

THE EX: A NOVEL BY ALAFAIR BURKE



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In this breakout standalone novel of suspense in the vein of *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on a Train*, a woman agrees to help an old boyfriend who has been framed for murder—but begins to suspect that she is the one being manipulated.

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Widower Jack Harris has resisted the dating scene ever since the shooting of his wife Molly by a fifteen-year-old boy three years ago. An early morning run along the Hudson River changes that when he spots a woman in last night's party dress, barefoot, enjoying a champagne picnic alone, reading his favorite novel. Everything about her reminds him of what he used to have with Molly. Eager to help Jack find love again, his best friend posts a message on a popular website after he mentions the encounter. Days later, that same beautiful stranger responds and invites Jack to meet her in person at the waterfront. That's when Jack's world falls apart.

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Most helpful customer reviews

42 of 45 people found the following review helpful.

Very compelling, hard-to-put-down mystery

By a

Alafair Burke's "The Ex" was the first book in a while that I have enjoyed all the way through. Despite having two kids in school and a very busy schedule, I was compelled to keep at it, and I finished it in about three days. So in short, I would recommend this book. That said, you may not necessarily like the topics or characters. There is limited foul language and reference to drug use, lots of drinking, a bit of sexual talk but no actual activity. At least three of the numerous characters throughout the novel are cheaters, most everyone is a liar, and at least one of them is thought to be a murderer.

"The Ex" begins with a main character, Jackson Harris, giving his statement to police. Believing he wants retaliation for his wife's murder, the police take him away for "questioning" which scares his sixteen-year-old daughter, Buckley, enough to call his ex-fiancée, Olivia Randall, Esq. Reluctant to take the case despite knowing her sweet Jack could never murder three people, Olivia eventually acquiesces, knowing that she owes Jack. After that, this novel takes us through all the reasons why. While I'm no stranger to mystery stories, I often have several theories that develop during reading, and it took me till nearly the end of this novel to figure out the truth. Even then I talked myself out of it.

Alafair Burke is no stranger to writing or the legal system, and with this novel she has written a compelling story using everything from Olivia's first person narrative to a police recording, depositions, and emails. If you enjoy crime mysteries and legal stories, you'll love "The Ex". Recommended.

22 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

A solid mystery!

By Wendy L. Hines

Jack Harris' wife was murdered several years ago and although he says he has moved on in his life, mainly because of his teenage daughter, Buckley, he clearly has not. His file cabinets are full of case files relating to the man who he feels was responsible. When that man is shot dead, along with two others, during Jack's attempt to meet a woman he met online, he is their prime suspect.

Olivia Randall used to date Jack back in the day. They were together several years until Olivia did something that has left a tarnish of guilt on her life ever since. When she sees that Jack has been arrested, she decides to represent him as his lawyer. She knows Jack is innocent. But the man she used to know, or thought she knew, may not be the same.

Filled with twists and turns, *The Ex* flashes back to Jack and Olivia's past to help authenticate their current relationship and provide contrast to the differences of how they have changed and grown over the years. While this is important to the story, it doesn't deflect from the current events of Olivia delving into the investigation to prove that Jack is innocent.

While I wasn't surprised by the ending, I was surprised with the repercussions of some character decisions on the facts of the case. Or in this case, the lack of...in some instances. I didn't connect with any characters, which really bothered me because I really didn't care who did it. But I had to know why, so I continued my journey with *The Ex*.

If you're looking for a standard murder mystery, then *The Ex* is worth a go. But if you're looking for the darker side of a thriller, you won't find that thrill here.

26 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

The Ex

By Alla S.

"*The Ex*" by Alafair Burke follows Olivia Randall, a forty-three-year-old criminal defense lawyer who is recruited to help her ex, Jack Harris—who is accused of murdering three people at a football field near a train station—after receiving a desperate call by his sixteen-year-old daughter Buckley. The problem is that among those murdered is Malcolm Nealey, a millionaire financier whose teenage son Todd murdered Jack's wife Molly as well as several other commuters, at the train station several years prior, before turning the gun on himself. Jack's court case against Todd's father for not getting his son the mental help he needed had just gotten dismissed the month before, which makes Jack's proximity to the murder site even more suspicious and gives him a strong motive. Jack's shaky defense is that he just accidentally happened to be at the site for a date with Madeline, a woman he had fallen in love with after seeing her once and who was tracked down with the help of his best friend, the head of an online NY magazine "The Room," Charlotte.

Feeling guilty over the way their relationship had ended in college (Olivia had cheated on Jack even as they were engaged), Olivia agrees to take on the case in spite of strong opposition from her boss Don (who only hired Olivia, who was forced to leave the law firm where she worked for almost a decade because she couldn't make partner, at the behest of his niece Melissa who was Olivia's best friend) and the increasingly complicated task of proving that Jack is innocent and that he had been framed, with Madeline being used for the set-up. Other suspects include Max Nealey, Malcom's son, whose father refused to give him the seed money to start his own business and who was to gain almost all of his father's money upon his death, as well as the mysterious individual who had set up the email that purported to be from Madeline.

Burke is a former prosecutor, so the legal jargon and trial background is detailed well. The writing is more sophisticated than say James Patterson books, with the chapters longer, the vocabulary more complex, and the narrative more detailed. Olivia is a flawed heroine, which makes her an interesting character. Jack is also a multi-dimensional character who Olivia tends to see as the good guy, but who has his own demons and a dark side to him. The rest of the supporting characters weren't as interesting, mainly used as props for Olivia or Jack, but I didn't find them to be that interesting individually. The one thing missing for me is that while the stakes were high for Jack—whose very freedom depended on proving his innocence—they were not high enough for Olivia herself, who had only taken the case out of her previous guilt for Jack and whose own life

would not really change regardless of the resolution. If Olivia's life was threatened during her investigation for example, or the case itself had some sort of direct connection to her own past, then it would have been different. This is a subtle difference that might change the book from turning-the-pages-out-of-curiosity to can't-stop-turning-the-pages. Overall, though, an interesting read set in New York.

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