



The Affair: A Jack Reacher Novel (Jack Reacher Novels)

By Lee Child

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Everything starts somewhere. . . For elite military cop Jack Reacher, that somewhere was Carter Crossing, Mississippi, way back in 1997. A lonely railroad track. A crime scene. A coverup.

A young woman is dead, and solid evidence points to a soldier at a nearby military base. But that soldier has powerful friends in Washington.

Reacher is ordered undercover—to find out everything he can, to control the local police, and then to vanish. Reacher is a good soldier. But when he gets to Carter Crossing, he finds layers no one saw coming, and the investigation spins out of control.

Local sheriff Elizabeth Deveraux has a thirst for justice—and an appetite for secrets. Uncertain they can trust one another, Reacher and Deveraux reluctantly join forces. Reacher works to uncover the truth, while others try to bury it forever. The conspiracy threatens to shatter his faith in his mission, and turn him into a man to be feared.

A novel of unrelenting suspense that could only come from the pen of #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Lee Child, *The Affair* is the start of the Reacher saga, a thriller that takes Reacher—and his readers—right to the edge . . . and beyond.

With Reacher, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Lee Child has created “a series that stands in the front rank of modern thrillers” (*The Washington Post*).

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for #1 bestselling author Lee Child and his Reacher series

“Child is a superb craftsman of suspense.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

“The truth about Reacher gets better and better.”—Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

“Implausible, irresistible Reacher remains just about the best butt-kicker in thriller-lit.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Like his hero Jack Reacher, Lee Child seems to make no wrong steps.”—Associated Press

“Lee Child [is] the current poster-boy of American crime fiction.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“Indisputably the best escape artist in this escapist genre.”—Marilyn Stasio, *The New York Times*

“Jack Reacher is much more like the heir to the Op and Marlowe than Spenser ever was.”—*Esquire*

About the Author

LEE CHILD is the author of sixteen Jack Reacher thrillers, including the #1 New York Times bestsellers **Worth Dying For**, **61 Hours**, **Gone Tomorrow**, **Nothing to Lose**, and **Bad Luck and Trouble**. His debut, **Killing Floor**, won both the Anthony and the Barry awards for Best First Mystery, and **The Enemy** won both the Barry and the Nero awards for Best Novel. Foreign rights in the Jack Reacher series have sold in more than fifty territories. All titles have been optioned for major motion pictures. Child, a native of England and a former television director, lives in New York City.

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Chapter 1

The Pentagon is the world's largest office building, six and a half million square feet, thirty thousand people, more than seventeen miles of corridors, but it was built with just three street doors, each one of them opening into a guarded pedestrian lobby. I chose the southeast option, the main concourse entrance, the one nearest the Metro and the bus station, because it was the busiest and the most popular with civilian workers, and I wanted plenty of civilian workers around, preferably a whole long unending stream of them, for insurance purposes, mostly against getting shot on sight. Arrests go bad all the time, sometimes accidentally, sometimes on purpose, so I wanted witnesses. I wanted independent eyeballs on me, at least at the beginning. I remember the date, of course. It was Tuesday, the eleventh of March, 1997, and it was the last day I walked into that place as a legal employee of the people who built it.

A long time ago.

The eleventh of March 1997 was also by chance exactly four and a half years before the world changed, on that other future Tuesday, and so like a lot of things in the old days the security at the main concourse

entrance was serious without being hysterical. Not that I invited hysteria. Not from a distance. I was wearing my Class A uniform, all of it clean, pressed, polished, and spit-shined, all of it covered with thirteen years' worth of medal ribbons, badges, insignia, and citations. I was thirty-six years old, standing tall and walking ramrod straight, a totally squared away U.S. Army Military Police major in every respect, except that my hair was too long and I hadn't shaved for five days.

Back then Pentagon security was run by the Defense Protective Service, and from forty yards I saw ten of their guys in the lobby, which I thought was far too many, which made me wonder whether they were all theirs or whether some of them were actually ours, working undercover, waiting for me. Most of our skilled work is done by Warrant Officers, and they do a lot of it by pretending to be someone else. They impersonate colonels and generals and enlisted men, and anyone else they need to, and they're good at it. All in a day's work for them to throw on DPS uniforms and wait for their target. From thirty yards I didn't recognize any of them, but then, the army is a very big institution, and they would have chosen men I had never met before.

I walked on, part of a broad wash of people heading across the concourse to the doors, some men and women in uniform, either Class As like my own or the old woodland-pattern BDUs we had back then, and some men and women obviously military but out of uniform, in suits or work clothes, and some obvious civilians, some of each category carrying bags or briefcases or packages, all of each category slowing and sidestepping and shuffling as the broad wash of people narrowed to a tight arrowhead and then narrowed further still to lonely single file or collegial two-by-two, as folks got ready to stream inside. I lined up with them, on my own, single file, behind a woman with pale unworn hands and ahead of a guy in a suit that had gone shiny at the elbows. Civilians, both of them, desk workers, probably analysts of some kind, which was exactly what I wanted. Independent eyeballs. It was close to noon. There was sun in the sky and the March air had a little warmth in it. Spring, in Virginia. Across the river the cherry trees were about to wake up. The famous blossom was about to break out. All over the innocent nation airline tickets and SLR cameras lay on hall tables, ready for sightseeing trips to the capital.

