



Hard Truth

Mariah Stewart

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From *New York Times* bestselling author Mariah Stewart comes a novel of sexy romantic suspense for fans of Nora Roberts, Catherine Coulter, and Karen Robards.

TELL THE TRUTH AND SHAME THE DEVIL

Two children who mysteriously disappeared twenty-one years ago are the last thing on Lorna Temple's mind when she returns to her Pennsylvania hometown to sell the old family property in the wake of her parents' passing. But instead of memories, the fields where Lorna grew up yield something utterly chilling.

All those years ago, when nine-year-old Melinda Eagan vanished on her birthday, her foulmouthed older brother, Jason, quickly became the lone suspect. Yet when he went missing, too, the case turned cold. But Jason, it seems, never got far: His bones have been moldering on the Temples' land for two decades. As far as the local police are concerned, the book is closed on Melinda's murder—and Jason's death is justice served. But Lorna refuses to let the dead rest uneasily. She turns to private eye T. J. Dawson to dig up the dirt of the past and see what lies beneath. Only there's someone out there who hasn't forgotten—and who won't be the least bit forgiving about being exposed as a killer.

In matters of crime, there are many versions of the truth.

BONUS: This edition includes an excerpt from Mariah Stewart's *Dark Truth*.

Hard Truth Details

Date : Published (first published September 27th 2005)

ISBN :

Author : Mariah Stewart

Format : Kindle Edition 400 pages

Genre : Romance, Romantic Suspense, Mystery, Suspense, Fiction

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From Reader Review Hard Truth for online ebook

Maura says

We start out with a prologue in which we see that a little girl from an abusive household disappears. Cut to twenty years later and a body is found on Lorna, our main character's, property and it happens to be the body of that little girl's older brother, who went missing only two weeks after she did. The first suspect is their mother, but Lorna feels a responsibility to help the woman (mostly because her mother had helped her get back on her feet in recovering from alcoholism). So she calls in a PI, former FBI Agent T.J. Dawson. Along with Regan Landry and Mitch Peyton (from the previous story), they work their interviewing and deductive magic and manage to uncover the actual killer.

This wasn't terribly exciting, a bit snoozeworthy almost. I admit, what kept me going most was the curiosity of why the brother had died and what happened to the little girl (view spoiler). The two main characters themselves weren't all that exciting and had all the chemistry of a brother and sister team, even though they apparently found each other quite attractive. This was a take it or leave it book for me.

Louise says

A very good read. I'd read Mariah Stewart's other novels: "Dead Even, Dead Certain, Dead End and Dead Wrong" and found them exciting page turners. This newest "Hard Truth" was equally as captivating.

From back cover:

Two children who mysteriously disappeared twenty-one years ago are the last thing on Lorna Temple's mind when she returns to her Pennsylvania hometown to sell the old family property in the wake of her parents' passing. But instead of memories, the fields where Lorna grew up yield something utterly chilling.

All those years ago, when nine-year-old Melinda Eagan vanished on her birthday, her foulmouthed older brother, Jason, quickly became the lone suspect. Yet when he went missing, too, the case turned cold. But Jason, it seems, never got far: His bones have been moldering on the Temples' land for two decades. As far as the local police are concerned, the book is closed on Melinda's murder-and Jason's death is justice served. But Lorna refuses to let the dead rest uneasily. She turns to private eye T.J. Dawson to dig up the dirt of the past and see what lies beneath. Only there's someone out there who hasn't forgotten-and who won't be the least bit forgiving about being exposed as a killer."

Jim says

I plan on reading the next of the series, Dark Truth (third entry). That should express my level of enjoyment of this book. As with Cold Truth (first in series), this is a strong three star, or low four star.

This series has an interesting literary approach. In *Cold Truth*, the main storyline was carried by Cassandra Reilly and Rick Cisco, with Regan and Mitch as secondary characters. In this one, the main storyline centered on Lorna Stiles and Thomas Jefferson (TJ) Dawson, with (again) Regan and Mitch as secondary characters. Totally different venue etc.

Oh, for completeness on names, TJ's full name was used only once, I think, and the back cover of the book has the name Lorna Temple (oops).

