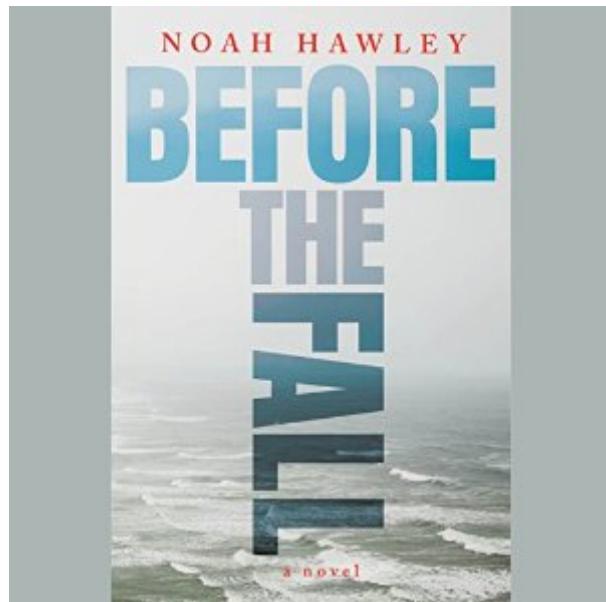


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# Before The Fall



## Synopsis

From the Emmy, PEN, Peabody, Critics' Choice, and Golden Globe Award-winning creator of the TV show *Fargo* comes the thriller of the year. On a foggy summer night, 11 people - 10 privileged, one down-on-his-luck painter - depart Martha's Vineyard on a private jet headed for New York. Sixteen minutes later the unthinkable happens: The plane plunges into the ocean. The only survivors are Scott Burroughs - the painter - and a four-year-old boy who is now the last remaining member of an immensely wealthy and powerful media mogul's family. With chapters weaving between the aftermath of the crash and the backstories of the passengers and crew members - including a Wall Street titan and his wife, a Texan-born party boy just in from London, a young woman questioning her path in life, and a career pilot - the mystery surrounding the tragedy heightens. As the passengers' intrigues unravel, odd coincidences point to a conspiracy. Was it merely by dumb chance that so many influential people perished? Or was something far more sinister at work? Events soon threaten to spiral out of control in an escalating storm of media outrage and accusations. And while Scott struggles to cope with fame that borders on notoriety, the authorities scramble to salvage the truth from the wreckage. Amid pulse-quickenning suspense, the fragile relationship between Scott and the young boy glows at the heart of this stunning novel, raising questions of fate, human nature, and the inextricable ties that bind us together.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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## Customer Reviews

Before the Fall is a book that really defies any attempt to categorize it. The setup is relatively simple.

Scott Burroughs, a washed up painter befriends a rich trophy wife in Martha's Vineyard and hitches a ride back to NYC on their private jet. That jet crashes and Scott is the sole adult survivor and saves a four year old boy named JJ with an amazing 15 mile swim from the crash site to the shore. Not long after the swim, questions begin piling up next to the new (and unwanted) notoriety for Scott. Did the crash have anything to do with the Wall Street criminal that was on the flight? Or the Roger Ailes stand in? Was it related to a kidnapping, a co-pilot with drugs in his system, an Israeli bodyguard or a pilot with a history of nosebleeds? On one track of the book the crash is explored through the eyes of the FBI and NTSB as well as the victims of the crash up to the moment of impact. On the other track of the book, Scott is dealing with his celebrity and the pitfalls that come with it. Bill Cunningham (a stand in for Bill O'Reilly) is using the death of his friend on the flight to pump up his ratings, attacking Scott and some of his friends who have liberal leanings. Scott is also still concerned with the boy JJ, now living with a \$103 million trust fund in upstate New York with his aunt and her loser husband. And there is the small matter of the FBI looking into Scott's paintings; all of disasters. Frankly, it is a hard book to explain. Part of the interest in the book is figuring out whether Scott had anything to do with the crash and whether or not it was even a crime or just simple mechanical failure. Watching Scott's journey through the book is watching the work of a master storyteller.

Every year, it seems, the mainstream book reviewers anoint a "thriller of the summer" - the one everyone will be talking about on the beach. Two years ago it was "The Truth about the Harry Quebert Affair" by Joel Dicker, which arrived from Europe garlanded with critical raves (mostly French), a literary prize (also French), and was duly raved about in the NY Times. It turned out to be an absolutely dreadful book, full of leaden writing and cardboard plotting. This summer the chosen one seems to be Noah Hawley's "Before the Fall", which has also been salivated over in the Times ("mesmerising, surprise-jammed") and other prominent news outlets. "Before the Fall" is by no means as terrible as the Dicker book, and boasts an engaging enough plot, vivid enough characters and a strong narrative pull. (Hawley is the highly regarded writer of the TV series "Fargo.") It kept me going for about 200 of its 400 pages. The hook - what caused a private plane carrying prominent New Yorkers to crash mysteriously off Martha's Vineyard? - has been adequately summarized in these comments. Hawley is less interested in following the investigation by a good guy from the National Transportation Safety Board (African-American, of course) and a bad guy from the FBI (white, of course) than he is in fleshing out the characters who were on board, each of whom receives detailed chapters of their own, including a character-defining childhood epiphany. The

scheme of the novel is sound. But - and this is where I got bogged down - the characters amount to little more than elaborately filled out cliches, and the writing doesn't know when to leave well enough alone.

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