



## Echo Burning

*Lee Child*

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**Echo Burning** Lee Child

**Jack Reacher finds trouble in Texas in the fifth novel in Lee Child's *New York Times* bestselling series.**

Thumbing across the scorched Texas desert, Jack Reacher has nowhere to go and all the time in the world to get there. Cruising the same stretch of two-lane blacktop is Carmen Greer. For Reacher, the lift comes with a hitch. Carmen's got a wild story to tell—all about her husband, her family secrets, and a hometown that's purely gothic. She's also got a plan. Reacher's part of it. And before the sun sets, this ride could cost them both their lives.

## Echo Burning Details

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Author : Lee Child

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*Poodle Springs*, he decided that since Chandler didn't plot, neither would he. He adapted the style to his own work from that point. I believe it is the main reason longtime fans feel his later novels are inferior, for the most part, to the first fifteen or so that began his career.

I'm not necessarily criticizing pantsers. Some are among my favorites. The aforementioned Block, for example; and John Sandford and Ed McBain to varying degrees work(ed) this way.

Long before I became aware that Lee Child had publicly discussed the subject, I had no doubt that he was a pantser. Now, if I choose to be honest, I never could have drawn that conclusion from his debut novel alone. But after four books, I came to the fifth, *Echo Burning*, expecting filler. That's exactly what I got.

Child's nomadic hero, hitchhiking away from a problematic situation, is picked up by Carmen Greer, a woman of obvious Spanish descent who is in desperately need of someone like Jack Reacher. Trapped in a small Texas town where Mexicans are treated secondarily at best, she has no money, no friends, and is stranded with her husband's considerably rich family as he serves a tax evasion jail term. She is unwilling to run because her husband would never renounce custody of their six-year-old daughter, the only joy in her life. He is about to receive an early release, which would compound her misery by adding domestic abuse to the mix. She relays all this to Reacher over the 300-mile trip home. And due to other circumstances, she has to tell it again. One hundred pages later they enter Echo, Texas.

I think even Child was aware that he was treading water with his setup because along the way some moron picks a fight with the hulking Reacher, and Child also intermittently cuts away to a small team of assassins as they travel to Texas and isolate and kill their target. These killers are the most interesting thing in the first quarter of the novel.

And so, the obvious question: If Child is wasting so much time and space, why haven't I learned my lesson and moved on; why even open the book? The same thing that has kept me around this long. Digression and inertia are the price of admission. Once we get into the meat of the story, Child is the best there is.

That begins upon reaching Echo. We meet the little girl. And then the in-laws, a brother and the mother, the latter of whom rules the family with an iron hand. And the two ranch hands who eventually accost Reacher, and this time it's an altercation that actually makes sense. They are experience rodeo riders, rural tough guys who do not scare, and they've done this before--and they arrange for the confrontation to take place where they have plenty of likeminded friends. Of course, if they really knew Reacher they'd know all these perceived advantages would not matter.

As Reacher gets drawn into the drama in his efforts to protect Carmen, a murder takes place, and a kidnapping as well as a frame-up, and in the course of untangling these events, we learn more about the assassins and how their victim relates to Carmen's plight. Once Reacher's presence forces countermoves by the villain behind everything, even minor hiccups, like the first clue to his identity being fairly obvious, cannot derail the momentum. Child has learned that if you can't properly disguise your clue, just give it to the readers and if they figure it out, so be it. The reveal of his identity was never the point, has little to do with what led up to it, and has no effect on the finale.

The finale, and most that preceded it once tackling the problem proper, is what makes the book successful. If the first one hundred pages feel like a slow crawl, then the following 450 or so make it feel as if you can't read fast enough. A fair trade.

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## **Adrian says**

Now I suppose the question is, after 5 novels am I already falling out of love with Jack Reacher (now don't get me wrong he's not really my type ? , but I have enjoyed his larger than life (literally) character). Well hopefully the answer is no. I did enjoy this book and would give it 3.5 stars if I could, but I cannot round it up to 4, its not as good as episodes 1 to 4, so 3 stars it has to be, sorry Jack.

Maybe it is time for another "Jack free" break. I am hoping, given that a mate of mine has given me about 20 Jack Reacher books, that when I do continue, it will re-ignite (no pun intended) my love affair with Jack !!!

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## **Malcolm says**

[Author: Lee Child|5091] brings us a bit of a TexMex western this time -- dropping Reacher into a distant and underpopulated border county of Texas, so strap on your spurs, gang -- Reacher's a cowboy.

