



Fugitive Red

Jason Starr

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Love on the Internet gone wrong

Reminiscent of Nick and Amy in *Gone Girl*, Jack and Maria have a tortuous history. Jack was an up-and-coming rock guitarist living on Manhattan's Lower East Side. His girlfriend Maria was just beginning a corporate career. They were happy and in love.

That was then.

Now Jack's music career has stalled, and he isn't doing much better as a real estate agent. Maria's doing well at her job, but she travels frequently, and it's taken a toll on their marriage. While they both love their son Jonah, they don't seem to have much else in common.

When a friend from L.A. tells Jack about a new extramarital dating app called Discreet Hookups, Jack quickly meets Sophia, who goes by the online name Fugitive Red. Jack and Sophia hit it off and have a steamy online affair. But when Jack gets up the nerve to meet Sophia in person, he discovers her dead--strangled by a red necktie.

Immediately, Jack becomes a person of interest in the murder. Maria, furious and betrayed, locks Jack out of the apartment and cuts off access to their joint accounts. Jack sets out to prove his innocence. Instead, he leaves a trail of dead bodies in his wake, and the police close in on him. Worse, he discovers that he has been the victim of a sinister scheme that may cost him his life.

Fugitive Red Details

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Author : Jason Starr

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From Reader Review Fugitive Red for online ebook

Still says

Outstanding shocker of a thriller with enough sudden twists to give a reader whiplash.

Jack Harper is a real estate agent and a member of AA.

He's abstained from alcohol for almost 6 years after a series of black-out drunks and a few violent episodes.

He's married to a woman -Maria- who is the mother of the son he adores.

Jack only stays with Maria because of his love for his young son.

Jack & Maria haven't had sex in over 4 and 1/2 years.

Maria's the family breadwinner. Jack's success as a real estate agent in Manhattan is less than stellar.

One night, after learning of a website "Discreet Hook-Ups" or "D-Ho", a site that allows unhappily married men and women to hook-up with other unhappily married men and women, a woman who calls herself "Fugitive Red" initiates a hot and horny chat session with Jack.

They chat back and forth for several weeks.

Finally they decide to meet up for a bit of the old in-n-out.

It is then that Fugitive Red tells Jack that's she's sort of a kink -she likes being tied up and engaging in rough sex.

Very rough sex.

You see where this is going, right?

Of course you do ...Jack goes to Fugitive Red's condo for a night of extra-marital sex and darn it to heck, wouldn't you know it? She's been MURDERED!

And guess who the homicide detectives' only suspect is?

But this is a Jason Starr novel so abandon all the usual expectations.

It's a harrowing, dread inducing, thrill ride all the way to the final page.

Highest Possible Recommendation.

Note:

I received an advanced epub copy of this novel from the publisher in exchange for a review.

Linda Strong says

Jack is not happy with his marriage. He and Maria have grown apart. She's not interested in anything he does he's not happy in his job. He only stays because of his young son. They both love their son, but they're living like roommates .. or brother and sister.

When a friend of Jack's tells him about a new dating site for married cheaters, Jack visits the web site just to see what it's all about.

But Jack is roped in by a woman who calls herself Fugitive Red. He's intrigued ... they have so much in common. He's not happy with his marriage, she says her husband is abusive.

They make plans to meet face to face but Jack decides he just can't go through cheating on his wife. But he does want to meet this wonderful sounding woman and tell her face to face.

What he finds is going to turn his whole life upside down. Fugitive Red is waiting ... on the bed ... strangled by a red tie. Jack instantly becomes the prime suspect.

This was quite a roller coaster ride. With more bodies being found that are linked to Jack have him wondering if he IS the killer. He is a recovering alcoholic, but is he having black outs? Is someone trying to frame him? Can the investigating cops be involved?

This is a real hand wringer, full of action and angst watching as Jack's life falls apart. There are twists and turns leading to an OMG ending that seemed to come out of nowhere.

Many thanks to the author / Oceanview Publishing / Edelweiss for the advanced digital copy of this psychological thriller. Opinions expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

Alex S. says

Jason Starr's thriller, Fugitive Red, has more twists than a 60's twist contest.

