



Red Light

T. Jefferson Parker

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Two years after the death of Tim Hess, her partner and father of her child, Merci Rayborn, the Orange County homicide investigator introduced in Parker's insanely imaginative (*New York Times Book Review*) *The Blue Hour*, is back. Merci has finally pulled her life back together. She and her son are living with her father, a retired cop, and she is dating Mike McNally, a respected fellow officer. When a young prostitute is found murdered and Mike emerges as the primary suspect, Merci must do the unthinkable - expose and arrest her lover. With her world turned upside down, Merci must sift through the facts and balance where the truth leads her against where her heart is telling her to go. But the truth is taking her down some very strange alleyways; from present-day Orange County to late sixties California, and the unsolved murder of another prostitute. This taut, psychologically complex thriller brings Jefferson Parker and his daring heroine, Merci Rayborn, into the front ranks of this popular genre.

Red Light Details

Date : Published April 2001 by Hyperion (first published April 29th 2000)

ISBN : 9780007101931

Author : T. Jefferson Parker

Format : Mass Market Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Crime

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From Reader Review Red Light for online ebook

Jerry B says

Excellent second outing in Merci Rayborn series !!

Parker's second book in the homicide sergeant (Ms) Merci Rayborn series (of three so far) is definitely a sequel to his earlier work, "Blue Hour" [which if you haven't read that, STOP HERE:]. At the close of that book, Merci loses her temporary partner and one-night lover, Tim Hess, to a bullet meant for her, only to bear his son nine months later. Skipping ahead in fictional time two years to this book, we find Merci not at all over her loss and the fears it has created, despite her unbridled joy in her young son. Her dad, retired cop and widower Clark Rayborn, has moved in to baby-sit as needed and create some semblance of family.

Against this backdrop, Merci is back at work with a new partner, Paul Zamorra, who has a somewhat minor role in the action since his wife is dying as we read of a brain tumor. They are assigned to investigate the murder of a hooker in her own apartment, where a seeming abundance of clues is at hand. Meanwhile, with year-end in the offing, the department annually hauls out its cold cases. Merci is assigned a 30-year old unsolved murder, coincidentally, of another hooker shot to death without ever a suspect. In her relentless, intense method of tackling these cases head-on, as she does just about everything in life, Merci begins to harvest "dirt" from both murders, both pointing at comrades and even her new boyfriend, cops all. The plot twists and turns through quite a few different scenarios, including finding some stunning new evidence, creating terrific suspense until the true stories eventually surface. Near the end, Merci needs to deal with some ethical issues about what she's discovered that pose some interesting questions to ponder for us all.

Parker manages to pull off a great deal of plot complexity with a relatively small number of characters. That skill means we get to know them well, relate to them and care for them, and really get caught up emotionally in much of the intrigue. We grow fonder of Merci with every passing chapter, as she seemingly matures (at age 36) before our eyes. And we also harbor a great deal of empathy for her struggling to advance her career fighting heinous criminals, while coping with a new son, the terrible death of his father, the personal tribulations of her new partner, and the advances of other men who see as much in Merci to like as we do.

To us, that all of that adds up to another top-notch effort: and on to Parker's Merci #3, "Black Water"!

Karschtl says

A classic whodunit story with a lady detective as the leading character, who pieces together all the evidence she has and comes up with a surprising suspect. Along the way she also tries to solve a cold case, a murder from 1969. And both seem to have something in common.

Good thrillers I read within a few days because they are quite easy to read and you want to know what happens next. This was also the case with this book, although it wasn't a 'suspenseful' thriller where you have to be afraid when the culprit strikes next. The main action has already taken place (but there is a climax at the end!)

Rietje says

This book is full of dark intrigue and deep emotions. The characters and sense of place are so real.

Michelle says

Homicide Detective Merci Rayborn is mourning the death of her former partner Tim Hess, who is the father of her two year old son Tim Jr. Her boss assigned her two murder cases, (1) cold case (unsolved case): a prostitute was murdered in 1969 who was found dead in an empty field, (2) a recent case: a young prostitute who was shot to death in her apartment.

The first case, few suspects were involved in the police department and influential people in Southern California's Orange County.

The second case, her boyfriend Sgt. Mike McNally is the prime suspect and who happens to be the close friend of the prostitute but admitted that he never had sex with her.

As Merci investigates her cases, she found out about political leaders and cops were dealing with corruption and political ambition that involves murder. She also struggles with her emotions between her lover and work.

"a very interesting read... i like the story, i will definitely buy the first series of this book."

