



Wilde Lake

Laura Lippman

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Luisa “Lu” Brant is the newly elected—and first female—state’s attorney of Howard County, Maryland, a job in which her widower father famously served. Fiercely intelligent and ambitious, she sees an opportunity to make her name by trying a mentally disturbed drifter accused of beating a woman to death in her home. It’s not the kind of case that makes headlines, but peaceful Howard county doesn’t see many homicides.

As Lu prepares for the trial, the case dredges up painful memories, reminding her small but tight-knit family of the night when her brother, AJ, saved his best friend at the cost of another man’s life. Only eighteen, AJ was cleared by a grand jury. Now, Lu wonders if the events of 1980 happened as she remembers them. What details might have been withheld from her when she was a child?

The more she learns about the case, the more questions arise. What does it mean to be a man or woman of one’s times? Why do we ask our heroes of the past to conform to the present’s standards? Is that fair? Is it right? Propelled into the past, she discovers that the legal system, the bedrock of her entire life, does not have all the answers. Lu realizes that even if she could learn the whole truth, she probably wouldn’t want to.

Wilde Lake Details

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From Reader Review *Wilde Lake* for online ebook

Aditi says

“The possession of knowledge does not kill the sense of wonder and mystery. There is always more mystery.”

----Anaïs Nin

Laura Lippman, an American bestselling author, pens an intriguing thriller in her new book, *Wilde Lake* that unfolds the story of the first female attorney of her county, who earns her first murder case, that looks like an easy win to her, but underneath the simple mystery lies a mind-blowing truth that will take this woman back to her childhood days when her only friend was her elder brother, who was once convicted of a murder but later cleared by the jury, that draws a close similarity to her recent case.

Synopsis:

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The more she learns about the case, the more questions arise. What does it mean to be a man or woman of one’s times? Why do we ask our heroes of the past to conform to the present’s standards? Is that fair? Is it right? Propelled into the past, she discovers that the legal system, the bedrock of her entire life, does not have all the answers. Lu realizes that even if she could learn the whole truth, she probably wouldn’t want to.

Luisa Brant has forever lived in Wilde Lake in Howard county of Maryland with her father, Andrew Jackson Brant, who was a state attorney, her loving elder brother, AJ, who has a lot of friends from diverse backgrounds when he was in high school, Wilde lake High and their housekeeper, Teensy, who is a person of color. And now Luisa is 45 years old, who has smartly managed to succeed her predecessor Fred Hollister's position by becoming the state's first female attorney and also she shares a complicated relationship with her father. And Luisa has bagged her very first case of a homeless man breaking into a lady's house and murdering her, that looks like a clear win for her. But the prosecution takes her down in the memory lane back to her childhood days when she was a little girl and her brother has been convicted of taking a man's

life in order to save another's, whereas the jury cleared him with full marks. And somewhere it gives Luisa a feeling that maybe there is a connection between the homeless man and the incident that occurred several years ago with her brother.

The author's writing is really well polished, and is laced with enough tension that will grip the readers right from the beginning. The narrative is emotive and articulate and is secured with deep feelings and also evoke a sense of respect and love towards one's own family. Right from the very start, the story has an addictive feel to it with a cleverly induced suspense that will keep the readers hooked to the story line till the very end. The pacing of the story line is moderate, yet it picks up speed near the climax thereby not letting the readers lose their interest from the story line.

The mystery is concocted very smartly with lots of unexpected twists and turns that only make this story even more intriguing. The author unravels this mystery layer by layer as in the background there are two stories running, one in the past and another in the present, and the author has strikingly bound those two parallel story lines in a way that will blow the anticipating readers' minds. Also the story has lots of poignant moments, that are deep and will move the readers.

The characters in this book are quite well developed, complete with their realistic demeanor that is flawed yet smart. The interesting mix of diverse characters who are somehow related to one another will leave an impression in the minds of the readers. The main character, Luisa, has gone through so much grief and loss in her life, yet her mind is sharp and despite of the emotional attachments, she is projected as someone clear headed and determined to get to the bottom of this mind-twisting mystery. The author has captured her voice both in her childhood days and in her mid age days quite strikingly. Her fearless yet defective behavior will make the readers relate to her and keep rooting for her till the very end.

