



The Venus Trap

Louise Voss

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Jo Atkins' sixteenth year was disastrous: she lost her dad, was assaulted by a stranger, and then had her heart broken. For the last twenty-five years, she's believed that nothing could ever be as bad again.

She was wrong.

Now, still smarting from her recent divorce, pretty, self-effacing Jo finally gathers the courage to enter the dating scene. She meets Claudio, whom she vaguely remembers from her youth, but after a few dates decides he's creepy and politely tells him 'thanks but no thanks'.

But Claudio has no intention of letting her go.

Instead of never seeing him again, Jo wakes up sick and terrified, handcuffed to her own bed. She is given a week to prove her love for Claudio—or he will kill her.

Claudio, it turns out, is a man with nothing left to lose.

The Venus Trap tackles the emotional impact of divorce, the perils of modern dating and the age-old powers of lust and obsession.

The Venus Trap Details

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Author : Louise Voss

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From Reader Review The Venus Trap for online ebook

sue says

WOW did this book grab me by the short and curlies right away or what!

We have Jo who wakes up, feeling sick and vomiting. Fever, feeling really out of it, and discovering she's chained to her bed post! What in the hell.

She remembers now that the father of her child has taken him away on holiday and she's got some 'me' time for herself. She also recalls that she went out last night. Is she drunk? did she have sex with someone? who in the hell would she have this sort of sex with, chained to the bed, why was she feeling so sick?

Then she realizes she's not alone, in comes this beefy guy, not good looking going by the description of him either!

He is being kind to her, asking if she wants to have a nurofen? Alka seltzer?

He starts to board the windows up with wood slates. Clears out the bathroom of any sharp objects. What in the hell is going on?

That's the opening, and it only gets better and better as you read on.

I would highly recommend this book, well, I enjoyed it, so I hope you do too.

I would like to thank Amazon Publishing via Net Galley for my copy to read and review

Gary says

I have read and enjoyed other books by Louise Voss including her collaborations with Mark Edwards and after reading the beginning of this book thought it was going to be a very good read. That is not to say it wasn't enjoyable but I felt it didn't fully capitalise on the excellent start to the book.

In the opening chapters of the book, Jo wakes up not feeling 100% and soon realises that she has been given the date rape drug and is now a prisoner in her own home. Claudio, her date for the night is an old acquaintance and is totally obsessed with her. He has handcuffed her to her bed and gives her the challenge to love him by the end of the week or face death.

Unfortunately though the book is still certainly enjoyable, for me it didn't reach the anticipated heights I gave it. Not to be put off though I have purchased other books by this author and will read shortly.

Kim says

A page turner- a great psychological thriller. The story unfolds and draws you in- what will happen next and how will this dreadful situation end?

Jo meets Claudio, who she knew in her younger years. But after dating him she tells him they don't have a dating future. But when she wakes up tied to the bed with a handcuff and a hangover , her nightmare begins. He gives her a week to prove her love-or she is going to die.

Whilst she is imprisoned she reflects on her life and her ex husband and other relationships she's had. She reads through old diaries.

Many thanks to Amazon Publishing and Net Galley for the chance to read this one.

Elaine says

This is one of those books that makes me glad I am not in the dating game anymore and if I ever am in that position again in the future, then I will probably think of this book and decide not to bother – it is safer that way. This is a really creepy read, which put shivers down my spine on page one when Jo Singer wakes up with the hangover from hell and a handcuff chaining her to her bed. How did last night's date with Claudio end up in such a disastrous way? After all, she knew Claudio when she was a teenager and, OK, so they haven't seen each other in over 20 years, but surely he would never keep her prisoner in her own flat?

It is a story of obsessional infatuation and is extremely creepy at times. The story is told from Jo's perspective as she sits in her prison and re-reads her diary from 1986 and also ponders her relationships with men since that time, especially the breakdown of her marriage to Richard and her affair with Sean. It is quite a claustrophobic read at times and so this did relieve some of that, helping to take the reader away from those four walls. I did think it was going to be a novel about her escape but it didn't quite turn out that way. It is about obsessively holding a candle for old loves, the "saintliness" that those old loves and crushes can achieve inside your own head and the lengths that someone could go to for the sake of their obsession.

