



Where Serpents Lie

T. Jefferson Parker

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A brilliant novel of one man's obsessive quest to protect the innocent--while facing the guilt in his own past Terry Naughton, head of Orange County's Crimes Against Youth unit, is the champion of children. He is their shield and their sword, their protector. He's come up against his share of heinous criminals in his years on the force--but nothing has prepared him for the Horridus. Abducting children from their beds, dressing them like little angels, and releasing them the next day, the only clue he leaves is a piece of snakeskin tucked into the folds of their gowns. So far he hasn't physically harmed any of them, but as Naughton well knows, it's only a matter of time. As he races to find the madman before his crimes escalate, Naughton learns that the Horridus may not be the only enemy. When shocking (and seemingly irrefutable) accusations put his career on the line, he is forced to confront his dark and violent past in his search for the truth. Who is behind the setup? And even if he can clear his name, can he do the same for his conscience? *Where Serpents Lie* pits the most memorable villain since Hannibal Lecter against an equally unforgettable hero in a thriller that is not only terrifying, but rich in psychological and moral complexity. It's a novel that will keep readers up at night, long after they've turned the last page.

Where Serpents Lie Details

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Author : T. Jefferson Parker

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From Reader Review Where Serpents Lie for online ebook

Linton Lewis says

WHERE SERPENTS LIE 1998 LP **** I don't usually like to read serials but some writers surpass themselves in spite of the subject and Mr Parker is certainly one of those. This story jumps from start until end with our investigator being framed along the way for child molestation while tracking a deviant who feeds his prey to his pet snake.

Vicki says

I normally like Jeff Parker's older books, but Where Serpents Lie was difficult to get through not only because of the creepy subject matter, but the story just seemed to d-r-a-g. I guess I didn't care for this one as much as others also because none of the characters engaged me. All things being equal, however, it wasn't a *bad* read; it just wasn't as good as some of his other books.

Lila says

I was googling for some good thriller with serial killer to sink my teeth into and I discovered that many genre-focused blogs/magazines have (conveniently) lists of best novels on theme. Naturally, many of listed are books that can be considered classics like Harris or *The Killer Inside Me* or Ellis, which also means that majority of them I've already read or was fairly familiar with the plot. And this is why *Where Serpents Lie* *caught my attention- I've never read anything by Parker before and considering the company it's keeping, I seemed to be missing a lot not having read this book.

Having read it, it was a good story, page-turner, with a few flaws.

Bare bones: Terry Naughton is a head of Crime Against Youth unit, and even if it doesn't say that nowhere directly, author kept this unit's caseload narrowed specifically to crimes against youth *of sexual nature*. There are scenes and situations they encounter in their line of work that are bleak and triggering to read, so have that in mind if it's a deal-breaker. Terry is on a hunt for predator who kidnaps little girls from their room and lets them go after few hours dressed in old-fashioned clothes. Only clue they have on him is connected to snakes. To give praise where praise is due, I find the entire concept and idea of Horridus the best thought and executed part of the story. He is a disturbed individual with weird motivations and rather unique hobby.

But, around the middle, entire plot about this kidnapper is taking a back-seat to another plot: the plot about who framed main character, Terry. Terry's chapters are written in first person pov, so we get insight in his mind and we can see that he is a deeply flawed man whose relentless need to help minors is triggered by death of his son, but to people in his life he is a hero up until the point he is framed so horribly and deviously. So this is where it actually becomes good for me, because I always enjoy when authors strip their characters of everything, especially those who feel entitled, so they can rebuild in some way.

So, the hero and the villain as concepts, on initial level are parts I liked, but plot progression and resolution ruined it a bit for me. I was able to see the end twist right away despite author trying to stir me in other direction, exactly because he was so obvious about it. There was something so unsatisfying about reading why Terry was framed since lengths they go to do that, were promising strong emotion and expectation of

rather definite damage to Terry and yet, all his troubles kind of blew away in space of one page. It contradicts that something planned so elaborately was also planned not to stand at all. But ymmv. And then there are some parts of book, tied to police work and justice that didn't make sense at all to me. Sure, this may be because I practice criminal law in rl, but this particular thing nagged me to no end: in opening scene Terry is undercover in a house of married couple who are prostituting their 10y-old daughter to pedophiles. They are arrested, but DI is, check this, considering to also charge the little girl for prostitution(!). I kid you not, few pages later they actually congratulate Terry for taking 3 criminals of the street (3 being parents AND girl). Like, "she knows her stuff, she is groomed to do that, she is a pro". This is such a strange narrative when there is entire police division in your novel devoted to protect minors. It actually crossed my mind that author went there because he wanted to show us Terry as this, ultimate champion for the youngest since he was not really for charging the little girl, but then, we are also told he doesn't have much say in that and we never really get to know what happened with that plan DI considered. This is not a case of criminal responsibility- just think about the fact that sex with minor with or without their consent is illegal (statutory rape) because they are deemed in eyes of law unable to give consent, so how on earth would girl of 10 be considered able to consent to sex for money? So, yeah, that really didn't make sense to me.

