

## The Stranger Behind You

William Morrow

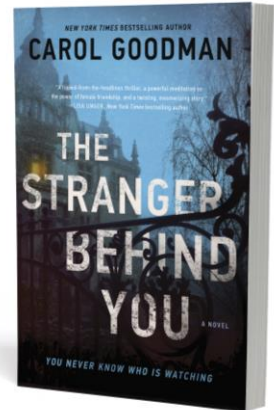
By Carol Goodman

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### Introduction

**Two-time Mary Higgins Clark Award-Winning Author!**

**In the tradition of Daphne du Maurier and Shari Lapena, comes the newest mystery thriller from *New York Times* bestselling author Carol Goodman—a twisty, chilling story set in a former Magdalen Laundry in Manhattan that explores today’s #MeToo complexities.**



**"In a twisting, mesmerizing story that is as beautifully written as it is utterly propulsive, Goodman keeps us breathlessly turning the pages right to the shocking and poignant end. I absolutely loved this layered and moving novel!"**

**—Lisa Unger, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Confessions on the 7:45***

**You're never *really* alone.**

Journalist Joan Lurie has written a seething article exposing a notorious newspaper tycoon as a sexual predator. But the night it goes live, she is brutally attacked. Traumatized and suffering the effects of a concussion, she moves into a highly secure apartment in Manhattan called the Refuge, which was at one time a Magdalen Laundry. Joan should be safe here, so how can she explain the cryptic incidents that are happening?

Lillian Day is Joan's new 96-year-old neighbor at the Refuge. In 1941, Lillian witnessed a mysterious murder that sent her into hiding at the Magdalen Laundry, and she hasn't come out since. As she relates to Joan her harrowing story, Joan sees striking similarities to her own past.

Melissa Osgood, newly widowed and revengeful, has burning questions about her husband's recent death. When she discovers a suspicious paper trail that he left behind, she realizes how little she knew about her marriage. But it seems Joan Lurie might be the one who has the answers.

As these three lives intersect, each woman must stay one step ahead of those who are desperate to make sure the truth is never uncovered.

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## Questions for Discussion

1. Joan doesn't report the attack. Why not? What do you think of this choice? Why is it that women don't always report sexual misconduct or abuse?
2. How culpable do you think Melissa is for living with a sexual predator? Should she have been able to tell what her husband was really like? Could she have done something about his behavior?
3. In her study on Magdalene Laundries in the United States, the scholar Michelle Jones states that "we seem to have lost all memory of them" and that "this historical amnesia hinders our understanding of prisons and marginalized women." Were you surprised to learn that there really was a Magdalen Asylum in New York City in the early years of the 20th Century? Do our history books focus enough on the history of how women were treated in the past? Why is it important to uncover this history?
4. Both Lillian and Joan have suffered a traumatic event. What are the long-term effects—the "sequelae"—of trauma? Is there any way to heal from this kind of trauma?
5. What do you think the #MeToo movement has accomplished? Why did it take so long for women to speak up against their abusers? Do you think there are any negative aspects to the movement?
6. Joan feels that her mother gave up on her dreams of becoming an artist and gave into her own mother's fears when she moved out of the city and went back upstate. Do you think Joan's assessment is correct? Are there times when it's better to give up on a dream and choose safety?
7. Joan becomes increasingly agoraphobic after she moves to The Refuge and begins to feel as trapped there as the inmates of the Magdalen Refuge. Why does she feel that way? How do our choices sometimes cause us to feel trapped—and how can we escape?
8. Melissa is determined to uncover the truth about her husband and she goes to extreme lengths to find out what Joan knows. Do you think she is justified in her actions? How ethical is her behavior? How do our priorities sometimes get in the way of doing the "right" thing?
9. Do you think that Lillian was an hallucination caused by Joan's concussion or do you think she was a ghost?
10. In the final scene the ashes of Lillian and Rose are disbursed between the orchard, where they felt safe, and the river, where they felt free. Are these two qualities—freedom and safety—always in conflict? Can we ever have both?