The backdrop of this story set in the modern and an uprising suburb of Howard County in Wilde Lake, where the author herself grew up, is vividly captured, through its landscapes to its people to its streets to its culture to its society, reading which, the readers will be instantly transferred to this evocative destination, that the author has descriptively and strikingly arrested through her story line.

In a nutshell, this is a riveting yet poignant mystery that revolves in Wilde Lake as well as in a simple family, where secrets and lies come sprawling out of the twisted maze of the mystery.

Verdict: *A fresh take of the crime fiction genre with this captivating thriller.*

Courtesy: *Thanks to the author, Laura Lippman's publishers for giving me an opportunity to read and review this book.*

Lewis Weinstein says

Most readers seemed to like this book. I thought there were some good moments but not enough, and the ending was not satisfying. Lippman's handling of two different time frames is well done and the tantalizing juxtaposition of past and present creates the best moments of the story. However, the resolution of the converging stories is much weaker than I expected, and left too much unexplained.

Snotchocheez says

Of the three stand-alone novels I've read (i.e. those unrelated to the Tess Monaghan series) of Laura Lippman's prolific career, *Wilde Lake* is probably my favorite. As I mentioned in reviews of her *The Most Dangerous Thing* and *I'd Know You Anywhere*, Ms. Lippman's greatest asset is her ability of conveying sense of place. I don't know Baltimore at all, but I *feel* like I do after reading her stuff. (This ability is rivaled only by Dennis Lehane's gritty you-are-there Boston portraits and a few of Thomas Pynchon's gonzo looks at Los Angeles { *Inherent Vice* comes immediately to mind}). Ms. Lippman's Baltimore (at least in her three books I've read) is an amalgam of John Waters' woodsy eerie scrub and Lippman's husband David Simon's masterful inner-city series *The Wire*.

Wilde Lake is centered not in Baltimore, but in exurb Columbia, MD, a relatively newish upscale planned community (of Lippman's own childhood). One of Lippman's trademarks is slathering her novels with dozens of characters. In this novel, most of them live adjacent around Columbia subdivision "fake lake" Wilde Lake, a concreted and dammed (damned?) creation that bears dreadful foreboding that is slowly unfolded as the novel progresses.

There are two plot threads going on (one in the present, one in the past), both revolving around the friends and family of Luisa "Lu" Brant, a 45 year-old elected Maryland state's attorney (following in the footsteps of her father). Her very first murder case after being elected (in a county with a murder rate of roughly two per annum, unlike Baltimore) involves what seems at first a pretty straightforward homeless man's breaking-and-entering attack of a woman in an apartment, but turns out having much more far-reaching, decades-old ramifications than what would appear on the surface.

I'm not quite sure why Ms. Lippman gets kinda middling reception here on Goodreads. Though this not a genre (crime fiction) I spend much time reading, I've never been displeased by her output. I'm guessing her stuff might not be lurid enough for some, or she has too many plot threads and characters, or spends too much time establishing the setting or gabbing about the political climate. Dunno. I can't speak to her Tess Monaghan series at all, but if you have not ever tried out any of Ms. Lippman's intelligently written novels before, *Wilde Lake* is as good a place as any to give her a try.

Tooter says

The last (and only) Laura Lippman book I've read previous to *Wilde Lake* was *The Girl in the Green Raincoat* in 2013. I had to look up the summary of the book to remember what the book was about and why I gave it 2 stars. Even after reading the blurb, I still can't remember many details so I was a bit leery about investing my time in another lackluster book by this author. I'm so glad I did. This was a well crafted, engaging mystery that was not the least bit predictable. 5 stars for a book that I highly recommend.

Liz Barnsley says

Laura Lippman has been described as one of the best crime novelists writing today – and I have to say from a purely readers point of view that I would absolutely agree with that.

Wilde Lake is perhaps my favourite of hers so far – multi layered, intensely engaging, a story about family

secrets, community, perception and reality, with some intriguing and brilliantly drawn characters and an atmospheric and authentic setting.

