



Until She Comes Home

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Winner of an Edgar Award for Best First Novel for *Bent Road*, Lori Roy returns with *Until She Comes Home*, a tale of spellbinding suspense in which a pair of seemingly unrelated murders crumbles the facade of a changing Detroit neighborhood.

In 1958 Detroit, on Alder Avenue, neighbors struggle to care for neighbors amid a city ripe with conflicts that threaten their peaceful street.

Grace, Alder's only expectant mother, eagerly awaits her first born. Best friend Julia prepares to welcome twin nieces. And Malina sets the tone with her stylish dresses, tasteful home, and ironfisted stewardship of St. Alban's bake sale.

Life erupts when childlike Elizabeth disappears while in the care of Grace and Julia. All the ladies fear the recent murder of a black woman at the factory on Willingham Avenue where their husbands work may warn of what has become of Elizabeth, and they worry what is yet to become of Julia—the last to see Elizabeth alive.

The men mount an around-the-clock search, leaving their families vulnerable to sinister elements hidden in plain sight. Only Grace knows what happened, but her mother warns her not to tell. "No man wants to know this about his wife." Ashamed that her silence puts loved ones in harm's way, Grace gravitates toward the women of Willingham Avenue, who recognize her suffering as their own. Through their acceptance, Grace conquers her fear and dares to act.

On Alder Avenue, vicious secrets bind friends, neighbors, and spouses. For the wicked among them, the walk home will be long.

Until She Comes Home Details

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From Reader Review Until She Comes Home for online ebook

Kathy says

Alder Street in Detroit in the late 1950's is a place desperately trying to hold on to its appearance of conventional routine. It's a struggle that comes to boiling point with the disappearance of one of its own, 20-year-old Elizabeth, a woman with a child's mind. The ladies of Alder Street ramp up their cooking and baking roles to support their men, who play out their assigned roles of protector in searching for Elizabeth. As the search drags out into the week, the fears and secrets of the residents of Alder come to a head. With the death of a black woman near the factory where the men of Alder Street work, questions arise about what connection that might have to the community, and the confrontation between races comes closer to boiling point. Reminiscent of classics such as Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, the point is driven that nobody really knows what goes on behind the closed doors of a neighborhood. The descriptions of 1950's roles of men and women are depicted with care, although the lack of children on the street captures mostly adult interactions. Being born in the fifties, I experienced a different view of life, what it was growing up with ready playmates all around me. The dearth of children in the novel and on the street made for a much more depressing setting than I cared for, but it did allow the focus to be on the adults' secrets from one another. The women and men must work through years of repressive feelings to arrive at either their salvation or their destruction in this novel. Lori Roy has given readers an interesting look at how life was changing in the late fifties and how secrets can destroy us anywhere, anytime.

Jean says

Lori Roy has created a wonderful story of life in Detroit in 1958. The people in this story grab your interest and you feel for them. She creates a wonderful sense of time and place with little details - the women wear gloves to go on the bus shopping; people don't talk directly about sex or bad things. You can see the kitchens, the bedrooms, the dark places.

The plot is about a young girl (probably mentally disabled) who is missing and about two women who were supposed to watch out for her and didn't. Lots of great characters, including a group of women of the church who are almost never described separately; they function as a unit. Great idea! The twins you can't tell apart but who have separate personalities are also well done.

The book is about the story but it's also about changing times, racial tension, marital expectations, and more. It's definitely worth a read.

I'm re-reading it in depth, making notes on how the author constructs the story, and I'm finding things I missed the first time. Yes, it's that good.

Alena says

Once again, Lori Roy ensnares me in a world of damaged people. This time it's Detroit just as it's experiencing a demographic shift in the late 50's. Race is a huge factor in this novel, but not really what the story is about. Instead, it's a sort-of mystery about a dead black woman and a missing white girl. Are they connected? Are they both dead?

What I loved was the way Roy unpeeled the layers of thought for multiple characters so flawlessly. We get the perspectives of Malina, Grace and Julia -- all neighbors involved in the story. It's hard to say more

without giving away the very engaging twists and turns of this novel, but it all works well.