Its story centers on Jack Harper, a reformed alcoholic who relies on AA meetings to stay sober. Jack is married to Maria and they have an 8-year old, Jonah, whom Jack adores.

Jack has trouble on the home and work fronts. Jack's in a loveless marriage with little hope of a fix. Maria barely talks to him, treats him with little respect, and disparages the idea of marriage counseling. He is real estate agent stuck in the middle of a dry spell, desperately needing some sales to keep his job.

An old buddy puts some unhelpful ideas into his head, and Jack finds himself on a website for spouses thinking of visiting the cheating side of town. There, Jack hooks up with a woman whose online moniker is Fugitive Red, who says she is in an abusive marriage and is looking for someone who's not averse to some kinkiness.

Invigorated, sad sack Jack soon finds himself tied to three murders and hounded by the cops, thrown out of his house, blocked from seeing his beloved son, divested of money, and homeless. He's hopeless, distressed, depressed, desperate, destitute, off the wagon, even suicidal.

And that only begins to describe this roller-coaster ride of an exceptionally well-paced thrill-fest of a story full of surprising twists and turns by Jason Starr.

It is one exceptional read.

Bookreporter.com Mystery & Thriller says

A new book by Jason Starr is always a cause for celebration. Starr explores the dark and dank underbelly of the modern lives of all kinds of individuals: the privileged, the victims, the has-beens, the never-wases.

Lately he has been focusing on those who seem blessed on the surface but who are actually faking it and are a step or two away from disaster on several levels. He continues this examination in FUGITIVE RED, which is as bleak and compelling a read as anything he has ever written.

Starr returns to the claustrophobic confines of life in Manhattan and draws the curtains open on a marriage

headed for the rocks, if it's not there already. Jack, the narrator and protagonist of the piece, is a real estate agent who was the guitarist for a rock band that almost grabbed the golden ring. His glory days of a quarter-century ago have long receded in the rearview mirror. He and his wife, Maria, have an eight-year-old son named Jonah, who is naturally the most precious little kid who ever walked the face of the earth. Maria is quite successful in her corporate job, which brings in much more money than Jack's efforts and involves frequent travel. As Jack notes in strategic places, they have been drifting apart for several years, which is okay for a ship and an iceberg but not for a married couple.

Still, Jack is trying to get and keep a grip on things, a process that includes maintaining sobriety. But he makes a big slip when, on the advice of one of his rock star friends, he begins visiting a site called Discreet Hookups, an online membership service for married people interested in a discreet affair. Let me stop for just a moment to point out that Starr elicits the "don't do it!" reaction from a reader perhaps better than anyone else. In the case of FUGITIVE RED and Discrete Hookups, you can put that exclamation in all caps. Jack buys a membership and strikes crimson gold in the form of a woman named Sophia, who calls herself "Fugitive Red." She represents herself as being in a loveless marriage, just like Jack, and they share mutual interests of the carnal type and otherwise.

Sophia suggests a rendezvous at a townhouse in the city that she and her husband own. Jack is struggling with his decision as he arrives there, but matters are soon taken out of his hands when he discovers that she has been brutally murdered. After reporting the crime to the police, he quickly finds himself a person of interest. He believes that Sophia's wealthy husband found out about the affair that didn't quite happen and killed her. He attempts to prove his innocence (a tall order) and save his marriage (an even taller one), but only succeeds at first in making things worse.

Maria is extremely unhappy with Jack, but his bigger problem seems to be that he has his own personal Inspector Javert, who is fully convinced of his guilt. Worst of all, though, is that Jack is leaving dead bodies in his wake. When he really does kill someone --- sort of by accident --- it appears he has hit rock bottom, and he begins drinking again. But then a sliver of hope arrives from an unexpected source. There's just one problem: Jack can't stay away from Discreet Hookups. It isn't long before he learns the truth.

FUGITIVE RED is by no means a sequel to SAVAGE LANE, but there is a brief, tangential and intriguing intersection between the two. That said, this latest effort stands on its own, as does almost all of Starr's work. Anyone who has sought salvation by reaching for the bottom of a bottle will see themselves in stark relief here. There have been only a few authors who have handled this type of exploration of dark and tortured souls this well --- James M. Cain and Jim Thompson immediately come to mind --- but Starr is our contemporary master. Read this book and then what has gone before.