Also, I had to look for a year when this book was first published because FBI did a profile on Horridus and quite a few people in this novel doubted in it, not as making little sense for their perpetrator, but not making sense as thing that can help catch a person who commits crime. Like, it's some kind of mumbo-jumbo, and everyone was at least wary if not completely dismissive except Terry who is of course, super-progressive. So, in that way, I'd say book got a little behind times.

All in all, I'm glad I got to read Where Serpents Lie. If you're in the mood for page-turner where snakes are not the worst creepers, give it a go.

**Anyway, this is where I have to clarify something because I was misguided myself. Like I wrote, this book is often featured on lists of thrillers focused on serial killers and very often named in scariest serial killer category. And yes, there is a bad guy in the book who also happens to have a very catchy, newsworthy moniker- the Horridus- but I wouldn't say he is really one or at least not of the variety of others on the list like Hanibal or Bateman. Blurb does a very good job of describing what Horridus does: he is kidnapping girls from their rooms and letting them go few hours later, dressed in old-fashioned clothes. Entire plot of this novel is balancing on one line from profile FBI did on Horridus after he kidnapped two girls: that he is going to escalate to rape and murder. Technically, just think of him as most likely to become serial killer. ;) So, in case you are looking for something very specific to read- that may be of interest to you.*

Elaine Bergstrom says

OMG! WTF! And when in the hell do I get to sleep? Parker never disappoints but in Serpents he dazzles with a complex child molester pursued by a dedicated police officer with more than a few issues of his own. And halfway through the novel there's a twist that raises this thriller to the realm of the sublime. Enough said, except that as I was reading it, I found myself thinking often of my family's gruesome redo of "Santa Claus is Coming to Town": He'll seize you when you're sleeping. Your nose he'll quickly break. He'll laugh as you cry out in pain and he'll feed you to his snake."

James Thane says

After a tragedy devastates his own family, Terry Naughton helps create the Crimes Against Youth division of the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Now, as head of the unit, Terry leads the hunt for a disturbing pedophile known as The Horridus. At the same time, Terry is attempting to bring some order into his own haunted and messy personal life.

Not surprisingly, The Horridus was himself the victim of sexual abuse as a child and he dreams of being reborn as a snake. (His namesake, the *Crotalus horridus* is a Timber Rattlesnake.) The Horridus keeps a large collection of reptiles and has fed at least a couple of his victims to one of his larger pets.

In the midst of the investigation, Terry Naughton is accused of being a pedophile himself, and the evidence against him seems incontrovertible. Naughton is charged, jailed, and then released on bail, pending trial. Although ordered away from the investigation, he cannot let it go and becomes entangled in an increasingly complex and scary effort to clear his own name and at the same time track down a particularly menacing killer who is about to strike again.

This book appeared four years before Parker exploded into prominence with his breakout book, *Silent Joe*. Good as it is, it is not the equal of that book or of Parker's subsequent work. But then again, few books are, and for those readers who enjoy watching a great writer coming into form, *Where Serpents Lie* will well reward the time spent reading it.

Joyce Adams says

T. Jefferson Parker is one of my favorite mystery writers. The subject matter of pedophilia and murder at times in this book were very dark and made me very uncomfortable and on edge. However the story and complexity of the characters were intriguing and there are twists and turns. Our protagonist Terry Naughton is fighting his own demons and needs to find redemption. The title, "Where Serpents Lie", implies many things as I reflect on this well written novel, relationships, both personal and business and how they change and people change, as well as literal dealing with poisonous reptiles and their basic needs.

Gary Lindsay says

This book was both gripping and unsettling, in ways both predictable and surprising. The subject matter is a series of child abductions. The little girls are all released wearing different clothing, shaken, but otherwise unharmed. FBI criminal profilers are convinced that these will escalate into far worse crimes. That's creepy enough, but as the book develops, it gets worse. The book's hero, a detective in the Crimes Against Children's division of the Orange County Sheriff's department, is fighting his own demons, and he falls under suspicion himself. Who and what can we believe?

The setting, the late 1990s, is an appropriate for such a book. Developments in both computer photo manipulation and politics make us wonder; who and what can we believe?

As usual, Parker's writing moves the story and character develop forward quickly, making the book an obsessive read every evening, and a haunting presence in times between.