Patrice Hoffman says

Until She Comes Home is the riveting novel by Lori Roy. This is the first I've read by this author but I have read many good reviews for Bent Road. I can understand why the reviews are favorable because Roy is quite a gifted author. Until She Comes Home begins with Malina fretting in her kitchen about the whereabouts of her husband and concerned that the town will know exactly where he is since his vehicle is missing from the driveway. The first chapter lets us know that there are some serious problems in this town that will soon be coming to a head.

With the death of a black woman and the disappearance of a "childlike" woman named Elizabeth, the whole town is on pins and needles and engulfed in fear. Neighbors are contemplating moving from the homes since the sudden influx of coloreds and the disappearance of Elizabeth. While the men go out searching for the girl, the wives stay in the "safety" of their homes. One woman in particular knows what may have happened to Elizabeth, but she is too afraid to tell. Rather, she's encouraged not to tell because of it's possible repercussions.

Until She Comes Home is fast paced and immediately absorbing. I got lost in the lives of the towns folk for the week they spent looking for Elizabeth. The twins Izzy and Arie are completely mesmerizing and fun to follow being the only children in the novel. Grace, and her secrets keeps readers in suspense about what she may do regarding the missing girl. Malina and her craziness only further paints a vivid picture of this 1950s neighborhood. Each character is vividly drawn and their depth comes from some of the secrets they harbor.

Blurbs of this book suggest that it's a thriller but I didn't find it suspenseful in the conventional sense. Besides on harrowing scene in a garage, the other main plot driver was done off scene. There is a mysterious buildup but never a hair standing up on the back of my neck feeling. The book is perfectly acceptable as is, but the blurb does not do much in that regard except be misleading. Much of the characters are full of fear but not for killers on the loose.

Ultimately, I look forward to reading Bent Road by Lori Roy. Her fans will find this to be a great followup. Until She Comes Home is definitely a not-to-be-missed read.

Jeanette says

I got just past the half way point. And really had no further interest in reading about these unlikeable characters and single dimensional women. Flat and revisionist stereotypes of some clichéd idea of what housewives were and what lives they lead before "social enlightenment" of more modern sensibilities.

It would not have been SO bad, but this writer does not know Detroit, nor the 1950's either. This was neither. Not even close.

She should have put this story into some alternate world or some era that was sci.fi. and made them real robots, it would have made a bit more sense.

The mystery part wasn't either.

It's shocking to me that so many posters believe that this is what the predominant mindset and value judgment was like in the 1950's for housewives in changing neighborhoods.

Lorraine says

It's 1958 in a working class Detroit neighborhood, and things are changing. Factories are starting to close, poor people are moving closer bringing prostitution, drinking and broken glass. A group of women on Alder Ave. keep to their rituals: washing and pressing their husband's shirts, taking care of their children and/or gardens, donating clothing to the thrift shop, holding bake sales at the local church.

Malina, married 25 yrs, but still referring to her husband as Mr. Herve, runs the church ladies group with an iron fist. Malina has never lost her figure. She is tiny and elegant - and nearly always terrified of her husband. Malina and Mr. Herve have never had children. Mr. Herve, however, has had other women in his life. Malina thinks that he has a child with a young "colored" girl.

Every week the ladies get together to discuss plans for the church. This time it's about the upcoming bake sale. Grace, married 5 yrs, and FINALLY pregnant is sweet and pretty and always looks perfect. She gets her work done in the morning so she can "putter" in the afternoons and freshen her makeup so that James, her husband who is ten years older, will not EVER lose interest.

Julie, on the other hand, has a problem keeping her frizzy red hair under control as well as her figure. Her sister's children are visiting from their grandmother's. (One flaw in this story is why we never really know what's going on with this situation, but it is peripheral to the story.) Julie lost her baby to SIDS three years prior. While none of her friends will admit it, they just don't quite trust her with children.