Reviewed by Joe Hartlaub

Dave says

Starr has given us a story about self-destruction and desperation. Jack once had a drinking problem. Now he sort of has an infidelity issue, and somehow you know that meeting someone, no matter how provocative she texts, meeting some stranger online just ain't the smartest idea. No matter how rough his marriage looks right now, this meetup is going to send Jack crashing over the cliff edge and bouncing off the cliff walls like some crazy pinball out of control. And once you go over that edge, well, it just sort of all unravels and everything falls apart and everything you thought you could rely on disappears.

Kurt Reichenbaugh says

Jason Starr is one of my favorite neo-noir writers in the biz today. This one is a classic setup wherein a relatively good guy (given that he's tempted to cheat on his wife) makes bad choices that kick open a chain of events that threaten to drown him. You want to feel sorry for characters like this, but you reserve your empathy because maybe, just maybe...well, you have to read it for yourself. I think of this novel as a companion to *Savage Lane*, also by Jason Starr. Recommended!

Anita Daher says

Over the years, Jason Starr has become my very favourite thriller author. His characters are beautifully flawed, live ordinary lives, and are suddenly thrust into extraordinary situations, often of their own making. We get it. No one is perfect. All it takes is one questionable decision, something small, some split second choice of a sort we can easily see ourselves making--if not this particular thing, something like it. Something we might shake off with a, "I can't believe I almost did that!" Or maybe even a, "I did that...oh, it could have gone so terribly wrong." But in the worlds Starr creates, terribly wrong is where the story kicks off, drawing us deeper and deeper with jet engine intensity until we're spit out the other end.

In *Fugitive Red*, Jack Harper is a real estate agent. Years earlier he'd set aside his life (and passion) as a struggling musician, pulled himself out of a bottle, and settled into family life determined to be a good father to Jonah, and husband to Maria. But his ideas and sensibilities are shaken when he shows a luxury apartment to a former band-mate, now a successful LA music mogul. Turns out his old pal is looking for a New York apartment not for a couples get-away he and his wife might use when in town, but to cheat. His wife will never know about this apartment. He extols cheating as a means to save a marriage.

Jack, whose own marriage has become stagnant, on a whim, out of curiosity and with that (Don't do it, Jack!) flicker of questionable judgement, checks out the cheating web site his friend uses. Fire up the jet engines! There are lies, mysteries, murders, threaded with desperation and a beautiful twist. For fans of Starr's novels, there is also a lovely "Easter egg" reference to his 2015 novel, *Savage Lane*.

Oh, I loved it! Come on, Jason. I am eager for your next :-)

Josh says

There's just something about a Jason Starr novel that separates his writing from the rest. Be it the personal narrative surrounding his characters, the easily plausible accidental murder of his killers, or the intense family centered dynamic - all of it jells just right to form a unique blue-collar domestic noir - with a twist.

Fugitive Red is perhaps one of the best yet.

Jack Harper is a struggling New York real estate agent, married to Maria, a successful corporate worker. Their son Jonah is the glue which keeps them together.

When Jack shows an apartment to a former band buddy, his thoughts of a bountiful commission give way to the lure of infidelity. Jack's onetime friend plants the seed of escaping the daily marriage grind by indulging in internet hookups - specifically, hookups for unhappily married people.

The first time is the last time for Jack as his life spirals out of control after finding the woman going by the internet handle 'Fugitive Red' naked and very dead at their designated meet-up spot.

Prime suspect, deadbeat husband, homeless, and attempted kidnapper are just some of the labels he dons during the course of the novel - but nothing is worse than the twist which turns everything on its head.

My rating: 5/5 stars. I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Mike Hughes says

Got a beta copy of this one from Jason Starr's newsletter. Thanks a ton! will be buying the hard cover when published for our shelves.

