



Perfect Nightmare

John Saul

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If you open your house to strangers, who knows who might come in. And what they might be after. Or whom. Now, ponder the unthinkable and surrender to your darkest dread, as sinister storyteller extraordinaire John Saul weaves a heart-stopping tale of lurking terror and twisted intent.

Every parent's nightmare becomes reality for Kara Marshall when her daughter, Lindsay, vanishes from her bedroom during the night. The police suspect that the girl is just another moody teenage runaway, angry over leaving behind her school and friends because her family is moving. But Lindsay's recent eerie claim—that someone invaded her room when the house was opened to prospective buyers—drives Kara to fear the worst: a nameless, faceless stalker has walked the halls of her home in search of more than a place to live.

Patrick Shields recognizes Kara's pain—and carries plenty of his own since he lost his wife and two children in a devastating house fire. But more than grief draws Patrick and Kara together. He, too, senses the hand of a malevolent stranger in this tragedy. And as more people go missing from houses up for sale, Patrick's suspicion, like Kara's, blooms into horrified certainty.

Someone is trolling this peaceful community—undetected and undeterred—harvesting victims for a purpose no sane mind can fathom. Someone Kara and Patrick, alone and desperate, are determined to unmask. Someone who is even now watching, plotting, keeping a demented diary of unspeakable deeds . . . and waiting until the time is ripe for another fateful visit.

From the Hardcover edition.

Perfect Nightmare Details

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From Reader Review Perfect Nightmare for online ebook

Melissa Levine says

This was an okay read. There were several times where I ended up skimming because I got bored. It's stories like this that always make me wonder how the author comes up with the little tidbits, as in being able to describe what a person with these kind of issues thinks and all the gross stuff basically.

I was not a fan of Lindsay at all. She was 17, yet, acted like she was a lot younger. Constantly pouting, feeling sorry for herself (all the time) and running off when she got upset. There was one part where she tells her mom (I think it was) to stop treating her like a little kid. haha What a joke.

What exactly was with the two male Realtors? I mean Kara catches Mark Acton watching Lindsay as she's heading into the house. Okay...what exactly is wrong with that? I mean we're never told how old he is, he could have been in his early 20's for all we know. Plus, he's a male! haha Yet, the weirdo vibe is put out on him. Then the other guy, Rick Mancuso. Ellen thinks he's weird because what? He tells her that Emily is a cute kid? I don't get it. The police detective guy ends up thinking they're weird too and I don't feel like there was really nothing 'weird' related about them, at least not explained.

So Lindsay doesn't want to go home after the open house. Yet, the only friend she mentions is Dawn and the fact that she can't go with Dawn because she has other plans. Why didn't she just go to another friends house?

After reading the back of the book, I wasn't surprised at all that Kara's husband ended up dying. Considering it said that Kara's neighbor, Patrick, would basically be helping her to deal with all the bad stuff. I automatically thought, "Well where's her husband at?"

Lindsay is looking for her slipper that apparently was under the bed. The phone rings which causes her to jump up and bang her hand/knuckles on the wood part. Which in turn, turns black and blue within seconds? Doubtful.

Patrick (of course we don't know it's him yet) is under Lindsay's bed. Lindsay is talking on the phone, as he starts to pull himself out from under said bed. Lindsay hangs up and goes to find the slipper again. She's crouched down when suddenly he's grabbing her by the ankles and pulling himself out that way. How was he already partway out and her not seeing him? Besides was there nothing she could have grabbed to hit him over the head with? That part was just strange.

The way Kara's husband died...wow! And that's a wow in a bad way. Could that part have been anymore cliched? I mean seriously, first he's driving home drunk...in a car that he's never driven before (hence, he doesn't know what handle does what)...then he realizes that there's tons of traffic, suddenly it starts raining...and ends up getting cut off, anything else? That was just stupid.

Lastly, it was obvious that Patrick had multiple personalities or something going on. He refers to Ellen as 'Mommy' and treats/acts like Shannon and Lindsay are the little girls. What in the world made any of them think he considered himself the father? That was weird. I mean I automatically thought he was thinking of his abusive childhood. Hence, his mother didn't notice anything bad that happened to him. And what was with Shannon and Lindsay wanting to show him that they loved them by talking sexy to him?

