But what if the mother of the small victim found out that the lawyer knew who had killed her child but maintained his silence, relying on the privilege?

How far would the mother go to find out who killed her child? And how dedicated to the principle of attorney-client confidentiality would the attorney be when the going got tough? It is these questions that gave rise to *Silent Counsel*.

Ken is an active member of the Mystery Writers of America, and served on the Board of Directors of MWA's New York chapter from 2002 through 2006. He received that organization's Silver Noose Award upon completing his second term. Ken continues to serve on the chapter's Mentor Committee, Program Committee, Membership Committee, and Website Committee. He is also the moderator of the chapter's online discussion forum. You can find him on the Web at www.KenIsaacson.com and at www.MySpace.com/KenIsaacson. Ken is working on his second novel.

He lives in New Jersey with his wife, Sylvia, their dog, Oakley, and their four cats, Nipper, Garth, Chelsea, and Cleopatra. He has three terrific sons, Brandon, Devon, and Jared, three wonderful stepdaughters, Dail, Dawn, and Daryl, and three amazing grandchildren, Kyle, Daniel, and Danielle.

More praise for **SILENT COUNSEL**:

“Ken Isaacson is an exciting new voice in crime fiction, and **SILENT COUNSEL** is his stunning debut—a legal thriller with a fascinating twist that will keep you turning pages to the unpredictable conclusion.”

—**Linda Fairstein**, *New York Times* bestselling author and former prosecutor

“Ken Isaacson scares us with the ultimate ethical nightmare: what if you endanger your family just by doing your job? **SILENT COUNSEL** is a smashing debut, with everything you could want in a legal thriller.”

—**Tess Gerritsen**, *New York Times* bestselling author of **THE MEPHISTO CLUB**

“Attorney Ken Isaacson knows his stuff. He knows the ins and outs of legal practice, and he knows the human cost when the system fails. And, best of all, he knows how to put together a book you won't want to put down.”

—**SJ Rozan**, author of **ABSENT FRIENDS**

“**SILENT COUNSEL** delivers everything you could want in a legal thriller. A rock-solid debut from Ken Isaacson.”

—**Steve Hamilton**, Edgar Award-winning author of **A STOLEN SEASON**

“A great premise for a legal thriller: a hit-and-run driver, who can stay anonymous, nevertheless contacts a lawyer toward doing the right thing. But, as Ken Isaacson shows in this haunting and harrowing novel, the ‘right thing’ has many possible definitions. And consequences. An outstanding debut, and a serious candidate for Best First Novel awards.

—**Jeremiah Healy**, author of **TURNABOUT** and **THE ONLY GOOD LAWYER**

“Isaacson takes his readers on a thrilling roller-coaster ride through the dark morasses of the legal system. With his characters, he pierces the moral dilemmas faced by those seeking ultimate justice; with his plotting, he provides enough twists and turns to keep the pages flying by. In all, an excellent debut forecasting more great work on the horizon.”

—**David Hosp**, author of **DARK HARBOR**

“From its explosive opening to its heart-wrenching conclusion, **SILENT COUNSEL** has everything I love in a legal thriller—insider details, unforgettable characters, twists, turns, and double-crosses. Ken Isaacson really knows his stuff.”

—**Michele Martinez**, author of **MOST WANTED** and **THE FINISHING SCHOOL**

Q & A with Ken Isaacson:

Q. First, congratulations on the upcoming release of *Silent Counsel*. I've got to say the premise of the story is very intriguing. Why don't you describe it to everyone?

A. *Silent Counsel* asks you to suppose the unimaginable: What if your child was killed in a hit-and-run, and the one person who knew the driver's identity—his lawyer—didn't have to tell you his name? *Silent Counsel* is the story of just such a nightmare. A six-year-old boy is run down in front of his house, with no witnesses. His mother learns that the driver has hired an attorney to negotiate a plea arrangement with the prosecutor, but has instructed the lawyer to keep his name secret until a satisfactory agreement is in place. The prosecutor refuses to make a deal, and the court rejects the mother's efforts to force the attorney to tell her—or even the authorities—who his client is, holding that it's privileged information. Since the court won't do anything to help the mother find who's responsible, she takes matters into her own hands. And she's determined to make the attorney talk—at any cost.

Q. You're right—it does sound like a nightmare, from both the perspective of the mother *and* the lawyer. Could something like that actually happen? Could just the *name* of an attorney's client really be privileged information?

A. Believe it or not, it's not outside the realm of possibility. As a lawyer, I did a fair amount of legal research in preparing to write this story, and while there's no firmly established rule one way or the other, there's enough legal precedent to justify a holding that under just the right conditions, the simple name of a lawyer's client can be considered privileged information.

Q. Now, as you say, you're a lawyer. But you went to MIT. Law wouldn't be the first career I'd think of on hearing MIT. What's up with that?

A. You're right—it's not typical. I don't know what the numbers were when I graduated from MIT, but today I think only about 4 out of 100 MIT grads go on to law school. When I was growing up in the 50's and 60's, the space race was in full swing, and I was utterly fascinated. I was eight years old when I watched Alan Shepard become the first American in space, and I don't think I missed watching a single space launch from then until the last moon mission in 1972. I went to MIT with my eye on the stars, but things changed. That was the time of hippies, freaks, Vietnam, and Watergate. Like John Lennon said, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans."