Semmian says

My biggest problem with this book was I didn't really like any of the main characters. I found the main character Merci, to be whiny, and I didn't get a feel for her at all. By the end I was tired of the author constantly reminding us how sad and depressed she was over her lover's death and her confliction investigating her current love interest. I also was getting tired of the author constantly reminding us how sad and depressed her partner was because of his sick wife. Do we see a trend here? Oh, and her current lover? Also whining constantly about how Merci won't commit to him.

The story just seems to drag on, with the characters constant whining and takes forever to get to the end, with a conclusion that just seems to appear out of the blue. Even the secondary plot was dull and offered no real satisfying conclusion.

Cathy DuPont says

My third T. Jeffereson Parker book and by far my favorite.

Still wish there were 1/2 star ratings. This book, in my estimation, was very close to five stars especially since I gave four stars to the other two. Had to recall those books I did give five stars to in order to back off

down to four. In my mind though, four and one-half stars.

Merci Rayborn is the protagonist and she's a wounded soul. Young but carrying the burden of a person who has been through a number of reincarnations all of which left her with a burden heavier than the last one.

There are at least three storylines, all intersecting at the right moment. Wish I could say I've gotten better at determining the 'evil doer' but no, not so much. In this book especially, it still came somewhat of a surprise because I just couldn't figure how the murder occurred with the evidence presented. Wouldn't make much of a Sherlock Holmes, that's for sure.

It's clear entertainment for me and TJP is running really close to becoming a favorite author. His books are complex without being confusing. His characters are as complex as the storyline. And Merci definitely has that moral compass which I love and appreciate in the main character, when, of course, he/she is the 'good guy.'

Look forward to reading the next chapter in Merci's timeline to become sheriff by the time she's 58. Make it or not, it's going to be a fine, very fine ride.

Maddy says

RATING: 4.25

T. Jefferson Parker has long written stand-alone novels that have been very well received by the crime fiction community. In *The Blue Hour*, Parker introduced his first series character, Merci Rayborn, a tougher-than-nails female homicide detective. In that book, the deep freeze that is her heart is penetrated; but due to an unfortunate series of events, she loses what she has just found.

Red Light picks up where *The Blue Hour* left off. Merci is balancing a tough work life with being a single mother. Fortunately, her father has come to live with her so that he can take care of her young son, Tim. She also has a serious relationship with a fellow cop by the name of Mike McNally. Although he professes to love her and wants the relationship to move to the next level, Merci just can't seem to commit herself emotionally. She's still recovering from the loss of her mentor and lover from *The Blue Hour*.

Merci's current case involves the investigation of the death of a prostitute by the name of Aubrey Whittaker. She quickly discovers that Mike may have been involved with Audrey. Putting aside her feelings of treachery, she uncovers evidence that points to Mike as the perpetrator, and he ends up in jail. Although he repeatedly asserts his innocence, every new fact that is uncovered points more strongly to his guilt.

Within the department, each detective is traditionally assigned a cold case at the end of the year to see if they can get it off the books before the new year. Coincidentally (or not?), Merci is assigned an unsolved murder dating to 1969 of another prostitute by the name of Patti Bailey. What she finds in that investigation has aftereffects which have tremendous impacts to the present day, involving leaders in the community, the police department and even people that she loves.

Parker excels at building a complex character in Merci, one who shows a lot of vulnerabilities that weren't evident in the first book, which made her more appealing to the reader. The plot is intricate; the past is woven into the present in a very convincing way with no stretches of credibility. Although I didn't care for

the long drawn-out confession at the conclusion of the book, the ultimate conundrum that Merci faces at the end is well presented. Loyalty and love versus truth and justice--which would you choose to honor? The book is well written and will leave the reader anxious to jump into the third entry in the series, Black Water.

Tim Warner says

I love T Jefferson Parker. This was not up to the superior level of his others. The plot is great, but I had the impression that Parker was struggling to get through this book. I know I was, for sure. As much as he is a master at fleshing out his people, I had the impression that something else in Parker's life as he was working on this book, was commanding more of his emotional and mental focus. There were a couple of times I wanted to give up but I kept through, knowing that the next in this series will be better.... in fact it will be fantastic again.

Jen says

Merci Rayborn returns in Red Light by T. Jefferson Parker. It's two years after Tim Hess died. She's dating Mike McNally - a fellow officer, has an 18-month-old son and lives with her father since her mother passed away. In this installment of the Rayborn series, a prostitute is murdered. But the catch is this prostitute has a tie to Merci's boyfriend, Mike McNally, and soon the evidence starts piling up against Mike as the murderer. Meanwhile, Merci has also been given a cold case to look into. The cold case is also a prostitute murder, this one from 1969, that starts to look like it too has ties back to the sheriff's department.