Margaret says

A young teenage girl is missing shortly after her parent's home is shown during an Open House held by the realtor. The police have little to go on and feel it is possible the girl took off because she was upset about the family's pending move. Her mother doesn't agree with this thinking and organizes her own search for her daughter. Then the unthinkable happens, a young mother disappears just as her home is scheduled for an Open House. As the story progresses it gets scarier by the moment. Don't read this just before you have an Open House scheduled!!!

Mickey DeCicco says

This guy is so fucking creepy. This book gave me more chills up my spine than Black Creek crossing; he's starting to equal H.P. Lovecraft as the rare author that can scare me. I swear I didn't want to turn the lights out the other night. Realtors and those selling their homes should read this first ;) Being in the market for a new house, this book hits particularly close to home. Because this story is grounded totally in reality, the horror is even more intense than his other works with supernatural elements.

Lady Delacour says

5 Gold Stars ?????

John Saul's writing was so visual

that it was a movie in my head the whole time.

Narrators Dick Hill and Susie Breck were fantastic.

Worth the listen just to hear all there different voices.

Great performance by this husband and wife.

Not quit clean. Adult Language. Handful of mild foul language.

Lori says

"Perfect Nightmare" by John Saul starts with a nifty premise. A kidnapper targets victims by stalking open houses and homes for sale on the internet. Great idea, and one that hasn't been done yet, to my knowledge, or done to death (no pun intended). The main and core characters are likable, sympathetic and realistic. You can relate to them and you care about what you just know is going to happen.

But starting about midway through the book, I felt that Saul began to lose his focus. Maybe it was the introduction, or reintroduction, of some secondary characters - - mostly thrown in for red herring purposes. But I felt the book lost some of its snap.

The seemingly pointless and senseless death of a major character threw me for a loop - - and not in a good way.

The "big reveal" at the end of the kidnapper was no surprise, as the signs were much too obvious much too early in the book.

The story seemed to end rather quickly, as if Saul himself got tired of the characters and the story.

That being said, although I like Saul's other works, I felt this was formulaic (for him) and seemed an almost phoned in effort. For a new writer, or one less prolific or proven, it might come across as a better effort, but I expect more from Mr. Saul.

Bark says

Somehow I ended up with an abridged copy of this audiobook. I don't like abridged because I always feel like I'm missing something super important, usually characterization, but this abridgement wasn't too bad.

This story is about a psycho attempting to create a family by abducting women through open houses. It has tones of that horrible triple abduction story in Cleveland, where the monster kept three women imprisoned for his own selfish needs for over a decade. Truly a horrible, nightmarish true-crime. But this book was written years before Castro was exposed as a rapist and kidnapper which makes reading this all the more horrifying. This version doesn't linger too much on the damage inflicted on the victims and for that I am grateful. I had enough of that after watching Lifetime's "Cleveland Abduction". I can't speak for the unabridged version, however, so beware.

When teen Lindsay is abducted, her mother Kara, distraught and heartbroken, takes action. When things go from bad to even worse for Kara she doesn't dissolve into a puddle of self-pity but keeps on keeping on with the search. As admirable as that is, it felt a little unbelievable and unnatural but I'll chalk it up to the four hours that were cut from this version and give it a pass. Kara quickly ends up joining forces with a man named Patrick, a widower and brother of a friend, and I found that bit rather strange and unnatural too considering the previous turn of events which I will not ruin.

It should be noted that I figured out who the killer was pretty early on. It should also be noted that I am not at all good at these things. I can only assume that it was pretty darn obvious.

The narration is done by Dick Hill and Susie Breck. I liked the fact that there were two narrators but Dick Hill's voices weren't very distinctive and his males all sounded like the same man, except for the killer. His killer voice was over the top, bordering on silly. Still, the story was definitely creepy and it was a page-turner so I'll give it a solid 3.5 stars.