I waited in line. Way ahead of me the DPS guys were doing what security guys do. Four of them were occupied with specific tasks, two manning an inquiry counter and two checking official badge holders and then waving them through an open turnstile. Two were standing directly behind the glass inside the doors, looking out, heads high, eyes front, scanning the approaching crowd. Four were hanging back in the shadows behind the turnstiles, just clumped together, shooting the shit. All ten were armed.

It was the four behind the turnstiles that worried me. No question that back in 1997 the Department of Defense was seriously puffed up and overmanned in relation to the threats we faced then, but even so it was unusual to see four on-duty guys with absolutely nothing to do. Most commands at least made their surplus personnel look busy. But these four had no obvious role. I stretched up tall and peered ahead and tried to get a look at their shoes. You can learn a lot from shoes. Undercover disguises often don't get that far, especially in a uniformed environment. The DPS was basically a beat cop role, so to the extent that a choice was available, DPS guys would go for cop shoes, big comfortable things appropriate for walking and standing all day. Undercover MP Warrant Officers might use their own shoes, which would be subtly different.

But I couldn't see their shoes. It was too dark inside, and too far away.

The line shuffled along, at a decent pre-9/11 clip. No sullen impatience, no frustration, no fear. Just old-style routine. The woman in front of me was wearing perfume. I could smell it coming off the nape of her neck. I liked it. The two guys behind the glass noticed me about ten yards out. Their gaze moved off the woman and onto me. It rested on me a beat longer than it needed to, and then it moved on to the guy behind.

Then it came back. Both men looked me over quite openly, up and down, side to side, four or five seconds, and then I shuffled forward and their attention moved behind me again. They didn't say anything to each other. Didn't say anything to anyone else, either. No warnings, no alerts. Two possible interpretations. One, best case, I was just a guy they hadn't seen before. Or maybe I stood out because I was bigger and taller than anyone within a hundred yards. Or because I was wearing a major's gold oak leaves and ribbons for some heavy-duty medals, including a Silver Star, like a real poster boy, but because of the hair and the beard I also looked like a real caveman, which visual dissonance might have been enough reason for the long second glance, just purely out of interest. Sentry duty can be boring, and unusual sights are always welcome.

Or two, worst case, they were merely confirming to themselves that some expected event had indeed happened, and that all was going according to plan. Like they had prepared and studied photographs and were saying to themselves: OK, he's here, right on time, so now we just wait two more minutes until he steps inside, and then we take him down.

Because I was expected, and I was right on time. I had a twelve o'clock appointment and matters to discuss with a particular colonel in a third-floor office in the C ring, and I was certain I would never get there. To walk head-on into a hard arrest was a pretty blunt tactic, but sometimes if you want to know for sure whether the stove is hot, the only way to find out is to touch it.

The guy ahead of the woman ahead of me stepped inside the doors and held up a badge that was attached to his neck by a lanyard. He was waved onward. The woman in front of me moved and then stopped short, because right at that moment the two DPS watchers chose to come out from behind the glass. The woman paused in place and let them squeeze out in front of her, against the pressing flow. Then she resumed her progress and stepped inside, and the two guys stopped and stood exactly where she had been, three feet in front of me, but facing in the opposite direction, toward me, not away from me.

They were blocking the door. They were looking right at me. I was pretty sure they were genuine DPS personnel. They were wearing cop shoes, and their uniforms had eased and stretched and molded themselves to their individual physiques over a long period of time. These were not disguises, snatched from a locker and put on for the first time that morning. I looked beyond the two guys, inside, at their four partners who were doing nothing, and I tried to judge the fit of their clothes, by way of comparison. It was hard to tell.

In front of me the guy on my right said, "Sir, may we help you?"

I asked, "With what?"

"Where are you headed today?"

"Do I need to tell you that?"

"No sir, absolutely not," the guy said. "But we could speed you along a little, if you like."

Probably via an inconspicuous door into a small locked room, I thought. I figured they had civilian witnesses on their mind too, the same way I did. I said, "I'm happy to wait my turn. I'm almost there, anyway."

The two guys said nothing in reply to that. Stalemate. Amateur hour. To try to start the arrest outside was dumb. I could push and shove and turn and run and be lost in the crowd in the blink of an eye. And they wouldn't shoot. Not outside. There were too many people on the concourse. Too much collateral damage. This was 1997, remember. March eleventh. Four and a half years before the new rules. Much better to wait

until I was inside the lobby. The two stooges could close the doors behind me and form up shoulder to shoulder in front of them while I was getting the bad news at the desk. At that point theoretically I could turn back and fight my way past them again, but it would take me a second or two, and in that second or two the four guys with nothing to do could shoot me in the back about a thousand times.

