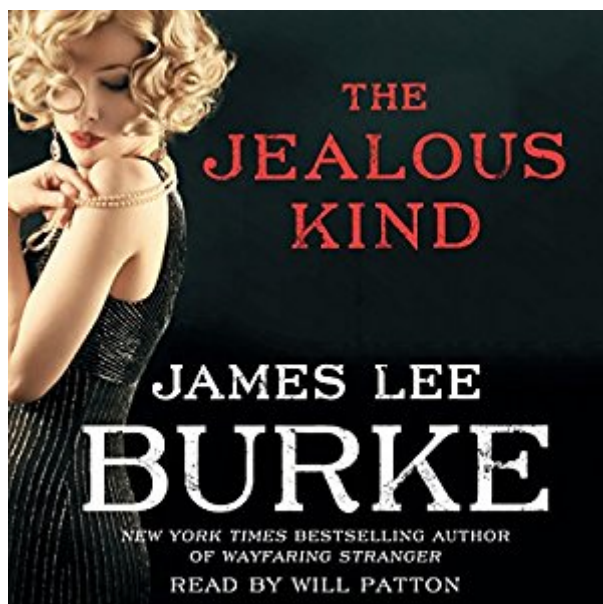


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The Jealous Kind



Synopsis

From award-winning New York Times best-selling author James Lee Burke - an atmospheric, powerful coming-of-age story set in 1950s Texas, as the specter of the Korean War looms. On its surface, life in Houston in the 1950s is as you'd expect: stoic fathers, restless teens, drive-in movies, and souped-up Cadillacs. But underneath lies a world shifting under high school junior Aaron Broussard's feet. There's a class war between the "haves" and the "have-nots" as well as a real war, Korea, happening on the other side of the world. It is against this backdrop that Aaron comes of age, trying to understand how first loves, friendship, violence, and power can alter what "traditional America" means for the people trying to find their way in a changing world. When Aaron spots the beautiful Valerie Epstein fighting with her boyfriend, Grady Harrelson, at a drive-in, he steps in. Aaron and Valerie begin dating, but Grady presents a looming problem - as does Grady's father, who has troubling criminal connections. In the middle of it all is Aaron, who seemingly takes care of one threat only to see multiple ones manifest in its stead. In *The Jealous Kind*, "modern master" (Publishers Weekly) James Lee Burke creates a singular bittersweet experience that mirrors a larger world on the precipice of great change. As Aaron undergoes his harrowing evolution from boy to man, we can't help but recall the inspirational power of first love and how far we would go to protect the world we know.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Jealous Kind is a crime story, but it's also the story of a teenage boy who is learning to understand himself, who is creating an identity he can carry into adulthood. The novel is also about

friendship -- the difficulty of separating true friends from false friends, of deciding whether a friendship is real and when it should end. And it's about the difficulty of being a decent person in an indecent world. Aaron Broussard is a high school student in Texas from a working class background. His interest in a girl sparks conflict with a bully. Before long, Aaron and his friend Saber Bledsoe are suspected of torching a car near the area where a Mexican girl's body is found. On top of that, one of his teachers, a man who is suspected of sexually abusing children, is deeply antagonistic to Broussard and Bledsoe. And on top of that, various characters have mob connections, making them doubly dangerous. And to top it all off, Aaron interacts with police officers who belong to the huge army of people who believed that authority over others was an achievement and that violence was proof of a man's bravery" -- although one police detective is a better example of humanity than the others. As the plot unfolds, various acts of mayhem and murder occur. Aaron and/or Saber are suspected of involvement in most of them. The challenge for the reader is to figure out who did what. With an assortment of mobsters, gang members, and potentially violent people to choose from -- people whose motivations might be protective or destructive -- the challenge is enough to hold the reader's steadfast interest. Aaron's father might be the novel's most interesting character. He has an old-fashioned kind of southern honor.

James Lee Burke is a legend, a venerable and highly respected writer known for his luminous prose and quirky characters. In this, his second work of historical fiction in a planned trilogy, he demonstrates that he can still work magic better than ever. I received this DRC from Net Galley and Simon and Schuster in exchange for an honest review, but I would have paid full freight if I had to, and I rarely say that about any book anymore. Our protagonist is Aaron Holland Broussard, and the setting is Houston, Texas in the 1950s. Aaron is a child of the middle class. His father drinks too much and his mother is mentally ill, suffering terribly from depression during a time period when tranquilizers and electric shock were the best -- and worst -- that modern medicine had to offer. But he's got a solid home to return to at the end of each day, his own bedroom, and a fine collection of pets. All told, his life is a great deal better than those that the young people around him face, especially his closest friend, Saber Bledsoe. Diehard Burke fans will recognize in young Saber the ghost of Clete Purcel, a favorite character in the author's Dave Robicheaux series. The role played by Saber, and before him by Clete, is that of the loyal friend that will do anything for the protagonist but whose judgment is often poor and whose impulse control is nearly nonexistent. At times the friend lightens things up with off-the-chain behavior, and at others the same friend creates problems that the protagonist has to try to repair.

First off I have to offer this disclaimer: I am one of James Lee Burke's biggest fans. He captured me initially with his "Dave Robicheaux" novels and has consistently delivered well thought out and intelligent stories for decades. Millions of people around the world have read his award winning novels, some of which have been interpreted on the 'big screen'. But in my opinion there is nothing much better than opening a James Lee Burke book while sitting in a comfortable chair in a quiet atmosphere free of distractions. You don't just read his novels, you drink it in like a fine wine. Mr. Burke is master of clean and descriptive prose, painting virtually all of his characters with a rainbow of colors that range from the darkest black to the most explosive white. Each character is developed with his/her relevant backstory so that his/her part in the novel is clearly understood as far as experience and motivation. None of his characters are consistently 'good' or 'bad', instead their prior experiences combine with their current motivations to shape how they experience and approach a new situation. When combined with the inherent zaniness or craziness making up each individual character, the response to any situation can range from cool and calm to 'over the top'. The unpredictable way any situation is handled is bound to keep the reader surprised and on their toes. His heroes are Imperfect with a capital "I". This particular story intrigued me because it was about a 17 year old boy who experiences the diverse micro environments provided by a big city in the very early 1950's.

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