As usual, the story is effective enough, but frankly, I'm feeling that Child doesn't do enough "credibility" checking on his stories, and relies upon the fact that we're completely committed to Reacher, so we won't notice that all the other characters immediately trust him as well.

Without giving spoilers, I'll give a basic example of what happens often ... Reacher meets a new character, talks to her for about 10 minutes, describes a situation, and then she gives him the keys to her car so he can drive off to keep the plot moving forward. Really? In another setting, he calls a random cop, describes himself as an attorney, and then tells them where some key evidence is ... they just roll with it, never wondering if he was involved ... just a big "whatever" ... in another moment, a woman he just met leaves him with her kid... this 6' 5" drifter -- hey, watch my kid, ok?

It doesn't detract from the storyline, and if you're reading on a beach or something, you won't care ... this isn't literature, after all ... it's storytelling for entertainment ... but I tend to like my thrillers to be plausible ... thus far, Child has consistently included implausible coincidences and behavior in every book. So if you're reading his books, don't look too closely, it's beautiful as long as it's left blurry.

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## **Nate says**

[The shootout on the "clock" mesa was pure fucking awesome. I did like that Child kinda played with gender roles by

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## **Keri says**

Let me start out by saying I love Jack Reacher, but this is the weakest of all Lee's books, IMO. It was the usual, Jack going to go out of his way to help someone and I didn't have issues with that. What completely pulled me out of the story was the research that wasn't done for the story. The way law enforcement works in Texas should have been better researched as well as Mapquest could have been used in order to gain distances between El Paso and Ft. Worth and therefore given truer timing information. Being a Texan and from Texas it mattered to me. I have read all of Lee's other books and enjoyed them tremendously, just not this one. Looking forward to reading 61 Hours.

## Terri Lynn says

I just can't make myself like this at all. Jack Reacher is in Texas after breaking up with Jodie in New York, back to living like a bum in cheap motels, carrying only a toothbrush and cash (but no ID), walking and hitchhiking everywhere, and throwing away clothes rather than wash them.

He's also still finding trouble. Right away he's in a bar staring at a redneck cop who is wolfing down bbq chicken wings and letting the greasy sauce roll down onto his shirt. Naturally he stopped to glance at such a disgusting sight only to have the cop, let's call him Bubba, take offense and start this macho posturing ("You lookin' at me, boy?") that led to him poking Jack's clean shirt with his greasy finger till Jack snatches it after 4 polite warnings and breaks it.

Later the next morning at the cheap flea-bitten motel, he sees 4 big bubba cops go into office and he leaves through the back window, looking for a ride as a hitchhiker. To his amazement, within 3 minutes an Hispanic woman picks him up. If he had known then what he knew later, he would have gone with the cops to get beaten up.

This book is boring. It is Jack Reacher on tranquilizers. Jack on Prozac. I really wanted to get in the car myself and drive that Hispanic idiot into the desert, kill her, and leave her for the buzzards but I digress. There is also a trio of killers running around- 2 men and a woman- who all travel separately until converging at some point. Even they couldn't salvage this. Even the cover is ugly. Garish sickly yellow color. I never did like Texas and don't like Reacher in Texas. I'll go on and try book #6.

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## Alp says

A real page-turner!

Echo Burning is the fifth installment in Jack Reacher series and the series itself keeps getting better and better. The plot was intense, exciting, and thrilling, exactly as I expected. Despite the fact that the story moved at a very fast pace, I still felt like I couldn't turn the pages quick enough because I was dying to know who was behind these murders.

Jack Reacher never ceases to amaze me with his cleverness and confidence, which are certain qualities I admire in men. In this book, (view spoiler).

On the whole, this was a captivating suspense-thriller with complex characters, brilliant plot twists, and riveting action scenes. I really enjoyed this book from start to end.

Can't stop, won't stop. Off to the next one!

## Richard says

6/10

With a newborn child just arrived and your nights reading time ruined, what book will see you through those 5 minute windows you get when you're not drooling in a sleep coma, cleaning up baby shit or vomit. A Jack Reacher novel is what!

The plot is simplistic and far fetched which is what you would expect for this type of novel, where it lacks compared to previous novels in the series though is the action. There are little bits of action dotted around but it definitely takes a back seat. One thing that did annoy throughout was the constant debating whether the main female character was a liar or not. A constant back and forth pretty much throughout the novel didn't make for a very interesting read.

Whilst not the best in the series (by a long shot) it was pretty much the ideal read for me at the time, I could pick it up and read 5 minutes and drop it at a moments notice and not feel robbed.