Paige Dearth says

Been reading Saul for years. Loved this book...fast paced and exciting. Only one part towards the end there was a bit too much detail, but it didn't hurt the story and it picked up again quickly. I would recommend this to anyone who likes to read thriller/horrors.

-Paige

Mark Soone says

This was a pleasant surprise, as I have heard of Saul for at least 20 years and tried and failed to get drawn into several of his books through the years. Finally though I came across this at just the right time, and while

I would likely rate it 3.5 stars 4 will suffice...were it not for the ending, which was a little lacklustre to me it would have been a solid 4 anyway.

A teen girl, discovers her family must move prior to her senior year of high school and thus ends her hopes of graduating w/ friends and attaining the head cheerleader position. Enter a faceless creepy psychopath stalking some perfect specimens....and we have a creepy scary almost from the headlines type of horror read that should delight fans of the genre....but also has the realism of being something that could happen in any town to any family. Since I abhor supernatural elements, this book was a good one for me as it is totally devoid of them. A string of disappearance occurs, with no clues leading to the perpetrator. While there are certainly cops involved this is in no way a crime thriller.....the creepy antagonist combined the realistic and mostly likeable main characters set up some creepy, horrifying and heartbreakig scenes. I loved that halfway through the book I kind of figured out the sicko was 1 of 2 individuals...but I seemed to go back and forth between which one I thought was really behind this.....other than the surprise of finding out who it really was, the ending didn't live up to the enjoyment that most of this read held me in.

I would recommend this to all horror/suspense fans.

Amy says

I can always count on John Saul to creep me out with a good story. While *Perfect Nightmare* isn't one of my favorites, I haven't yet read a book of his that I didn't like. The premise of this story is extremely unsettling - a traumatic event in a young boy's life results in his becoming a pedophile as an adult, except he doesn't know he's a pedophile. He abducts his victims by sneaking into their homes during an Open House completely undetected. Unmasking the monster in this tale wasn't too difficult, but the ending was nonetheless shocking. If you have enjoyed other books by John Saul, chances are you will enjoy this one too.

Jamie (The Kansan Reader) says

The first time I read this I was about sixteen. I had lived a somewhat sheltered life when it came to books. My mother was strict and I couldn't read books like this one. Well while I was on a vacation in California to see my dad's side of the family my aunt let me read a Patricia Cornwell's book. It started my appetite for thrillers and mysteries. When I got back home and went back to school I saw this in my local library along with another one of his books. I picked the two up and hid it from my mother.

The first book I had read by Saul didn't scare me. I liked it. For those who want to know it was *The Devil's Labyrinth*. I really liked it. Then I got to this book. For some reason this book scared me. Maybe because I tend to have always had the paranoia that someone can break into the house. I still do but today I'm not as scared because I have learned to defend myself and take all necessary precautions. Can't live in fear.

Anywho, at that time I didn't know what I do now. So I was scared out of my wits after reading this book. The only person who knew about it was my brother. He didn't tell because then I wouldn't help him sneak out at night. What? We were each other's partner in crime. I made him check under my bed, even though the only person or animal that could fit underneath it was my cat, and my closet. I was a wimp when I was younger.

Since I am older now and not so scared of everything that goes bump in the night. I was at the library browsing when I saw this. I decided to see if it was still as scary as it was when I was still a teen.

Turns out no it isn't as scary as I remember. I feel my brain may have exaggerated many parts being scary. Granted this could be something that happens today. It's not a ghost story, or a cult story. This is about a man who goes into open houses, hides and waits for the perfect time to steal the girl. Literally a parent's worst nightmare.

I had forgotten the ending so I couldn't remember what happened which was fine by me. I actually don't remember a lot of what had happened in the book so it was like reading it for the first time but knowing certain parts.

I ended up liking the story this go around. Will I reread it again? No. But it is no longer a one star in this former scaredy cat's book.

Kasia says

Perfect Nightmare was my first John Saul book and it was fast, intense and extremely dark as simple words rang truth in my ears like bells and they were terrifying and depressing but made for a really good horror book. There were no super natural monsters, no vampires and witches but a soul of a man so dark and rotten that it chilled me to the bone as I read this book in two days, as it was a very fast and smooth read. I must admit that the story left me feeling down and sad because it was so real and horrifying yet I knew it was a book so I kept reading, if it was a newspaper article I don't know if I would have had the guts to continue.

