



LIFE AND TRUST
CONCEPTUAL NOTE FROM JON RONSON



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Life And Trust is a vast tapestry of true stories from Progressive Era New York. Every character in the show is either based on or inspired by a real person who lived in the City in the late 19th or early 20th century. Some, like Evelyn Nesbitt, are celebrated historical figures—charismatic and intriguing, with remarkable lives. Others, like the Vaudeville performers, are less well known. They just had a brief cameo in a book about early Vaudeville, and I took those breadcrumbs and gave them life. Others still, like Dr Kellogg and Mrs Davenport, are inspired by Charles Davenport and his followers, the troubling, powerful eugenicists of the time.

In *Life And Trust* everyone has their own distinct narrative arc—each one full and rich. Sometimes the characters intersect, and there are Faustian elements to each narrative, but in a sense *Life And Trust* is both one show and 25 shows.

I chose the era for a number of reasons. First, it made logical sense that if the broken J.G. Conwell is—on the eve of the 1929 Great Crash—allowed to travel back in time to his days as a carefree young man, he would return to the Gilded Age. But it's also a wonderful period to explore. So much of American life began during that time—political and social reform, the birth of cinema and Vaudeville, the explosion of stage magic and escapology, the rise of shadowy underground libertine clubs, Thomas Edison's lightbulb, junk sciences like eugenics...

Life And Trust, then, is a Faustian fever dream of Progressive Era New York, populated by the ghosts of people who were really there.

– Jon Ronson