Elizabeth is also at the weekly get together. It's her birthday. She's wearing her favorite lavender dress. Elizabeth is sweet, but she's a little off, she's like a child really. She needs to be protected. Someone needs to make sure that she gets home. It's usually Grace or Julie, but somehow they are both distracted. Julie remembers Elizabeth turning at her gate and going home only she never makes it home. The men mount search parties.

Mr. Herve is the boss so he makes arrangements for them to skip work and search. The women make sandwiches and coffee and casseroles and desserts. The men keep on looking. Grace is nearly ready to deliver so she is excused from a lot of the tasks that the rest of the women are doing to support their menfolk. However, one thing that Grace is NOT excused from is her inability to make a decent pierogi. Her mother despairs as her dumplings split because she over filled them or the dough just wasn't EXACTLY right.

Their weekly bus ride to the store to do their shopping never varies. However, one thing concerns them: the people who are moving closer to their neighborhood are shopping at the same stores. A local Polish bakery is one of the stops, but they want her to close on payday so that they won't have to rub elbows with the "Negroes." Everyone is sure that Elizabeth's disappearance has something to do with the Negroes that cut through their alley behind their street. Then something awful happens to Grace, and Julie begins to suspect that her 3 month old daughter did not die a natural death.

This book may be one of the creepiest I've read in a long time. It's also one of the best. Roy is a terrific writer who knows exactly how to set the stage. This is Roy's second novel. Her first, "Bent Rd," won an Edgar. I don't know how I missed it, but I'll be reading it soon.

Karen Brown says

I loved Lori Roy's depiction of the wives in this book--the way rituals and expectations shaped their lives--the cleaning, ironing, cooking, baking are all integrated into the women's actions, and there's always something to do that involves bending, scraping, scrubbing. The women are of a particular time period, 1958--and we witness the ways that their routines are both comforting and confining. At one point, Grace forgets to wear her gloves into town, and must hide her bare hands. So many fine details here, and of course, a brilliant mystery, and an unsettling sense of place. Like Bent Road, the tone is dark, the characters' lives filled with secrets.

karen says

2014 edgar nominee for best novel!

until she comes home is about the women, the wives living on a street in a white detroit neighborhood in 1958. their cozy world of bake sales and homemaking is shattered as the racial divide begins to shift, as black women entice their husbands near the factory where they work, and black men cut through the alleys on their street, breaking glass and committing an act of violence towards one of the women. when a developmentally disabled woman goes missing soon after a black woman is murdered near the factory, fingers are pointed from behind curtained windows.

the changing racial climate is what initially brings about the novel's fear and tension, but the reality is that the street was already corroded from within. suspicions, mysterious deaths, infidelities, and unsavory attractions were already there, just all hidden beneath the veneer of perfectly frosted carrot cakes and spotless

gloves.

but things are starting to come to the surface.

things start small, as they always do, with the faintest ripples, but by the end of this novel, the fear and crimes will have grown into a whirlpool, sucking the entire street down into a spiral of crime and revenge and betrayal and death.

and those horrors, to me, as bad as they are, are nothing compared to the more ordinary horrors a modern reader will experience.

the horror of being a woman when sexuality was such a minefield and appearances of propriety were so valued that we have a character whose mother encourages her not to tell her husband that she was raped in her own garage when she was already hugely pregnant because she worries that if he finds out, he won't look at her the same again. that, to me, is almost as horrifying as the rape itself - to have to smile and get dinner on the table while mom covers up the bruises with makeup and everything is just peachy.

the horror of living in a neighborhood where everyone knows everyone's business, and a woman suspects her husband of infidelity, worrying what the neighbors will think of the absence of his car in the driveway, when all the other husbands have already come home.

the horror of... twins...

that one is probably just my own personal horror.

a woman is murdered, a woman goes missing, a woman is raped. suspicions form, blame is placed, crimes are covered up, and nothing is going to unfold the way you think it will.

roy does a really good job depicting the attitudes and mindsets of cloistered women, which was frequently horrifying to me, but rings true. shudder. it is a tidy and surprising crime novel with a satisfying tailfeather spread of an ending, and a fascinating study of neighborhood politics.

