



## Pacific Avenue

*Anne L. Watson*

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## **Pacific Avenue** Anne L. Watson

Richard Johnson is a black veteran, back from Vietnam and trying to rebuild his life by attending college in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He's smart and handsome, yet haunted by memories that plague his sleep and send him flying for cover at sudden noises.

Kathy Woodbridge is a white student in one of Richard's classes. She's pretty, idealistic, and drawn irresistibly to Richard's combination of charm and aliveness. It leads her into a relationship different from any she had expected -- and to a tragedy greater than any she can face.

Lacey Greer is a secretary in San Pedro, California. When Kathy shows up at her office and is hired with no record of her past, Lacey wonders what Kathy could be running from. She's determined to find out, and to help if she can.

Set in the early seventies, "Pacific Avenue" explores themes of love, belonging, helpfulness, hope, forgiveness, reconciliation, interracial marriage, and healing from the trauma of war.

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Anne L. Watson, a retired historic preservation architecture consultant, is the author of numerous novels, plus books on such diverse subjects as soapmaking and baking with cookie molds. Anne has lived at various times in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and San Pedro, California, the settings of "Pacific Avenue." She currently lives in Friday Harbor, Washington, in the San Juan Islands, with her husband and fellow author, Aaron Shepard.

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## SAMPLE

I chose a window seat on the Greyhound, but I didn't look out. For almost the whole trip, I stared at the rough tan upholstery of the seat in front of me. It had a rip on one side and three dark stains.

A woman settled into the aisle seat. She raised her footrest, but it clunked back down. When I glanced her way, she caught my eye and smiled.

"How do you make these things stay put?" she asked.

I meant to answer -- the words were lined up in my mind. But before I could say them, they slipped apart like beads when the string breaks. I gave up and studied the seat cover again. Still tan, still ripped, still stained. The next time I looked, the woman was gone.

Evening came, but I didn't use my reading light. Late at night, awake in the breathing dark, I imagined running my fingers over the seat back, erasing the stains, mending the seam. In the morning, I almost believed I could fix it. So, I took care not to touch it, not to find out for sure.

In the afternoon, the bus left the freeway and crept through downtown traffic. I turned then, and peered through the mud-spattered window. As far as I could see, Los Angeles was a city of warehouses. I sank back into my seat.

When we reached the station, I claimed my suitcase and dragged it through the waiting room to the street. Outside I found blank walls and empty sidewalks. No direction and no one to ask.

Well, I ran away from college, then from New Orleans, and then Baton Rouge. Is it too soon to run away from here?

## Pacific Avenue Details

Date : Published November 22nd 2016 by Shepard & Piper (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN :

Author : Anne L. Watson

Format : Kindle Edition 328 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Contemporary

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## From Reader Review Pacific Avenue for online ebook

### Becky says

"It starts out good but then just drags. There is so much sadness as you find out what happened in her life to bring her where she is. After all the drama the ending seemed much to hurried. It seemed that all the suffering had been for nothing."

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### Marguerite says

Started out well enough, but quickly became a tired and typical story of a young woman who finds herself homeless and proceeds in the most unbelievable ways to build a life for herself with the most tired and typical "quirky" characters. I finished it and feel as though I should have been reading something else...

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### Michele says

#### Nice Effort, Sad Story

This book took me about a month to finish . . . I simply wasn't motivated to get to the end of the story, most likely because of the structure. The plot is predictable by design, and I found it very sad--neither uplifting nor particularly moving. The writing starts out strong, with great use of mood and description, but soon lapses into the annoying habit of relying on italicized internal dialog for the main character. She is a young woman named Kathy, who escapes her sad life in Louisiana, boards a bus for the unknown, and winds up in southern California. A second character, Lacey, (Kathy's co-worker at a construction company) has an occasional chapter, where she primarily obsesses over finding out more about Kathy, but this is very much Kathy's story and Lacey is tragically short-changed.

Kathy goes back in time from her arrival on "Pacific Avenue" in SoCal, to the years just prior and her complicated, young-adult life, her bi-racial relationship with a troubled Viet Nam vet named Richard, their child, Jamie, and her racist parents--particularly her hateful mother--and her relationship/s with a group known as the "Motleys," who put on puppet shows for a living. Skimming over anything to do with the puppets and the shows, I kept looking to the pages that moved the story forward and played out the details as to why she felt the need to escape.