Valerie says

This book is quite different from any of T. Jefferson's Parker's books I have read. Take one depressed, inclined to drink who had lost his son in a tragic accident a few years before and put him as the lead investigator on a case to catch a serial molester/killer called the Horrurus, which is actually a timber rattlesnake. If the snake does not attack the girls between 3 and 7, the would be killer lets the children go. There is obviously a dark sexual overtone to this character no doubt to his dysfunctional family. The character had a severe case of psoriasis and identified with reptiles. There were many other subplots in this story and I found it to be very interesting, although I have never had a fear of any reptile except certain monitor lizards! especially the Komodo Dragon. I found this book to be a fast read and a very dark book. In fact, this is a very creepy book and plumbs the depths of the human mind....

P.S. Winn says

This is an interesting if at times dark read. I found the author is fascinating to read and the main character, Terry Naughton, who is head of the Crimes Against Youth Unit is believable and a person you feel you not only know but side with as he goes after a brutal killer. The author does a great job delving in the psychosis of a killer and takes readers on a great ride.

Joyce says

Parker is terrific. He comes up with plots that are complex and characters that are even more complex. In this novel, published in 1998, the head of the Orange County (CA) Crimes Against Youth division is searching for a serial kidnapper who appears to be escalating among other things. He is set up as a pedophile himself and arrested for it. The climax is fascinating as is who set him up and why. This was a great way to spend a summer weekend.

Pam says

This is a REAL page-turner but, warning,,,,,,this book is not for everyone. This crime novel is very graphic and contains disturbing content that some readers may find offensive and hard to handle. Terry Naughton, the head of the Orange County's Crimes Against Youth unit, intensely hunts down Horrurus, a monster who abducts children from their beds in the middle of the night, dresses them up as angels, releasing them the next day. The only clue.....a piece of snake skin tucked in the folds of their costume. Naughton, battling his own personal demons, is in a race against time to find this madman before his crimes escalate. I guarantee, if you pick this book up, you will not be able to put it down until you have finished reading it through to the last page. A great read!!!!

Richard says

Disturbing, but very well told tale. The conclusion to secondary story is shocking.

Courtney Wallace says

I found the plot of the novel intriguing as well as the villain. I feel that Parker really encompassed just what horrible extend emotional and psychological abuse can do to person's mind. What it can turn them into. However, I felt that his characters were lacking depth, there was no layering to their personalities which makes them hard to relate to. Also, his pacing was very off. He started off great but then he would slow to a crawl and then speed up so fast you didn't know what was going on. The ending was a bit hazy as well. Not a terrible book but I wouldn't recommend it either.

Nina says

Easily one of the darkest, most unsettling thrillers I've ever read dealing with the most disturbing aspect of human nature and perversion. Extremely well written, excellent prose and dialogue, faultless plot and ends as thrillingly and punchily as it begins.

David says

This is a truly frightening book. There are scenes in this book that make "Hannibal" seem like the kindly old Wizard of Oz. In fact, there are portions of this book that were more macabre than the special meals that Hannibal consumed or asked captured F.B.I. agents to consume. In other words, portions of this book are just plain gross.. in a scary, tormented way.

Terry is head of the Orange County (Southern California) Crimes against Youth Division. He has suffered the loss of his only son in a drowning incident and is one of the saddest people you would ever meet. His life is full of drinking and cheating on his girl. The one redemptive element of his life is his work with the CAY division.

Terry and his unit is after a predator who sneaks into bedrooms and abducts little girls. The predator takes them to his den and changes them into old-fashioned little girl clothing and then releases them in isolated wilderness areas. No rape, but the CAY unit know that the profile shows he is building up to it.

Parker does a great job with the police work and the actual solving of the mystery and going after the bad guy. His hero, Terry, is sufficiently flawed, an element that seems to be pretty consistent in Parker's writings. And one of those flaws is some dark secret connected to his son's death. Along the way, Terry will be accused of horrible crimes, suspended from the force, and yet unable to stop his investigation into the serial abductor.

Sadly, Parker slows the pacing a bit too much by letting us see the abductor's memories, his passions, his problems, a bit too much. About the time we want to see the investigation go forward, Parker wants us to see the horrible reality of this man's life, temperament, and torment. He fails to humanize the bad guy at all. Some of this insight and viewpoint is necessary to get to the really juicy, frightening part of the novel. However, at times, Parker dwells too much on the criminal's point of view and gives us a bit too much knowledge that would've been better coming out in investigation.

This was a really good book, I dinged it a star because its final conclusion was a bit unsatisfying. Terry gets the evidence he needs to prove who set him up for false charges, but doesn't do much about it. Instead, we get a further glimpse into Terry's torment and finally, the secret about his son's death, the one that the reader knew almost from the beginning was there, is revealed in an anti-climactic fashion...

A good book with some minor flaws... I do recommend it, despite the fact that I only give it three stars. I think fans of Hannibal Lector will enjoy this macabre mystery full of dark, sad, lonely, and hurting people. "Clarice, is that you?"