And if I charged forward they could shoot me in the front. And where would I go anyway? To escape into the Pentagon was no kind of a good idea. The world's largest office building. Thirty thousand people. Five floors. Two basements. Seventeen miles of corridors. There are ten radial hallways between the rings, and they say a person can make it between any two random points inside a maximum seven minutes, which was presumably calculated with reference to the army's official quick-march pace of four miles an hour, which meant if I was running hard I could be anywhere within about three minutes. But where? I could find a broom closet and steal bag lunches and hold out a day or two, but that would be all. Or I could take hostages and try to argue my case, but I had never seen that kind of thing succeed.

So I waited.

The DPS guy in front of me on my right said, "Sir, you be sure and have a nice day now," and then he moved past me, and his partner moved past me on my other side, both of them just strolling slow, two guys happy to be out in the air, patrolling, varying their viewpoint. Maybe not so dumb after all. They were doing their jobs and following their plan. They had tried to decoy me into a small locked room, but they had failed, no harm, no foul, so now they were turning the page straight to plan B. They would wait until I was inside and the doors were closed, and then they would jump into crowd control mode, dispersing the incoming people, keeping them safe in case shots had to be fired inside. I assumed the lobby glass was supposed to be bulletproof, but the smart money never bets on the DoD having gotten exactly what it paid for.

The door was right in front of me. It was open. I took a breath and stepped into the lobby. Sometimes if you want to know for sure whether the stove is hot, the only way to find out is to touch it.

Chapter 2

The woman with the perfume and the pale hands was already deep into the corridor beyond the open turnstile. She had been waved through. Straight ahead of me was the two-man inquiry desk. To my left were the two guys checking badges. The open turnstile was between their hips. The four spare guys were still doing nothing beyond it. They were still clustered together, quiet and watchful, like an independent team. I still couldn't see their shoes.

I took another breath and stepped up to the counter.

Like a lamb to the slaughter.

The desk guy on the left looked at me and said, "Yes, sir." Fatigue and resignation in his voice. A response, not a question, as if I had already spoken. He looked young and reasonably smart. Genuine DPS, presumably. MP Warrant Officers are quick studies, but they wouldn't be running a Pentagon inquiry desk, however deeply under they were supposed to be.

The desk guy looked at me again, expectantly, and I said, "I have a twelve o'clock appointment."

"Who with?"

"Colonel Frazer," I said.

The guy made out like he didn't recognize the name. The world's largest office building. Thirty thousand people. He leafed through a book the size of a telephone directory and asked, "Would that be Colonel John James Frazer? Senate Liaison?"

I said, "Yes."

Or: Guilty as charged.

Way to my left the four spare guys were watching me. But not moving. Yet.

The guy at the desk didn't ask my name. Partly because he had been briefed, presumably, and shown photographs, and partly because my Class A uniform included my name on a nameplate, worn as per regulations on my right breast pocket flap, exactly centered, its upper edge exactly a quarter of an inch below the top seam.

Seven letters: REACHER.

Or, eleven letters: Arrest me now.

The guy at the inquiry desk said, "Colonel John James Frazer is in 3C315. You know how to get there?"

I said, "Yes." Third floor, C ring, nearest to radial corridor number three, bay number fifteen. The Pentagon's version of map coordinates, which it needed, given that it covered twenty-nine whole acres of floor space.

The guy said, "Sir, you have a great day," and his guileless gaze moved past my shoulder to the next in line. I stood still for a moment. They were tying it up with a bow. They were making it perfect. The general common law test for criminal culpability is expressed by the Latin *actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*, which means, roughly, doing things won't necessarily get you in trouble unless you actually mean to do them. Action plus intention is the standard. They were waiting for me to prove my intention. They were waiting for me to step through the turnstile and into the labyrinth. Which explained why the four spare guys were on their side of the gate, not mine. Crossing the line would make it real. Maybe there were jurisdiction issues. Maybe lawyers had been consulted. Frazer wanted my ass gone for sure, but he wanted his own ass covered just as much.

I took another breath and crossed the line and made it real. I walked between the two badge checkers and squeezed between the cold alloy flanks of the turnstile. The bar was retracted. There was nothing to hit with my thighs. I stepped out on the far side and paused. The four spare guys were on my right. I looked at their shoes. Army regulations are surprisingly vague about shoes. Plain black lace-up oxfords or close equivalents, conservative, no designs on them, minimum of three pairs of eyelets, closed toe, maximum two-inch heel. That's all the fine print says. The four guys on my right were all in compliance, but they weren't wearing cop shoes. Not like the two guys outside. They were sporting four variations on the same classic theme. High shines, tight laces, a little creasing and wear here and there. Maybe they were genuine DPS. Maybe they weren't. No way of telling. Not right then.

I was looking at them, and they were looking at me, but no one spoke. I looped around them and headed deeper into the building. I used the E ring counterclockwise and turned left at the first radial hallway.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Brown:

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