



California Girl: A Novel

By T. Jefferson Parker

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The Orange County, California, that the Becker brothers knew as boys is no more—unrecognizably altered since the afternoon in 1954 when Nick, Clay, David, and Andy rumbled with the lowlife Vonns, while five-year-old Janelle Vonn watched from the sidelines. The new decade has ushered in the era of Johnson, hippies, John Birchers, and LSD. Clay becomes a casualty of a far-off jungle war. Nick becomes a cop, Andy a reporter, David a minister. And a terrible crime touches them all in ways they could never have anticipated when the mutilated corpse of teenage beauty queen Janelle Vonn is discovered in an abandoned warehouse.

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California Girl: A Novel By T. Jefferson Parker Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1474904 in Books
- Published on: 2009-07-28
- Released on: 2009-07-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .90" w x 5.31" l, .64 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 400 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set on Parker's usual turf, this Orange County, Calif., saga is a family drama carefully wrapped around a mystery involving a murdered beauty queen. Back in 1954, the Becker brothers, David, Nick, Clay and Andy, win a fight with the wrong-side-of-the-tracks Vonn brothers at the Sunblesst orange packinghouse. After the rumble, the Vonns' little sisters, Lynette and Janelle, show up to throw rocks. Thus begins a lifelong association between three of the brothers and the two girls. In 1968, Janelle is back at the packinghouse, only now she's lying dead on the floor, her decapitated head several feet from her torso. Nick is with the county sheriff's department working his first case as lead detective. Brother Clay has been killed in Vietnam, Andy is a reporter on a local newspaper and David is a minister. Framing the occasionally glacial narrative with Nick's present-day reworking of the case, Parker (*Cold Pursuit*, etc.) introduces a wide variety of quirky period characters, from stoned-out hippies to Dick Nixon and his conservative cronies, one of whom might be Janelle's killer. Readers should think mainstream novel rather than thriller and prepare to wait patiently for the rewards offered by this intricately plotted tale.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Parker's 12th novel is a gripping saga of three brothers and their relationship to one doomed and abused young woman over the course of a generation. Parker uses Janelle as a focal point for examining a diverse set of characters; in investigating her murder, for example, the Becker brothers dig deep within themselves. Yet perhaps the best character is '60s-era Southern California itself: its blue sky, ocean, drive-in churches, orange groves, tract homes, peace protests, and drugs, spotted with cameos by Richard Nixon, Timothy Leary, and other celebrities. *California Girl*, though technically a crime novel, is also a family saga and history, though it tries too hard at the latter. If sometimes too self-conscious or superficial in tone, the novel offers a not-so-innocent look at the tarnished California dream.

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From [Booklist](#)

Since the Edgar-winning *Laguna Beach* in 1985, Parker has been known for his literate mysteries set in Southern California. This latest involves a very cold case from the 1960s. The story is framed by the elegiac meditations of Nick Becker, former L.A. cop, who deeply regrets lost youth and opportunities, but the bulk of the story suggests that Nick hasn't missed all that much. The core experience of his youth, his first case as an L.A. sheriff's officer, involved standing over the body of a neighbor girl, staring at it with his reporter brother, Andy. The girl, whom they knew had been molested and drugged by her brothers and later became a local beauty queen and *Playboy* cover girl, was found brutally murdered on the floor of a packinghouse. Before readers get to this core incident, which took place in 1968, the novel lurches through chapters depicting the Becker family in 1954, 1960, and 1963. It's obvious Parker wants to recapture the '60s, but he does so in an extremely heavy-handed, lugubrious fashion, hitting readers over the head with ways in which the times touched the family. The mystery itself moves extremely slowly, relying for its partial solution on an extremely corny deus ex machina device. Parker devotees will stick with him, but this one won't attract new fans. *Connie Fletcher*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jason Urso:

This book untitled California Girl: A Novel to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, honestly, that is because when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit into it. You will easily to buy that book in the book retail store or you can order it by means of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, since you can read this book in your Cell phone. So there is no reason for your requirements to past this reserve from your list.

Elizabeth Rodrigues:

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Douglas Stevens:

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Jack Scala:

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