Jo is quite a complex character and I was amazed about how, as she thought about her past loves, she seemed to change her mind about who she really loved and wanted to be with by the chapter. She has a very strong voice which I particularly liked, especially her snide internal only comments to Claudio.

If I have one criticism it would be that I would have liked to have seen into Claudio's head and seen things from his perspective every now and then, and seen the twisted delusional thoughts that were running around inside him, because we only really see things from Jo's perspective. Thanks to the publisher for the review copy.

Sophie Bristow Harris says

When I started reading "The Venus Trap" by Louise Voss I was expecting a taut thriller similar to her joint novels with Mark Edwards. However, to me, this read very much as chic lit with a faint smattering of "Thrill" running through it.

I did really enjoy the book, it was fast paced and a nice leisurely read.

I found myself rooting for Jo, hoping she would overcome her predicament safely in the end. The other main character was a despicable and highly unpleasant person, they were described very descriptively which I pictured as clearly as though there were physical images through my kindle!

A well spun storyline that I shall be recommending to my fellow book lovers.

Thank You to Louise Voss and her publishers, Thomas & Mercer, for making this available for me to read via Net Galley.

Sue says

A special thank you to Amazon Publishing, Thomas and Mercer, and NetGalley for an ARC of “THE VENUS TRAP” by Louise Voss, in exchange for an honest review. British thriller author, Louise Voss delivers a twisted romantic suspense, and psycho-thriller mix, in THE VENUS TRAP—a cat and mouse game of obsession... This is my first book by Voss solo, as have enjoyed her duos with Mark Edwards and Mark solo, in the past, with my favorite “Because She Loves Me”.

The title for this book is very fitting. The Venus Flytrap is a carnivorous plant native to subtropical wetlands, that catches its prey, chiefly insects with a trapping structure formed by the end portion of each of the plant's leaves.

Jo Atkins, protagonist, a forty-three year old divorced single mom of Megan, decides to get back in the dating game, through an online dating site.

Jo goes on a third date with Claudio, an old school chum, but decides that he is creepy and that she doesn't fancy him. However, it seems giving him the brushoff is a big mistake. The next afternoon Jo wakes up feeling really ill and discovers that she has been handcuffed to her own bed. She is a prisoner in her own bedroom with no way to escape. Claudio, her captor, has no intention of letting Jo go and he gives her one week in which to declare her love for him.

“You have seven days to tell me you love me, in a way that I believe you really mean it. No bullshitting... If you don't convince me that you love me within seven days, I will kill you.”

This novel is one of stalking and obsession... he knows everything about her.

During Jo's captivity, Claudio finds Jo's diary, and makes her read passages and relive her tragic past. She needs to escape from this madman!

I really enjoyed this book, and would recommend it. I have read books by this author with Mark Edwards, but this is the first book I've read by Louise Voss on her own, and it didn't disappoint!

Denise says

I was delighted to be given the chance to read an ARC of this new book by Louise Voss as I enjoyed Killing Cupid also written by Louise with Mark Edwards.

I started this book thinking I'd just read a few chapters but then couldn't put it down until I finished.

A brilliant page turner, superbly written and a very current story which builds up and unfolds so cleverly. I had no idea where the story was going and there were unexpected twists, which made The Venus Trap a perfect read for me. I loved it.

Katherine Marson says

I was luck enough to receive an advanced copy of this book in return for leaving an unbiased review.

I have read all of Louise's books with Mark but not her solo ones so was intrigued to see what this one would be like. I wasn't disappointed.

The book starts with Jo, divorcee waking up not feeling quite right. You soon find out she's been given the date rape drug and is now a prisoner in her own home. Claudio, a distant memory from her past and totally crazy about her is desperate for her love and will go to any lengths to get it. Forced to relive the worst year of her life in a bid for them to get to "know each other better" Jo goes on an emotional rollercoaster.

A page turner which leaves you wondering and hoping throughout.