It starts a little slow (but not too slow), then speeds up and runs to the end. Admittedly, I was initially disappointed not to have Cassandra in it, as I liked that character, but I had no problem with the new characters.

Although I figured most things out before they were revealed, it was still good (and perhaps I guessed well based on "it's not the obvious" which all mysteries must stick to, if they want to be read).

Ada Iaboni says

This one too, should get 3.5 stars.

Another well done story that also goes back many years. Well done too!

And, I liked that several of the characters continue to the next story.

Tracy Stackhouse says

In this book Ms. Stewart Stands Alone

In this book , Miss Stewart has an entirely different cast of characters from the others in this series . She introduces a new voice as narrative , a civilian rather than a law-enforcement officer and a new locale. Equally as good as her

Carl says

Plot: Missing childhood friend, presumed murdered by older brother who disappears . . . Lorna returns home after death of mother . . . bodies are found on her land . . . young men, including the older brother . . . serial killer of young men--gay bar . . . Private I on scene. . . Lorna smitten . . . nice uncovering of plot . . . suspicion falls on Fritz, who is gay and lives in closet in community. . . police check his house . . . evidence found . . . but wait! . . . not Fritz but his brother Mike . . . Lorna nearly killed . . . saves herself by hiding until P.I. shows up and kills Mike.

So, sort of a romance thriller. Interesting in that it is not PC at all. Our female CPA protagonist hides until her man saves her. Realistic, and in a way points out the problem with PC books.

Well written, but this is probably my first and last Mariah Stewart book. Definitely a female target audience!

Caralyn Rubli says

Pretty good , even if I figured out who dunnit. I kind of wish it was a little longer, I felt we needed to know the characters better and also what was going on with the site and police.

Nell says

This book also started out a little slow, but by the time I get to this one, I was looking for it to be a little slow at the beginning. She does a good job of character building in the beginning of the novel. The reader really gets to know, Lorna, the main female character. There is a lot going on in the story for Lorna, but she seems to handle it pretty well and she tries to help someone less fortunate than she is. T. J. Dawson is a great character too although his character is a little less developed than Lorna's. Regan and Mitch are also in this book, so you get to see them again which is always fun, to see characters from other books in the new one. I liked that Regan and Mitch were brought into this book as well, and you get to see Regan and Mitch's friendship growing and blossoming while seeing T. J. and Lorna's grow. There isn't much of a romance to this book, but it is there, soft and simple in the background and hinted at. It's nice to see the mystery build as relationships change grow while the world seems to be twirling around the characters like a tornado of information, detective work, and speculation. It's really a good book. I recommend that readers read the books in order, but it's not really necessary. They can be stand-alone books.

Melody says

I would give this one a 3 1/2 star if it existed. Moved quickly, held my interest, light reading for an air travel trip or Summer reading.

Theresa says

Much better than Cold Truth the romance was more obvious because the characters showed more affection for each other throughout the book rather than just at the very end and actually got to know each other. Also, I felt it benefited by focusing more solely on the two main characters, with Reagan and Mitch being simply side notes instead of another set of characters vying for attention; it gave the story more time for the character/relationship development that was abbreviated in Cold Truth. However, while it was an improvement over Cold Truth, it suffered from the same problem of not being very passionate and not really drawing you into the story. Also, I felt the characters were a bit stupid about the killer near the end, and the whole resolution with Mellie was just abrupt and stupid *so much for "best friends."* Overall, better than Cold Truth, but still only good enough for a rental, not to buy.

Kathleen Hagen says

Hard Truth, by Mariah Stewart. B-plus.

Produced by Blackstone Audio, downloaded from audible.com.

