

## Synopsis of **EDGE OF THE TRIANGLE** by d. h. cook

Genre: Historical Fiction      Word count: 99K

At the turn of the twentieth century, despite roaring advances in technology, the Millwood family scratches out a meager existence in the fields, docks and pubs of Queenstown, Ireland. When patriarch Rory Millwood seizes a chance to become a Revenue Agent, his true character comes through--and greed, violence and drinking shatter his family.

To avoid the show down that would surely result in one of their deaths, Rory's son Junior escapes to America, heartbroken to leave his long-suffering mother and his fiancé, Moira. He survives the ordeal of steerage and confusion at Ellis Island only to be beaten and robbed within minutes of setting foot in Manhattan. Despite extreme prejudice against Irish workers, his quick wit lands him a job in the garment district.

Junior starts in the simplest and lowest job, unaware his pay is being skimmed and he's being over-charged for rent. After being injured while rescuing a co-worker, he is nearly fired. But after a month of recuperation, he returns to the Triangle Waist Company. Junior receives a telegram saying his future mother-in-law has died and Moira is sailing to marry him.

Within days of her arrival, Moira has her dream wedding in Brooklyn. Their life together seems to be going along smoothly when Moira also finds work at the shirtwaist factory and Junior receives a promotion, but then tragedy strikes. As a result of a prank, Junior may have accidentally triggered a flash fire that kills 146 workers including Moira and their unborn child.

In the turmoil afterwards, Junior turns to drink and work in the rough and tumble Gas House District in lower Manhattan where his personality and humor ingratiates him with some of the most influential politicians in American history. These connections soon unlock the door to a dream job as Mayoral Inspector, answering directly to no one and accountable only to his own conscience.

While on the road to enormous wealth, Junior meets a former co-worker, Helena. They fall in love, marry, honeymoon, and return to a dream house in the wilds of Long Island. Despite all being well, they long to have children. After having given up such hopes, Helena becomes pregnant in her early forties, only to tragically die during childbirth. Stunned by grief and guilt over her death, he abandons his daughter Clarissa to the care of hired servants, until a chance tumble, brings him back to his senses.

Young Clarissa grows up in comfort until she is stricken as a teen-ager with devastating side-effects from a vaccination. Through good care, she overcomes the emotional

oversensitivity that occasionally cripples her and goes away to college. Focusing on her studies and the JFK presidential campaign keeps her focus off her symptoms, and then love enters her life in the form of John Atwater, the privileged son of a seemingly-successful retailer.

Their college romance leads to an unplanned pregnancy. After graduation, at their wedding Clarissa is invited to join a committee that would lead to the formation of the Peace Corps. In order to face the consequences of mental illness head on, Clarissa leaves her husband and baby boy, Mikey, to lead a Peace Corps team in Africa. Following a two-year separation, she returns stronger and healthier than she has ever felt in her life and withstands the trauma of John Kennedy's assassination.

Clarissa is pregnant with their second child as she and John study towards their law degrees. After the birth of their second son, Jadon, Clarissa finds work on Robert Kennedy's staff and becomes a key assistant during his run for the presidency. Her family gets to see her on TV in her glory on Election Day in the California primary, but the victory is shattered by assassination. Clarissa suffers a nervous breakdown that debilitates her for decades.

John must face raising his sons alone and moves in with Junior in the beautiful home on Long Island. Mikey and Jadon couldn't be more different, with Mikey being an overly-emotional boy like his mother. Junior confesses to John the secrets from the past including the tragic fire and his extortion of millions of dollars. But John doesn't share his secret -- he has kept Clarissa locked away under false premises.

After Junior's death, the boys read his memoirs and discover his astonishing secrets. Mikey sees what has happened to him and his mother as divine punishment for his grandfather's sins. He determines to make atonement that will free his mother, brother and father.

The novel closes with Mikey's atoning suicide before the centennial commemoration of the fire and John's decision to welcome Clarissa back into his life.