Matt says

Voss returns with another psychological thriller, tackling another angle of the horrors of love. When Jo Atkins wakes up in her own bed, everything seems fine, at least until she moves. She is shackled to her bed and her head swims in a lake of confusion. It is only then that she is able to begin the slow process of realisation; she's being held captive by her date, Claudio. Jo is given an ultimatum, 'fall in love with me in seven days, or I will kill you', which does not seem like an exaggeration when Claudio says it. Voss leads the reader through the following days, as Jo recounts her past: from her first interactions with Claudio, her marriage to Richard and their daughter, the flirtation and relationship that promulgated her divorce, and a horrific memory Jo's documented in her diary in 1986. As Jo's resolve appears to diminish in the hopes of being freed, Claudio ramps up his antics to win the heart of the woman he's loved for upwards of twenty-five years. Voss continues to make a name for herself and her ever-evolving thrillers. A must-read for fans and a great launching point to win over new readers alike.

Voss has mastered the art of the psychological thriller, and this novel is no exception. It illustrates just how sadistic some people tend to be when it comes to infatuation. Voss examines love and personal growth through the eyes of a woman who was scarred as a teenager, but who saw fit to work through that and forge a life for herself. Crossing paths with Claudio was more a happenstance occurrence, though the reader discovers the root of this romantic curiosity. Voss also returns to a previous theme from Forward Slash, in which she discusses the pros and cons of internet dating, while also addressing the post-divorce return to the dating world. Well written and spiced with just enough humour to take the raw edge off, Voss masterfully captures her audience and will not let them leave until all is resolved... or ends horrifically.

Kudos, Madam Voss for another stellar piece of work. I am a fan of the highest order, hands down.

Like/hate the review? An ever-growing collection of others appears at:
<http://pecheyponderings.wordpress.com/>

Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says

I seem to be one of the few readers of Louise's books that does not rave and give five star reviews. I love the work of Mark Edwards and have found the books they have written together not too bad, but this one, whilst good does not fall into the wow factor box in my humble opinion.

Jo Edwards has come through some traumatic years and is now getting over a painful divorce. Pretty, self-effacing Jo finally gathers the courage to enter the dating scene. She meets Claudio, whom she vaguely remembers from her youth, but after a few dates decides he's creepy and politely tells him 'thanks but no thanks'.

But Claudio has no intention of letting her go.

Instead of never seeing him again, Jo wakes up sick and terrified, handcuffed to her own bed. She is given a week to prove her love for Claudio or he will kill her.

Claudio, it turns out, is a man with nothing left to lose

So, you get the idea right? She is held captive by obsessive and hideous Claudio who has been in love with and crazy for Jo since she was in her teens, and now after a few dates with him this man has now got the fire burning and it's reached it's peak temperature. It's game on.

The book covers scenes of interaction - good, bad and indifferent between them stretched over days in Jo's home, and it's really stretched. I was really hoping for a whole heap of scare and terror factor but it just fell short. I wanted more of the tense dramatic scenes that really would have me on the edge of my seat, the drama!

Claudio finds Jo's diary from her teen years and asks her to not only read it but then discuss things with him, mainly past relationships that he was and is jealous of. But then we get Jo having MANY flashbacks to that first kiss, the relationships, her teen self and well, um, sorry to say but that took all the thrill out for me. I get that it was a way to build some back story, but what a boring way to do it.

It contains pages of flashback actual diary entries. I felt it was used like a "filler" in the book and was just too much.

I found it really boring going over her past life and all her relationships, the book would be more scary and thrilling if it focused on the psychological and emotionally messed up aspects of the abduction.

Does Jo get out of her captive situation? Will Claudio see sense that he can't force someone to love him (I

would have been a better actress if I was her). It's a classic love obsession/abduction novel and there are many of those on the market. This one was okay, but it lacks depth of characters and the plot is very drawn out and watery in places, still a quick and easy read but nothing to rave about.

Other books I have read and love that cover the obsessive love/abduction theme really well are *The Second Captive* by Maggie James and *Wanton Regard* by Geoffrey Neil.