Lorna Temple has arrived at her childhood home after her grandmother's death to sell the house and distribute the belongings between herself and her siblings. But, no sooner does she arrive at the house than there is a chilling discovery on land that used to be part of her family's farm. They find the bones of several bodies, all teenage boys. This brings into Lorna's memory her childhood when her friend Melinda Egan, disappeared when they were both nine years old. A few weeks after Melinda disappeared, her brother, Jason disappeared as well. The community thought, in view of their mother's cruelty, that they maybe just ran away. Lorna's siblings are upset, her sister because she's not sure they should sell the house, and her brother, because he wants to forget all memories of their home town. Lorna has no idea why her brother is reacting so negatively to their past, which seemed to have been a happy childhood to her. She wonders if her brother had some experiences specific to teenage boys, and whether or not his life had been threatened. Lorna calls her friend, true crime writer, Regan Landry, from the first book, and Regan gets her to hire a private detective, a friend of Mitch's who also used to work for the FBI. The FBI becomes convinced that a serial killer might be involved, and an investigation ensues, not only to find the killer of the teenage boys, but also to look again for Melinda. It's a good book, a real page-turner, and tighter than the first one in this series.

Jaret says

This was a decent mystery and the characters worked well together. The focus was more on the suspense than the romance, but I preferred the way it was handled. It felt more real. The plot moved at a decent pace and it kept my interest. I would recommend it as a quick "beach read".

Jessica says

2.5 stars

While this was a decently enjoyable way to spend a few hours i'm not really anymore impressed by this one than the one immediately preceding it. In this one we are given an actual suspect but its too little too late and you don't really get hints to the real killer. You also don't get hints to the secondary mystery that's totally separate from the real plot (and seems rather pointless honestly) and is magically solved by an offhand comment that meant something only to the heroine i think because i either totally missed something (which is possible since i was skimming it) or the solve came out of nowhere. These characters were less cardboard than the previous book but not as fleshed out as the other book i have by the author which is a much earlier work. I found the writing more tolerable than the last book but since I couldn't put my finger on why I didn't like that writing I'm not sure what that really does for this review.

Bottom line: if you have it might be worth a read but I wouldn't go out of my way to buy it. I find Regan the most interesting character in this series but I'm over this author and she never seems to get the spotlight so I'm giving up on the series and the author altogether. On to hopefully better things

Dotti Elrick says

This is the second book in the "Truth" series. I had previously read Mariah Stewarts "Dead" series and I'm discovering that even though all the books can be read as stand alone novels, she continues to put in little snippets from earlier books and bringing back former characters. I enjoy that aspect of her books.

As a child, Lorna Stiles' best friend, Melinda Eagan goes missing the night of her ninth birthday. There are no clues, no witnesses, she just vanished without a trace. Most of the people in the small farming town of Callen Pennsylvania, believed her abusive mother or her older brother had something to do with her disappearance.

Now an adult, Lorna has returned to her childhood home to get it ready to sell after the recent death of her mother. She is expecting to deal with her feelings and that of her siblings about selling the family farm. What she is not expecting, is the body of Jason Eagon being found on what used to be part of the family farm. It was dug up during the new construction taking place on the backside of the property. His body appears to have been buried there since he went missing a few days after his young sister disappeared. His mother is brought in and the local police have the case sewn up and closed before the ink dries on the arrest warrant. In their minds, they have their killer, period.

Lorna wants to do right by her mother's memory, so she steps in to help Mrs. Eagan. Posting her bail and hiring a Private Investigator to look into what happened all those years ago when the children went missing. Thomas Jefferson Dawson, T.J., is a former profiler with the FBI, and has been recommended to Lorna by her friend and true crime author Regan Landry.

When three more bodies, all young teenage boys, turn up buried near the body of Jason, all with the same cause of death, Regan's friend and FBI agent Mitch Peyton, pushes to be invited into the case. It seems now they have a serial killer on their hands and he has disposed of his victims in the back fields of Lorna's family home.

Between Lorna, Regan, T.J., and Mitch, new clues are discovered, and they now know in which direction to hunt their killer.

This book was a bit different than the earlier books by this author that I've read. This one was much slower paced. A true mystery needing to be solved. There are no awesome car chases, and our main character is not in constant fear for her life. That being said, it was still very well written. Lots of twists and turns leading you in several directions before the killer is finally discovered. I found every time I had to put the book down, I couldn't wait to pick it up again to see what was coming next.

I really liked the book, and will buy the next one in the series.

Purple Iris says

2.5. Nothing great and the last few pages feel like they were written when the author realized one of the mysteries hadn't been solved yet and she had to invent something to resolve it.