Hallie says

“Until She Comes Home,” Lory Roy’s second novel after her Edgar-winning debut “Bent Road,” is set in 1958 in a hardscrabble suburb of Detroit, a Polish neighborhood destabilized by factory closings and a changing population. The disappearance of Elizabeth Symanski, the dreamy, mentally-challenged daughter of an elderly neighbor, sets everyone’s nerves on edge and nearly topples the social order. Life stops as the police mobilize. Every able-bodied man helps with the search; the women make casseroles; and conjectures about what happened to Elizabeth breed suspicion. Meanwhile, a black prostitute from a nearby enclave is murdered, and no one even knows her name.

Readers looking for a protagonist won’t find one. The story is told by the women living on Alder Avenue. These include Grace Richardson, happily married and pregnant, who is obsessed with the impossibly high standards her Polish mother sets; her best friend, Julia Wagner, who is still in the throes of grief after her baby’s death; Julia’s two spunky nieces, who, determined to find their missing cat, put themselves in constant danger; and Malina Herze, the prim, powerful, and oh-so-judgmental wife of the factory boss, who

is desperate to maintain a patina of dignity despite what is obvious to everyone in town: Her husband rarely comes home.

Every family on Alder Avenue harbors secrets, and what happened to Elizabeth is the least of them. Roy weaves a complex tapestry of entwined lives that can, at times, feel overwhelming and a bit unfocused. Much of the suspense depends on jump cuts and flash forwards in the narrative, and on character after character withholding vital information. This is one to read for rich characterization, setting, and family drama.

First published in The Boston Globe 7/6/2013

Marjorie says

The author does a wonderful job of slowly building up this multi-layered character study. It's a quiet book, not very fast paced, that gradually pulls you into the lives of the people of this community in the 1950's and their fears, desires, lies and secrets. It's packed with the various stories of the hidden lives of each of these neighbors that twist and wind together into a compelling tale. To say too much about the plot would be to give away some of the shocks that this book contains. Suffice it to say that this is a fascinating read as you watch this once respectable neighborhood gradually crumble into chaos around its residents.

It's very suspenseful. I don't care much for "women in distress" type of books where there's a woman in trouble and there's a handsome police officer or detective or neighbor or whatever who you know will eventually save her from the bad guys. This book is so much more than that. The mysteries involved are completely unpredictable in their outcome and will keep you guessing. The book also touches on the racial conflicts in Detroit during that time and how integration affected this community.

This book has so many layers to it and is so masterfully written with genuine, true-to-life believable characters. Recommended.

Diane S ? says

Alder Street in Detroit is your typical middle class street of the 1950's. The factory in town is the main employer and the women wait for their men to come home after a hard day at work, looking their best and ready to put food on the table. Things are changing, however, some colored have moved into the rooming house at the edge of the town and a colored woman has been murdered and fear begins to mount in the neighborhood. When a white woman goes missing, a woman who is mentally challenged, the town gears up and starts searching. As the search continues the cracks begin appearing in the everyday lives on the street. In the nineteen fifties there was the attitude that what went on in ones house stayed there. So it is on this street, but as the cracks widen the secrets are exposed.

I loved this author's *Bent Road* and I loved this one as well. The tension and fear permeates the pages and at one point I actually had goosebumps down my arm. It is really hard to tell from the beginning exactly where this novel is going to go. There is a mystery involved and there are many secrets to be found. All the characters are so well drawn that one can imagine living on this block. One of my favorite new authors for sure.

Barb Lie says

Until She Came Home is Lori Roy's second novel. Last year I read her first book, Bent Road and said at that time, she was an excellent writer, and we should expect more of the same from her. Well I can safely say, she has done it again. Until She Comes Home is a suspense story of two tragedies that take place in the same neighborhood in Detroit. It is a somber and tension filled story of how these murders intermingle, during a time of racial conflict, and how it causes everything to slowly crumble.