Ultimately, one feels great sympathy for Kathy. She's innocent and likeable; however, that internal italicized dialog kept getting in the way. On each page I wanted to tell her to SPEAK UP! Unfortunately, this writing technique ruined (for me) an otherwise compelling tale of love and loss.

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### Evelyn says

Ugh. Naive construction of characters. Poorly written. This could have been an excellent book because the plot was potentially good. But, the author did not execute it well. The worst parts were the rambling italicized thoughts of the characters used to portray their conflicts and intentions. This may have worked in more experienced hands. But, it did not work here.

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### **Rachael says**

ending was a disappointment. Richard had no redeeming qualities that made me want to like or empathize with him.

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### **Alex says**

Read this on my Kindle and it was free, so thought I'd give it a try. Finished it, but was not really thrilled with the story.

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### **Jackie Johnson says**

Really enjoyed this book. Another love story that draws you in and takes you on a journey.

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### **Jennifer says**

Didn't live up to the potential.

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### **Arlene says**

The story starts with a young woman on a bus to Los Angeles. She is running away from her life in Louisiana. She ends up in San Pedro, CA at the end of the bus line on Pacific Avenue. Through her eyes, thoughts and flashbacks, and those of her friends, we learn why and what she is running from. This story takes place in the early 1970's when young soldiers were coming home to a country that has grown hostile to the war in Vietnam, before PTSD was a diagnosis for their nightmares and reactions to life. It also was a time when mixed race couples were not accepted, especially in the South. Kathy is struggling to find her way against these prejudices.

I am of the same generation, so I found the story compelling.

This book was a gift from the author. Thank you so much Anne!

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### **Nenette says**

Set in the 70s, this love story blends the most significant issues at the time: the war and racism. It illustrates both conditional and unconditional love. It shows the strength that can be drawn from community. It demonstrates the innate goodness of people. It's a very good book altogether; highly recommended.

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## bookster says

It starts out fantastic but then just drags. There is so much sadness as you find out what happened in her life to bring her where she is. After all the drama the ending seemed much to hurried. It seemed that all the suffering had been for nothing.

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## Anne says

Anne L Watson's *Pacific Avenue* is one of those novels that would be easy to dismiss as mere romance. However, that would be unfair. *Pacific Avenue* is also a story about young adulthood, racial prejudice, middle-class expectations, and the psychological effects of war. Kathy is young, white, and middle-classed; the daughter of an idealistic college professor and a closet-racist of a housewife. Lacey is middle-aged, black and poor; an under-paid secretary whose own daughter has just left for college. The pair serve as narrators for the story that ensues, Kathy recounting the story of a failed interracial relationship with Richard Johnson; and Lacey providing an alternative view point on the same. One of those stories, then? Yes, to some extent. Watson's novel falls strongly into the realm of literary fiction. In some intangible way, it reminds me of Kim Edwards' *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*. Unlike last week's novel, this is just the sort of story I enjoy. So without further ado...

What is good about the novel? I loved Watson's handling of the complex racial issues at hand. With depressing regularity, these sorts of stories are written as black vs white where whites are all immoral aggressors, and blacks are all moral victims. *Pacific Avenue* is not without its racists – from the unidentified stranger who stalks Kathy and Richard, to the young woman's mother, who hides her viciousness behind a Stepford facade and expects her daughters to do likewise. However, the novel also discusses racism among people of colour; Richard fears that his estranged father would completely disown him if he knew that he were to marry a white girl.

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## Rosie says

Really enjoyed at first but went downhill fast. Could not feel any emotion from any of the characters. They just plodded along. The story line got sidetracked on something stupid which I couldn't seem to figure into the plot. Didn't finish.

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## Elaine says

*Pacific Avenue* starts off at a good pace but slowly declines. I just want to get the book over with now. The whole puppet business and the time surrounding that, bogs the story down - way down. Though I do like some of the characters. One of my favorites is Sam.

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## Cheryl says

I was looking forward to this but ended up pretty disappointed. I think this is probably a better book for a teen-aged girl or young adult than someone my age. Having lived through that era I found it a generally interesting story but the writing style was just way too simple for my taste.

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