I give this one 3.5 stars, it would have had higher if less past reflection and waffle and more game playing and psychological head twisting stuff that you would expect in that situation. But fans of Louise Voss will no doubt love this one too. You make your mind up.

I was pleased that Jo's cat starred well and came through it.

I received an ARC of this book thanks to the publisher in exchange for a fair and honest review. Many thanks.

Siobhan says

I would like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for allowing me an advance read of the book. Whilst the book wasn't quite what I was expecting it was without a doubt a great read.

I'd been expecting a book focused upon an escape attempt, the main character trying to break free of entrapment; however this did not focus quite as much as I would have liked. In all honesty, I think this is the main reason why I gave the book four stars rather than five: a part of me was disappointed by the lack of focus upon trying to escape. By that I do not mean there are no attempts, I'm merely saying I expected so much more (more mishaps, more desperate ideas and so on).

Nevertheless, I gave it four stars for a good reason. Whilst our character is trapped we're given an insight into her life: the ups and down (mainly the downs). So much has happened to her throughout her life that during her entrapment she is given a chance to reflect upon things, to philosophise if you will. Some parts I thought were clichéd – the low self-esteem whilst men seem more than happy to paw over her, certain events which took place during her teenage years – yet they were all built together so well that I grew to ignore the overused aspects and love them as a whole.

One thing I will say, however, is that the 'mystery' of who was behind a certain event in her past... well, it wasn't much of a reveal at all. I worked it out as soon as we were informed of it. For a short period of time I changed my mind – if only to spice it up myself – yet I was unable to fool myself for long as it really was an obvious detail.

Overall, however, I really enjoyed it. It was my first dealing with the author and it was certainly interesting enough to bring me back for more of her books!

Joanne Robertson says

Thank you to netgalley for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

I haven't read any Louise Voss on her own before but have read all the books she has written with Mark Edwards(also all of his solo works) which I really enjoyed. So I was rather excited to see this on netgalley and once I started it really struggled to put it down.

Jo is a divorcee going through a kind of midlife crisis realising that she hasn't ever really found herself due to events that happened to her around her 16th birthday. Getting herself back on the dating scene leads to some interesting encounters with online dating but sometimes it's those we know we have to be more afraid of. Jo was an interesting character-very much a product of her childhood experiences and I was rooting for her to escape the clutches of the creepy Claudio her stalker and eventual kidnapper.

I read this book late into the night to finish it off and have to say it has been my favourite book of 2015 so far! Well done Louise and I look forward to more from you like this-i loved it!

Jay says

ARC kindly provided by NetGalley on behalf of the publisher

Set in the now and looking back at the past, this is an interesting story of a woman finding herself and the truth about her fears in a very unconventional setting - held captive in her own home!

I really liked that throughout this book you could never truly predict what was going to happen, even when looking back at the past, you had inklings about what may or may not happen, but there was so much at play that you could never be sure.

Was she going to escape? Was he really going to kill her? Will she tell her ex-husband how she feels, or is it all too late? And what happened to her teenage boyfriend?

It all comes out in the end, slowly, as little bits of info are needed to build and conclude the story.

A great story that shows the reality of just because you know who someone is doesn't mean you actually KNOW them.

Dani Jade says

2.5ish stars.

This book tells the story of Jo, a 40ish year old recently divorced woman who's back on the dating scene. She goes on a couple of dates with Claudio, who she vaguely remembers from High School, and then decides he's not the one and ends things... or at least, *tries* to end things. The next morning she wakes up handcuffed to her bed, with Claudio looming over her telling her she has one week to convince him she is in love with him or else he will kill her. We spend the next week half in the present, locked in with Jo and Claudio, and half in the past as Jo and Claudio reminisce about the events of Jo's 1986/87 diary, when they were at high school together.

A good premise, which sounded exciting in theory. However, it came off as just a bit slow and boring to me. In the present: The week progresses slowly, there is no mystery and I pretty much knew what was going to happen.