Q. So you've been a lawyer for more than twenty-five years. When did you decide to write a novel? Did it take long?

A. [Laughs] I was afraid you'd ask me that. Let's just say it was quite some time ago...and life happened while I was writing it. My wife keeps telling me it better not take me as long to write the second one. But seriously, it started as something I was doing just for

myself. I'd come across a magazine article about a hit-and-run incident along a deserted highway in Florida. The driver had hired an attorney and told him to negotiate a plea agreement while at the same time keeping his (the client's) name secret under a claim of privilege. The case was resolved before the court decided whether the name of a client could be privileged information—the client had an attack of conscience and came forward on his own. But the article got me thinking. As a lawyer, I write for a living, and I guess there are cynics who'd even say lawyers write fiction for a living! So, I decided to write the story that, after life happened to me for a while, finally became *Silent Counsel*.

Q. You say there's a second book in the works? What can we expect in that?

A. I guess it won't surprise you to hear that it, too, is law-related. In *Death Benefit*, a young law student working a summer job at a law office investigates the death of a firm client. What seems to be an accidental carbon monoxide poisoning due to a malfunctioning water heater leads our protagonist to discover the unseemly side of the burgeoning industry of viatical settlements.

Q. Viatical settlements? What are they?

A. [Smiles] I didn't have clue either, before I started writing *Death Benefit*. Consider a typical life insurance policy. The problem with life insurance is that you pay and pay and pay, but there's no upside to it until you die. When you're terminally ill, though, you could find plenty of uses for that death benefit now. A viatical company offers you an option. It will pay you a significant percentage of the policy's face value today, become the beneficiary of your policy, and take over the premium payments. You now have a significant sum of money available to you today, when it means the most. What's in it for the viatical company? It's playing the numbers, and is banking on the fact that you'll pass away before its cash outlay exceeds the death benefit it'll receive from your insurance company when you die. That's their profit. If you live longer than expected, and the company's out-of-pocket expense exceeds the death benefit—that's a cost of doing business. In *Death Benefit*, we come across a viatical company that's found a way to cut costs.

Q. I understand you work as general counsel to a major transportation company. It must be difficult to find the time to write. How do you manage that?

A. My alarm rings at 4:30 every morning, and I'm at my desk by six. That gives me a few solid hours before the emails start coming in and the phone starts ringing. At least that's my schedule now. When I was writing *Silent Counsel*, I had an hour's drive to and from my office. I got myself a handheld recorder and dictated on the Garden State Parkway each night and each morning. When I got to my office, I would transcribe what I'd dictated. Back then, bumper-to-bumper traffic meant a good day's writing!

Q. I heard you ride a motorcycle. Have you been riding for long? What kind of bike do you have?

A. [Smiles] Ah, my bike. I ride a 2006 Harley Ultra Classic Electra Glide. I'd often told my kids that when I turned 50, I would buy a motorcycle. And when my 50th birthday came, my wife looked at me and said "Well, let's *both* do it!" And we did. My kids thought I was nuts. But I have to tell you, I love it! Nothing better on a summer day than for my wife and me to get on our bikes and ride the whole day.

Q. One last question: There are hundreds of lawyers turned authors out there. What is it about your writing that sets you apart from them?

A. Well, first, I do hope that there *is* something that sets me apart. First, what I try to do is put my characters in situations that you won't find beyond the realm of believability. In much of what we read, dead bodies pile up with nearly every turn of the page. I've been a lawyer for more than twenty-five years, and I know a lot of lawyers. I can't name one that's racked up a string of dead bodies on any of his or her cases. Maybe I just keep dull company. But in my stories, I think you'll be able to identify with the characters. You'll be able to say, "Yeah, I could see that happening. In fact, I could see it happening to me. And I wonder how *I'd* react if it did."

Second, I try to pick an underlying theme for my stories. Nothing preachy, nothing too weighty, but something that's just a bit more than "victim dies, now figure out who did it." In *Silent Counsel*, it's the attorney-client privilege. Everyone's familiar with the concept of "privileged information," and the story shows the very real impact that the doctrine has on the people it touches—both the lawyer who's bound to remain silent, and the person on the other side who wants to know what the lawyer is keeping secret.

In *Death Benefit*, it will be the world of viatical settlements. There's a whole industry out there that not too many people know about. And while there are no doubt many reputable players in the field, there do appear to be those who prey on the sick and the old. *Death Benefit* will get you thinking.

Now, don't get the idea that this is all "Ken's view on X." All the while, I think I give you a ride that you'll enjoy! Like Tess Gerritsen has said about *Silent Counsel*: "Everything you could want in a legal thriller!"

Q. Ken, thanks for taking the time to talk with us! Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A. Please visit my website at www.Kenlsaacson.com, where you can read the first chapter of *Silent Counsel*. And while you're there, sign up for my mailing list to receive periodic updates as the publication date draws near. Also, check out my page on MySpace.com, at www.MySpace.com/Kenlsaacson. And thanks so much for having me!