We meet the ladies early on, as they all are at Grace's house for an afternoon get together. We meet Grace, who is pregnant, and her best friend Julia, who is taking care of her two nieces. Malina is another of the wives we meet, and we learn that her husband is cheating on her with one of the prostitutes who hang around the factory where many of the men work. Malina goes one evening to follow him, only to come face to face with a few of "colored ladies" who know why she is there. The next day, one of the those woman is found dead. Malina is worried her husband is responsible, and is desperate to hide that she tried to follow him.

At a get together at Grace's house, the gossip is about the murder in town. Malina is the one doing most of the talking. During this time, we meet Elizabeth, who is somewhat handicapped mentally, and Grace, keeps an eye on her. When it is time to get Elizabeth home, Grace makes sure Julia walks her home. That night, Elizabeth is found to be missing, and the neighborhood joins forces to search for her. All the men take turns, leaving no stone unturned, but to no avail, Elizabeth remains missing. Everyone fears the worse.

A day or so later, while she is in her garage, Grace is attacked by three men, one of whom rapes her. Grace's mother finds her, and cleans her up. She tells Grace to never tell anyone, especially her husband what happened, because he will never look at her the same. Also in this mix is Julia's two nieces, who may have witnessed something bad that happened to Grace, but they are afraid to say anything. Despite being warned to stay in the house, they continue to go about and find themselves getting into trouble.

What follows is a tense story of how the murder of the prostitute, and the disappearance of Elizabeth effect everyone and turns their lives around. The secrets, the fears, and the betrayals divide everyone, creating dangerous situations.

Does Grace tell her husband and the police the truth, to help find the men who may have done the same thing to Elizabeth; or does she hide the truth to save her marriage? What secrets does Julia discover about her husband that threatens their marriage? Will Malina continue to hide where she was the night of the murder, and to what will she go through to protect herself?

Lori Roy does a fantastic job in this suspenseful and tense tale of a neighborhood that seemed a perfect place to live, become a cesspool of lies and secrets. Roy slowly rips the masks of their lives, and shows us what is underneath in the face of tragedy. The key here is that she does this so flawlessly. This was a very intense story, very well written, with so many emotional moments, that I found myself thinking about this book for two days before I wrote this review.

Barb
The Reading Cafe

Allison says

This book rates 2.5 stars. The book was interesting enough to keep reading it, but in the end, there were numerous issues that kept it from being rated any higher.

"Until She Comes Home" follows the story of a missing girl on Alder Street, Detroit, in the summer of 1958. Is Elizabeth's absence connected to the recent murder of a black girl? Over the course of several days, tempers rise and otherwise cordial neighborly relationships are put to the test as unresolved grief, suspicion, accusations and racial tensions simmer.

The author's style of writing is really confusing. Many things were suggested or insinuated, yet the author never followed through on the details or resolving the problem that was suggested. Furthering the confusion were the abrupt transitions from one character situation to the next.

Britany says

1950's Detroit. Alder Avenue is your quintessential Pleasantville, until a black woman shows up missing near the factory where all the husbands work. The wives are busy running bake sales and keeping up with community appearances until one of them goes missing...

Interesting perspective and good story overall, a couple of unexpected twists make this one better than the average read.

Su says

I couldn't justify giving this more than three stars. The basic story is about a neighborhood block of Detroit in the year 1958. Although some readers criticized the author's portrayal of the women of the era as being stereotypical, I would say they were written exactly the same as I remember the neighbor ladies on my block at that time. Well, with one glaring difference. These characters suffered variously from infant deaths, divorce, rape, murder, alcoholism, suicide, and kidnapping. That was a very busy block. My main opposition to the book was the author's meandering narrative which would swiftly change settings, scenes and thoughts within one sentence. I did a lot of backtracking to zone in on who was speaking to whom and what they were talking about. My other complaint was the numerous loose ends that were never addressed. What happened to Malina? Could Bill and Julia find peace? Was Grace absolved of all guilt? I never found those answers.
