



The Analyst

By John Katzenbach

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Happy 53rd birthday, Doctor. Welcome to the first day of your death.

When a mysterious letter bearing these threatening words is delivered to Dr. Frederick Starks, his predictable life is thrown into chaos. Suddenly, the psychoanalyst is plunged into a horrific game designed by a man who calls himself Rumpelstiltskin. The rules: in two weeks Starks must guess Rumpelstiltskin's identity and the source of his fury. If he succeeds, he goes free. If he fails, one by one, Rumpelstiltskin will destroy fifty-two of Dr. Starks' loved ones—friends, relatives, children—unless the good doctor agrees to kill himself.

You ruined my life. And now I fully intend to ruin yours.

Ignoring the threat is not an option. When one of his patients dies under the wheels of a subway train and a detective investigating the case is struck by a hit-and-run driver, Starks knows his tormentor means business. And then there are the messengers sent to guide Starks on his descent, from the seductive woman in a trench coat who calls herself Virgil to a lawyer named Merlin weaving a spell of havoc and lies. His bank account rifled, his credit ruined, and his reputation dragged through the mud, Starks must rouse himself from the cocoon of his life, unlock the secret of Rumpelstiltskin, and find a way to stop the madman—before he himself is driven mad.

One thing of which you can be absolutely certain: My anger knows no limits.

A mesmerizing thriller that gives a wicked new twist to the doctor-patient relationship, *The Analyst's Last Days* weaves a blistering race against time with a tale of identities shattered and chosen, disguises taken and discarded. With his trademark style, breathless plots, and brilliantly realized characters, John Katzenbach proves once again why both critics and fans alike have crowned him the master of suspense.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Penzler Pick, February 2002: This thriller from the author of *Hart's War* is addictive. Analyst Dr. Frederick Starks has just turned 53 and, on his birthday, receives a letter informing him that he has ruined the letter-writer's life and now his own life is about to be ruined.

Starks must solve a riddle, he is told. He must find out whose life he ruined within two weeks. If he does not, he must kill himself. If he does not kill himself, then those nearest and dearest to him will be killed. The letter is signed, Rumpelstiltskin. At first Starks is dismissive--but he does call relatives to see that they are all right. Not all of them are. In fact Starks is convinced that the letter writer is deadly serious when he discovers how the birthday of his 14-year-old great-niece was ruined. He must now engage in the game or be responsible for the lives of others.

While he works frantically to try and unlock the past and find whose life he could possibly have ruined, Rumpelstiltskin is also busy. Within hours of receiving that first shattering letter, one of Dr. Starks's patients throws himself under a subway train, though Starks knows the patient was not suicidal.

When the police tell him that a couple and a homeless woman saw the man jump, Starks tries to find them. He finds only the homeless woman, who tells him that she was given money by the couple to tell what she witnessed. Starks is certain that Rumpelstiltskin must be one of the couple, but he's wrong. It's even more sinister than that, and when he meets the accomplices, he realizes that his adversary has been planning his revenge for years.

Soon, Starks's life is spiraling downward. There is nothing hidden from Rumpelstiltskin. His credit cards, his bank accounts, his patients, his homes in Manhattan and in Massachusetts, his reputation--nothing and no one is safe as Starks races against time as his world shrinks and his options run out. The clock is ticking as he hunts a ruthless psychopath who always seems to be one step ahead of him. As Starks tries to figure out what to do besides react to his life spinning out of control, he uses his training, his dwindling resources, and every weapon available to him to combat this relentless and deadly foe. --*Otto Penzler*

From Library Journal

Katzenbach (*Hart's War*) never writes the same book twice, nor does he use the same plot devices or characters. His latest opens as New York City psychoanalyst Frederick (Ricky) Starks receives an anonymous missive saying that Starks has ruined the writer's life and that he has ten days in which to discover his or her identity. If he fails, he must commit suicide; if he does not comply with this order, someone in his family will suffer or die. At first Ricky is disoriented and unable to function effectively, but he soon begins to take action. Using his research skills, he finds that a former patient was so despondent that she killed herself, leaving three children as orphans. But this information is not enough to save Ricky's life. Thus, he goes on a journey of self-discovery, calling upon unknown depths of endurance and using his medical training in order to survive. This masterfully told thriller is impossible to put down and equally impossible to forget. For all fiction collections. Jo Ann Vicarel, Cleveland Heights-University Heights P.L., OH

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From [Booklist](#)

Katzenbach, two-time Edgar Award nominee for *In the Heat of the Summer* (1982) and *The Shadow Man*

(1995), puts a suspense spin on the Rumpelstiltskin fairy tale. An Upper East Side psychoanalyst, Dr. Frederick Starks spends his fifty-third birthday at his practice "listening to people complain about their mothers." When his last patient leaves, he finds a letter in the waiting room. The letter writer, who only identifies himself as a former patient, gives Starks an ultimatum: the patient will kill one of Starks' relatives within two weeks, unless Starks either correctly identifies him in an ad placed in the *New York Times* or kills himself. The threat is quickly made real when Starks learns that his teenage niece (who shares his birthday) has received a note promising sexual assault and torture. Katzenbach ratchets up the suspense with every page: as Starks embarks on his mental odyssey through 20 years of treatment to discover the identity of his tormentor, he is constantly besieged by more moves from the other side--false charges of seducing a patient, loss of his credit cards, loss of his status. Starks is in the position of fighting for his life and that of an unknown but soon-to-be-killed relative, while his abilities and sanity are steadily being eroded. Ticking-clock suspense. *Connie Fletcher*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daniel Spencer:

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