I listened to this book on audio, read by Anna Fields. She does a good job of projecting the dark tone of Parker's novel. She doesn't have a wide range of voices, though. I thought most all the female characters sounded one way and all the male characters another way, but not much differentiation within the genders. It was still a decent recording, though.

I predicted the outcome in this book pretty early. I'm not sure if it's because I'm reading too much crime fiction these days and have it all figured out or if this particular book was just a bit on the predictable side. And yet, there's something about Parker's writing that just keeps me riveted. He's great with detail. I love how all the detail is essential in the plot. There isn't a bunch of superfluous "stuff." He doesn't try to be showy or extravagant. Rather, Parker is economical and makes full use of everything he puts in the book.

I have found so far with the four books I've read of his, Red Light included, I wouldn't recommend them if you're depressed! All four have had a very dark tone, and Parker doesn't have much in the way of comic relief.

I'm intrigued by Merci Rayborn. I can't say she's one of my favorite female characters, but I'm constantly trying to figure her out. She's a tough cookie, without a doubt. And she is a character with depth. But, in this book, more so than in The Blue Hour, I found some of her behavior out of character. It just didn't seem to fit, and I didn't buy into it.

The other thing that bothered me a bit about this novel was the handful of details I was picking up as the

law-enforcement-ignorant-reader that Merci was NOT picking up as a veteran sheriff's detective. She would eventually get there, but I had a hard time believing it would take her as long as it did. Now maybe, being on the outside looking in changes things, but as an example, it took her until the end of the book to think of the possibility that the outside light might NOT have been turned on. They assumed that the light would have been on because the bulb was not burned out - the bulb's status was determined at the beginning of the novel. Wouldn't a veteran investigator consider all the possibilities of that bulb from the get-go? I mean, personally, I would think one of the first scenarios they would consider is that the murderer unscrewed the bulb so the victim couldn't see him/her through the peep hole. But, I could be way off base.

Overall, I enjoyed Red Light and it was a good audiobook to listen to in the car.

James Jackson says

I listened to the audio version on an auto trip. Having enjoyed The Blue Hour I picked up this second one featuring Merci Rayborn. Parker's mystery/suspense novels are multi-layered and this was as well - in fact my reason for deducting a star was I felt a bit of overburdened by the layers.

The present situation involves Merci's investigation of a murdered hooker who had a relationship with her on again/off again boyfriend. Layered on top are her relationships with her bosses and co-workers. her current partner's wife is about to die.

The past involves not only her father, but her boyfriend's father, former cops and pols and her onetime partner/lover now deceased who can still get in her head.

The future centers on her son and how she will provide for him.

Implicitly Parker asks us to consider what we would do in Merci's shoes and it's a question worth thinking about.

Glen says

This is the second book in the series, and I am unsure exactly what references are made to the first book.

Merci is just getting her life back together, and has a new boyfriend when a prostitute is killed. Of course, her boyfriend is soon a primary suspect. Then there are links to a similar case in the 1960's. Merci is quickly in over her head.

Ok, but I don't think I'll seek out number 3 in the series.

Valerie says

This is one of Parker's novels I missed (thought I had read them all) and it features the main character Merci

Rayborn who is a deputy sheriff for Orange County, CA like her father and his friends, before her. This book has to do with one cold case which happened in 1969 and one current case, both of them homicides of prostitutes or call girls. I found it fascinating the way the author wove the strands of both stories together to arrive at a logical and coherent whole.

Mrs Patricia A Taylor says

Brilliant!

I never fail to be amazed by T Jefferson Parker. He is a writer of the first order and this story is one of his best. The first book in the Mercy Rayborn series was outstanding and I couldn't wait to read this second one. I was not disappointed. The quality of the writing kept me enthralled all the way through and I didn't want it to end. If you like Michael Connelly, John D McDonald or the Matthew Scudder series you will enjoy these books. I have already ordered the third title in paperback as, unfortunately it is not available as an ebook. If you are a fan of engrossing storylines, excellent characterization and suspense up until the very end don't let this pass you by.

Tom Tischler says

Merci Rayborn an Orange County homicide detective is back after the death of Tim Hess her partner and the father of her child. She has put her life back together and is living with her father, a retired cop and her son. She is dating Mike McNally a respected fellow officer. A young prostitute is found murdered and Mike emerges as the prime suspect. Now Merci must do the unthinkable expose and arrest her lover. She must now shift through the facts and balance where the truth leads her against where her heart is telling her to go. the truth is taking her down some very strange alley's. From present day Orange County to the late sixties and another unsolved prostitutes murder. This is a taunt psychologically complex thriller from around 2000.

Connie Marx says

It was a good read, a little long in some parts, but I didn't want to put it down.
