

The Stranger

By Harlan Coben

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A secret destroys a man's perfect life and sends him on a collision course with a deadly conspiracy in this shocking thriller from #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Harlan Coben.

The Stranger appears out of nowhere, perhaps in a bar, or a parking lot, or at the grocery store. His identity is unknown. His motives are unclear. His information is undeniable. Then he whispers a few words in your ear and disappears, leaving you picking up the pieces of your shattered world...

Adam Price has a lot to lose: a comfortable marriage to a beautiful woman, two wonderful sons, and all the trappings of the American Dream: a big house, a good job, a seemingly perfect life.

Then he runs into the Stranger. When he learns a devastating secret about his wife, Corinne, he confronts her, and the mirage of perfection disappears as if it never existed at all. Soon Adam finds himself tangled in something far darker than even Corinne's deception, and realizes that if he doesn't make exactly the right moves, the conspiracy he's stumbled into will not only ruin lives—it will end them.

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Editorial Review

Review
Praise for *The Stranger*

“Coben describes Adam’s search for the truth behind these allegations—and the identity of the person who made them—with masterly skill, springing surprises, raising stakes, seamlessly integrating other victims of the ‘stranger’ into Adam’s tale. He’s also a smooth, funny writer.”—*New York Times Book Review*

“This page-turner is one stranger that readers will want to meet.”—Associated Press

“Seamless storytelling at a breathtaking pace.”—*Houston Chronicle*

“Coben’s latest stand-alone is a great story for people who like to examine the ephemeral nature of those strings that bind our dreams to our reality.”—*Library Journal*

“*The Stranger* isn’t just a great thriller, it’s a stunningly effective, probative novel about one man’s search, essentially, for his own identity...Flat-out great and not to be missed.”—*Providence Journal*

“Another suspenseful thriller whose gripping and intricate plot is completely plausible, and chilling.”—Huffington Post

“Thoroughly entertaining.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“Coben can always be relied on to generate thrills from the simplest premises, but his finest tales maintain a core of logic throughout the twists. This 100-proof nightmare ranks among his most potent.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“The startling climax reinforces the novel’s theme that the trappings of the American dream—affluence, fine home, family—don’t necessarily protect one from violence...[*The Stranger*] carries his trademark asset: a plot that pretty much defies readers to guess the outcome.”—*The Columbus Dispatch*

About the Author

With more than seventy million books in print worldwide, **Harlan Coben** is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of thirty novels, including the Myron Bolitar series and a series aimed at young adults featuring Myron's newphew, Mickey Bolitar. His books are published in forty-three languages around the globe and have been number one bestsellers in more than a dozen countries. The winner of the Edgar, Shamus, and Anthony Awards, he lives in New Jersey.

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Chapter 1

The stranger didn’t shatter Adam’s world all at once.

That was what Adam Price would tell himself later, but that was a lie. Adam somehow knew right away, right from the very first sentence, that the life he had known as a content suburban married father of two was forever gone. It was a simple sentence on the face of it, but there was something in the tone, something knowing and even caring, that let Adam know that nothing would ever be the same.

"You didn't have to stay with her," the stranger said.

They were in the American Legion Hall in Cedarfield, New Jersey. Cedarfield was a town loaded up with wealthy hedge fund managers and bankers and other financial masters-of-the-universe types. They liked to drink beer in the American Legion Hall be- cause it was comfortable slumming, a way to pretend that they were salt-of-the-earth good ol' boys, like something in a Dodge Ram commercial, when they were anything but.

Adam stood by the sticky bar. There was a dartboard behind him. Neon signs advertised Miller Lite, but Adam had a bottle of Budweiser in his right hand. He turned to the man, who had just sidled up to him, and even though Adam already knew the answer, he asked the man, "Are you talking to me?"

The guy was younger than most of the fathers, thinner, almost gaunt, with big, piercing blue eyes. His arms were white and reedy with a hint of a tattoo showing beneath one of the short sleeves. He was wearing a baseball cap. He wasn't quite a hipster, but there was something of a wonk attitude coming off him, like some guy who ran a tech department and never saw the sun.

The piercing blue eyes held Adam's with an earnestness that made him want to turn away. "She told you she was pregnant, right?"

Adam felt his grip on the bottle tighten.

"That's why you stayed. Corinne told you she was pregnant."

It was right then that Adam felt some kind of switch go off in his chest, as if someone had tripped the red digital timer on some movie bomb and now it had started to tick down. Tick, tick, tick, tick.

"Do I know you?" Adam asked.

"She told you she was pregnant," the stranger continued. "Corinne, I mean. She told you she was pregnant and then she lost the baby."