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## Michael says

Lee Child has many qualities of a great author. His characters do things. His characters talk. His characters act in reasonable ways. Child lets the reader into Reacher's head. We get to see the decisions he makes. We understand why those decisions are made. One would think this would make for a very predictable story, predictable events, predictable dialog, and thus a boring story. Nope. Far from it.

While the reader does have great access to character motivation, Child generally only allows us to see a single side, a single dimension. We see from Reacher's perspective. We uncover details as Reacher uncovers details.

And, just when you think you have something figured out, Child reigns you back in, and forces you to re-engage your mind by tossing in a curve. Not inventing out of thin air, mind you. No, Reacher often misses clues, subtleties that lead him down one path, and we with him. Then, in light of new evidence we are forced to reconsider our evidence.

In Echo Burning, Reacher is given a ride, hitchhiking as he often does. The driver is young, pretty Hispanic woman. Desperate, Carmen's husband, Sloop, is soon to be released from prison and she fears his return will end in her death. See, she put him in prison; her IRS testimony led to his arrest and conviction. And, his history of spousal abuse has her convinced that her life will end once he returns to the family ranch. Her six-year old daughter will lose her mommy, and she will lose her life, unless Reacher can prevent Sloop from exacting his revenge.

As with every Child novel I've read, and I'm almost done with all of them, nothing is as it appears. Why?

Because everyone lies.

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## **Mike (the Paladin) says**

One of the better Reacher books. I have given 3 positive reviews in a row here...pretty good.

This book has what I'd call an "interesting" opening... If you've read many of my reviews you know I use that word, frequently. It says so much.

Reacher upon smacking someone (else) in the nose makes the disturbing discovery that he seems to have damaged the person of the local constabulary. Realizing that discretion is the better part of valor (and that he could possibly disappear into a local jail and no one anywhere would be the wiser) he makes the decision to move on and see "another" part of the country.

He's picked up by...are you ready...an interesting woman. She says she was looking for someone "like him". That of course referred to Reacher's appearance, a giant, homeless, bad-ass (again please pardon my use of the vernacular).

I will say this also. The book does a good job of flipping the plot back and forth. The Reacher books aren't primarily mysteries or known for setting clues for readers to follow but he does do that here.

Actually a surprisingly good read...my opinion of course.

Enjoy.

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## **Carol says**

Note: my Reacher ratings are on a different scale from all other ratings I allocate. They range from 3 stars to 5, in the context of the Reacher universe. This one, a 4-star Reacher novel is not as good as a 5-star Reacher novel, better than the rare 3-stars which are lame for Child, and pretty good for his universe of competitors. Because I can.

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## **David says**

In "Killing Floor" (which I thoroughly enjoyed), Lee Child introduced an electric main character named Jack Reacher. He is ex-military and wanders from place to place. He is smart and a violent badass to anyone who messes with him or those he cares about. In Reacher, Child has created a character who can interact with anyone, go anywhere and do anything.

So who does Reacher interact with in this book? A Hispanic woman named Carmen. She picks up Reacher as a hitchhiker and tells him a sad story about her life. Reacher thinks that she is lying. Maybe she is. Maybe she isn't. This gets the book off to an intriguing start. Unfortunately, all anyone in this book seems to do is to debate whether Carmen is telling the truth. Yes, she is. No, she is not. If she had an interesting story, that would be one thing. But her story, while sad, is not interesting at all. At the 90% mark, people are \*still\* arguing about this. It is incredibly boring.

Who are the villains who mess with Reacher? Texans, who (and this is shocking) are rednecks! They are so one-dimensional, they are not worth writing about. They do very predictable redneck things, are racists,

shoot rifles, and like everyone else in the book, debate about whether Carmen is telling the truth. Maybe she is. Maybe she isn't.

What does Reacher, the super-smart, ultraviolent action hero do throughout the book? He eats ice cream. He learns how to saddle a horse. He buys clothes. I half-expected Lee Child to have him spend a day in the library reading. Oh, and he wonders if Carmen is telling the truth. Maybe she is. Maybe she isn't. There are only a couple of action scenes.

In "Echo Burning", Child seems to have had the idea of writing a thriller with almost no action. Call me picky, but that is a really bad idea. It's like a James Bond movie where Bond spends the movie doing some window shopping, and oh, debating about whether the main character is lying. Maybe she is. Maybe she isn't.

Was Carmen actually lying? Maybe she was, maybe she wasn't. By the end of the book I didn't care. I just wanted the talking to end!

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### **Ralph McEwen says**

Another good story by Mr. Child. 5,388 ratings, 356 reviews, 3.90 stars probably says it all. I did like Micheal Busby's review which I have linked below.

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

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