Kara Marshall and her husband Steve were planning on moving from the charming Long Island home to the city, where Steve worked because they couldn't afford to stay in the house and needed help with their finances. As they decided to put their home out on the market, they unknowingly invited a stranger into their house for an open house who ended up doing the worst harm a mother can imagine; he was responsible for having her only daughter, Lindsay who was a seventeen year old girl, disappear without a trace. I have never read a book so dark and twisted, as the mother's agony was so clearly written, I felt pain as I read it and I felt sick reading about the cold blooded killer who tortured and kidnapped women out of their homes and who were thought to be dead by their family members. I have been told by some people that a loss of a child is the most macabre thing a parent can suffer, and I got a major dose of the end, the sadness and the finality of someone else's actions as they ended a mother's happy life and set her life in eternal shadows as her own child was being tortured and pushed to brinks of death. I got to read and feel the emptiness, the sadness, the way the mother knew her child was out there and was not coming back, that no matter what dreams she woke up from that nothing was ever going to be the same. Just as things got bad they got worse very quickly and darkness turned to inky blackness as I had no hope for any of the captured girls.

This was a gloomy, morbid book, and it caught me in a surprise a few times, but I'm glad I read it, as it made me look around more at people and made sure to always keep safe. This really read so realistically that I'm still trying to shake it off, but I know it's fiction and it was a good read from a solid and well known author, and I will definitely read more of his stuff.

As someone else mentioned, I don't know how Saul wrote this, as it was insane and real but I respect him as a writer, as clearly his skills were sharp, and despite the negative reviews, maybe this was too dark for some, to me this was a great read.

Kim says

I haven't read a John Saul book for many years. I used to be quite a fan so I was quite looking forward to something more contemporary and up to date. This is a pretty scary novel. Certainly if you have children and are of a sensitive disposition you should avoid. The subject matter is grim and it does make for quite an uncomfortable read. The author conveys creepiness and suspense builds well as you would expect from an experienced writer. The book is well written but a little formulaic. Unfortunately the flaw is in the ending it is just too predictable. I felt that the author had grown bored and rushed the ending. It was a real shame as this should have been an outstanding read from a master horror writer.

Jo Sexton says

I used to be a big John Saul fan in my younger years, when I used to scour the library shelves for horror and the like. This is the first of his books that I have read in a long time though, and I found it just okay. The storyline wasn't particularly gripping, but I think this was due to the writing style, which wasn't as developed as you'd expect. It could have been better, but I didn't hate it.

Angela says

This started out as a very promising book, and left me full of suspense. It is a real page turner, you can't help but keep reading to find out what happens. Unfortunately, it kind of goes downhill at the end. It was good the first half but the second half got a bit tedious. I think the death of the husband was a bit of a filler plot since it didn't really go anywhere. There were lots of bits that just weren't important to the plot itself and it got to be a bit much. Also, the end was good but not great. It was a fascinating ending yet it lacked explanation and depth. It felt rushed, like the author just wanted to finish the book. I felt like there were several strings left untied at the end. I wish it would have gone more into what exactly happened and the resolution of the characters. I was surprised that there wasn't an epilogue or something just to show what the survivors felt and what they were doing now. It was disappointing in that respect.

Tory says

Hmm. This was alright. Alright in the sense that I cared enough to have something to say about it.

I don't think that the writing was great, or even good. But it was enough to not put me off completely. The concept of a killer that stalks his victims through the real estate ads was clever.

But the "chilling" parts were just stupid. That the subjects could smell their attacker. It was just over the top, didn't cause goosebumps, just reminded me that it was a silly paperback.

Also, the reasoning for the way the "baddie" was acting that was kind of just thrown out there in the end... it was quite a good reason. But it wasn't talked about enough for me to know whether I was meant to feel sorry

for him, or if it was just supposed to be known.

It had the potential to be a lot better. The end was badly written, too rushed, and the descriptions were silly, and there was a lot of needless bullshit throughout.