In the past: Firstly, Louise Voss definitely never kept a diary- the passages that were supposed to be read from 16-year-old Jo's diary did not sound realistic at all. Secondly, the year Jo turned 16, her dad dies, she was sexually assaulted in an alley and she gets her heart broken. You'd think reading about this time in her life would be compelling, right? You'd be wrong. It was mostly mundane rambling.

I also found both past *and* present Jo very annoying, as well as dumb and desperate. When she first runs into Claudio again, she gives him a fake number since she didn't like him at all at school. She is also ex-directory. He calls her anyway, after *paying* to get her details from the Electoral register. And she thinks 'Oh he went to so much trouble, how sweet, i'll go out with him then'. UM. It's not sweet! It's creepy as f**k, woman!

Donna seemed like a bit of a bitch (or at least, a not-very-understanding and unsympathetic BFF), Sean was a dick and good-ol'-lovable Richard was very sweet but kind of pathetic.

Also, Claudio mentions he was left at the altar, but won't talk about it and there is an air of mystery to it. Then we don't find out *anything* else about it. Ugh.

It wasn't a *bad* book, it was just not very exciting. At all. I'm quite surprised how the majority of reviews for this book seem to be 4-5 stars. I started skim reading parts just to get through it. In the end I rate it 2.5 stars, instead of 2, as it did pick up it's pace towards the very end. It was just too little, too late.

Lucy Catten says

'I love you, Jo, and I want you to love me. I want to have a future with you'.

I've read a lot of thrillers this year. And I really do mean A LOT. Many of them were really good but this one completely and utterly creeped me out. I've been trying to work out exactly why and I've come to the conclusion that it's probably because I found the premise so terrifyingly plausible. There are no super-intelligent detectives in this story and no heart-racing pursuit and capture. There's just one woman in her own home, with one man.

So what's it about?

Jo Atkins' sixteenth year was disastrous: she lost her dad, was assaulted by a stranger, and then had her heart broken. For the last twenty-five years, she's believed that nothing could ever be as bad again.

She was wrong.

Now, still smarting from her recent divorce, pretty, self-effacing Jo finally gathers the courage to enter the dating scene. She meets Claudio, whom she vaguely remembers from her youth, but after a few dates decides he's creepy and politely tells him 'thanks but no thanks'.

But Claudio has no intention of letting her go.

Instead of never seeing him again, Jo wakes up sick and terrified, handcuffed to her own bed. She is given a week to prove her love for Claudio—or he will kill her.

Claudio, it turns out, is a man with nothing left to lose.

Jo is kidnapped by Claudio with the help of a healthy dose of Rohypnol. She is kept as a prisoner in her own home by a man who became obsessed with her years before her marriage, and whose obsession has never dwindled. Jo remembers him as someone who'd *'always kind of given me the creeps'* – it turns out with very good reason. When she comes around from her drug-induced state, she realises that he has screwed her windows shut and removed anything from her flat with which she could do herself, or him, any harm.

In the course of searching for anything that could help her in her plight, Jo comes across her old diary. Claudio is delighted: *'This will give us a perfect talking point. I want to know everything about you, everything. We have so many years to catch up on, to find out where we went wrong – and we have all the time in the world to do it'*. From this point on, the narrative splits. On the one hand we witness Jo's terrifying reality and on the other, her flashbacks to 1986 – the year she met Claudio - and the events that have helped to shape her future.

We are with Jo as she starts to blame herself for her situation: *'If I had different instincts, I'd never have walked down that alley'* and when she considers her best route to survival: *'Surely it's better to sit passively and mentally practise how to convince him of my 'love', than risk disaster by provoking him?'*

Somehow, Voss manages to pack a little bit of everything into this story without ever making it feel as though it's been shoe-horned in. As well as her divorce, we learn of Jo's infidelity, of her struggle to conceive, of her friendships and her grief: *'The pain that sweeps over me at this realisation makes me truly believe I could die from grief'*.

I'm not going to talk about the ending as I don't want to give anything away. Suffice it to say that his novel is an all-rounder that packs a real punch. I couldn't put it down. Huge thanks to the publisher for sending me a copy in exchange for a review.

'I think he has broken me, not just my heart. I feel broken'.