But a typical Starr book, noir all the way. Loved the story, kept you on your toes wondering how he(Jack) was going to screw it up even more than he already has. Just when you think Jack couldnt get any more desperate he screws up even more. Great writing as usual from Starr brings us a story about the desperation an everyday regular guy could face just by making one bad decision.

Jeff says

I've been reading Jason's books for 20 years and I can't recall him ever having written a bad book. In fact most of them, like his latest, Fugitive Red, you just can't put down. You go to bed at night reading one of his books and get so absorbed in it that, when you glance over at the clock on your nightstand, you're surprised to see it's 3 a.m. and you're still wide awake.

His best books are reminiscent of the paperback originals of the 50s from writers such as Gil Brewer or Jim Thompson. The kind where the protagonist has what seems a momentary lapse in judgement that causes his life to suddenly spiral out of control.

The first third of Fugitive Red starts off slowly, but then, quickly begins moving at break-neck speed. About three-quarters of the way through, it seems to start winding down, but you realize you have 30 pages left and the crime hasn't been solved.

emmabooks says

Entertaining, page turner

Jack Harper's marriage is not going well and, motivated by a friend, he visits an online dating site - just to

liven up a dull evening! Unfortunately his first extra-marital date is dead by the time he arrives, which causes problems for Jack with the police - and his wife. From this moment on this psychological thriller turns into a real page turner.

Although it is difficult to have any sympathy with Jack, I was fascinated to find out what happens. Some of the action would have been almost farcical if it hadn't been so serious, but the story is gripping and great entertainment (after a rather slow start).

4* from me as this was a great book to escape into, with an excellent ending.

Steve says

Jack and Maria live in a one bedroom apartment in Manhattan with their son, Jonah. Their marriage is strained to say the least. Jack is struggling in his job as a real estate agent. Their finances are shaky at best. When an old music friend comes to New York City, he tells Jack about an extramarital dating app. Looking for something, Jack signs on and meets Sophia, who uses Fugitive Red as her on-line name. They have a steamy on-line relationship ultimately agreeing to meet in person at her townhouse in the city. But when Jack arrives, he finds Sophia dead. He is convinced that Sophia's husband is responsible, but soon finds himself in deep water with the police. I struggled to like this book as Jack is not the brightest light on the block, making one bad decision after another. And much of the action seems contrived. But I hung in there and the ending let me give the book an average rating. My thanks to Oceanview Publishing and Edelweiss for the ARC of this book.

Matt says

Fugitive Red is a really fun book, and Starr is a writer whom I have admired for some time. I've read all his novels, and I have enjoyed them all, but I think Fugitive Red is one of his best. Certainly, in the top three. I don't want to give away any of the plot, but anyone who has read a Jason Starr book before knows that Starr often writes about people who make bad decisions and then struggle to pull themselves out of the mess they have created, which only compounds the trouble, the anxiety, and ratchets up the tension of the plot.

Fugitive Red is a little different, and I read it with expectations that the narrator would stumble and fall, would hang himself as he continues to lie and deceive. And there is all of that, but there is something different about the narrator in Fugitive Red. For once, I rooted for him to get out of the mess he was in. There are all the cringeworthy decisions and poor life choices that one would find in a usual Starr book, but there is not that usual feeling of schadenfreude that one usually gets when one reads a Starr novel. This narrator feels like me. I can relate to him in many ways, and I want him to pull himself out of the muck. I want him to succeed. I suppose that is why this book is being called a "thriller" and not "crime fiction." Anyway, like all of Starr's work, It's really good, and I recommend it highly.

Christi Massey says

Started this thinking I'd just read for a little bit before bed. Five hours later, it's finished. WOW! Could NOT stop! Excellent read! Starts off building the story, then crescendos nonstop into action, suspense, and mayhem. Outstanding!

Joann says

First of all, I would have enjoyed this book much more if it hadn't used an abundance of swear words as they weren't necessary. The author has a really good thriller going with the plot of Jack, Maria and their son, Jonah. This is a story of self-destruction and desperation and the author makes you feel the tension all through the book. I certainly didn't see the ending coming but I thought it was an awesome twist. Just be forewarned that there is excessive use of foul language and some explicit sex talk.