The American Legion Hall was loaded up with town dads sporting those white baseball T-shirts with the three-quarter sleeves and either baggy cargo shorts or perfectly no-assed Dad jeans. Lots of them wore baseball caps. Tonight was the fourth-, fifth-, and sixth- grade boys' lacrosse draft and A-team selections. If you ever wanted to witness type As behaving as such in their natural habitat, Adam thought, watch when parents get involved in their own offsprings' team selections.

The Discovery Channel should film this.

"You felt obligated to stay, am I right?" the man asked. "I don't know who the hell—"

"She lied, Adam." The younger man spoke with such conviction, not just as though he knew for certain but that, at the end of the day, he had Adam's best interest at heart. "Corinne made it all up. She was never

pregnant."

The words kept landing like punches, dazing Adam, sapping his resistance, leaving him shaken and confused and ready to take a standing eight count. He wanted to fight back, grab the guy by the shirt, toss him across the room for insulting his wife like this. But he didn't for two reasons.

One, there was the whole dazed-like-taking-punches, sapped- resistance thing.

Two, something about the way the man spoke, something about the guy's confident tone, the damn conviction in his voice, made Adam start thinking it might be smartest to listen.

"Who are you?" Adam asked. "Does it matter?"

"Yeah, it does."

"I'm the stranger," he said. "The stranger with important knowledge. She lied to you, Adam. Corinne. She was never pregnant. It was all a ruse to get you back."

Adam shook his head. He swam through, tried to stay rational and calm. "I saw the pregnancy test."

"Fake."

"I saw the sonogram."

"Again fake." He held up a hand before Adam could say more. "And yes, so was the stomach. Or should I say stomachs. Once Corinne started to show, you never saw her naked, right? What did she do, claim some kind of late-night sickness so you wouldn't have sex? That's what happens most times. So when the miscarriage occurs, you can kinda look back on the whole thing and realize the pregnancy was difficult right from the start."

A booming voice from the other side of the hall called out, "Okay, guys, grab a fresh beer and let's get this show on the road." The voice belonged to Tripp Evans, the president of the lacrosse league, a former Madison Avenue ad exec and a pretty good guy. The other dads started to grab aluminum chairs, the kind you use for your kid's school concert, from a rack and placed them in a circle around the room. Tripp Evans looked over at Adam, spotted the undoubtedly pale expression on his face, and frowned his concern. Adam shook him off and turned back to the stranger.

"Who the hell are you?"

"Think of me as your savior. Or like the friend who just released you from prison."

"You're full of crap."

All conversation had pretty much ended. The voices were hushed now, the sounds of scraping chairs echoing in the still hall. The fathers were getting their game faces on for the draft. Adam hated this. He wasn't even supposed to be here—Corinne was. She was the treasurer of the lacrosse board, but her school had changed the scheduling of her teachers' conference in Atlantic City, and even though this was the biggest day of the year for Cedarfield lacrosse— indeed the main reason Corinne had become so active—Adam had been forced to step in for her.

“You should be thanking me,” the man said. “What are you talking about?”

For the first time, the man smiled. It was, Adam couldn’t help but notice, a kind smile, the smile of a healer, of a man who just wants to do the right thing.

“You’re free,” the stranger said. “You’re a liar.”

“You know better, don’t you, Adam?”

From across the room, Tripp Evans called, “Adam?”

He turned toward them. Everyone was seated now except Adam and the stranger.

“I have to go now,” the stranger whispered.

“But if you really need proof, check your Visa card. Look for a charge to Novelty Funsy.”

“Wait—”

“One more thing.” The man leaned in close. “If I were you, I’d probably run DNA tests on your two boys.”

Tick, tick, tick . . . ka-boom. “What?”

“I have no evidence on that, but when a woman is willing to lie about something like this, well, it’s a pretty good bet it isn’t her first time.”

And then, with Adam dazed anew by this final accusation, the stranger hurried out the door.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Hector Hartung:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to learn everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim as well as goal; it means that book has different type. Some people sense enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They are reading whatever they get because their hobby is usually reading a book. How about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, individual feel need book if they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you should have this The Stranger.

James Robbins:

As people who live in typically the modest era should be update about what going on or details even knowledge to make these keep up with the era which can be always change and advance. Some of you maybe will probably update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you is you don't know what kind you should start with. This The Stranger is our recommendation to make you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and

wish in this era.

Bess Malloy:

The reason? Because this The Stranger is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap that but latter it will distress you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of gains than the other book get such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I had been you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Steven Perez:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray you, why because this The Stranger guide written by well-known writer we are excited for well how to make book which might be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written with good manner for you, dripping every ideas and publishing skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still hesitation The Stranger as good book but not only by the cover but also by content. This is one book that can break don't assess book by its protect, so do you still needing one more sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your studying sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to an additional sixth sense.

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