The story uses the past/present narrative in a slightly different way, as Lu enters the fray on a murder case that may have deep rooted and hidden links back to her own family. As she prepares to make her case, the past starts to intrude on the present and things Lu thought she knew suddenly look very different from her now adult perspective.

She is in some ways a divisive character which makes things all the more interesting -this author knows how to drag you deep into the story, I loved the relationships drawn between Lu, her father and her brother. A family pulling together through all things, the normal and sometimes not so normal life events, the picture painted is a fascinating one. Throw into that a death from the past and one from the now, start moving one towards the other and you will be unable to put this one down.

Laura Lippman shows us how Lu came to be, her influences and experiences growing up which all feed into her behaviour and reactions in the now -there is a mystery element that has many nuances, this is not a black and white whodunnit but a tale of many levels. Moral lines blur, Lives are changed. The whole thing is extraordinarily gripping.

I loved it. I loved the use of language to convey and invoke emotion, loved the dark and genuinely clever plot and the ending made me cry. Brilliant.

Highly Recommended.

joyce g says

Written well, just not what I was hoping for.

Brenda says

3.5★s

Luisa Brant's mother died a week after Lu was born – her brother AJ was eight so was lucky to have had his mother for those first years of his life. Lu and AJ's father was a highly respected member of the community in which they lived; State Attorney of Howard County in Maryland. The three of them lived together in their big home with housekeeper/carer/nanny Teensy working days – Lu's father wasn't a demonstrative man, but cared for them just the same.

When AJ was eighteen there was an altercation at their graduation party where AJ saved his best friend Davey's life, and another young man lost his. Though AJ had his arm broken in two places, he was cleared of all fault – Davey's parents were eternally grateful to AJ while AJ's family were happy and thankful he hadn't been too badly hurt.

Now, years later forty five year old Lu was elected into the position her father had held all those years ago – plus she was the first elected woman which made her family proud. But the murder case she became

involved in almost immediately dredged up the events of a long ago past – secrets, lies and shattered memories had Lu wondering what had really happened back in 1980 when she was only ten years old. It seemed instead of getting answers there were only more questions...

Wilde Lake by Laura Lippman is a gripping and suspenseful thriller that moved between the present day and the past with ease. The mystery of the past clashing with the murder of the present made for an intriguing plot but I didn't feel overly drawn to the characters I'm afraid. I enjoyed the character of Lu as a child but felt there was no depth to the adults. And I will admit to skimming in parts. But that said, I would recommend *Wilde Lake* – my first by this author and she has many fans.

With thanks to Allen & Unwin for this copy to read in exchange for my honest review.

Linda says

Bottom Line: Some things are just inescapable. Like the glaze of childhood upon our bones. Fraught, sometimes difficult times that revisit us. Plummeting deeper into the waters of wavering denial.

Luisa Brant possesses a determined, tenacious spirit. This serves her well as the newly elected state attorney of Howard County, Maryland. Those bones have been well-formed as she has cut a path in the same vision as her famous attorney father. Newly widowed and a mother of twins, Lu takes residence with this icon of a parent once again. Many have compared this father/daughter relationship to that in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Perhaps. Only Lu and her father are cut from cloth more rugged and untamed.

Lu's relationship with her brother plays heavily into the mix. A.J. had been cleared of a crime in 1980 in which he fought with the attacker who stabbed his best friend. The attacker died in the struggle for the knife. A.J. was lauded as a hero. And the scenes from that night carry Lu to a peripheral relationship with the men in her life. Always gripping the edges. Always just this side of the truth.

Laura Lippman offers us more crime/fiction than mystery/thriller here. She weighs heavily into Lu's childhood years and the hammered impact that catapults into the present. Every family has secrets that are guarded relentlessly. Some painfully known by its members. Some never to see the light of one's own reality. And how do you stop the bleeding?

Lu prepares for the trial of a homeless man accused of breaking into a woman's apartment and murdering her. A brutal crime in which the woman's face is bludgeoned in what appears to be an outlash of deadly anger. The trial itself takes Lu back to those scenes of childhood once again. Lippman focuses on the baggage of life that never seemed to make its way to the check-in counter.

Lippman presents a novel heavy on detail. The jagged pieces find their way home. Like birds who seem to roost in the rafters awaiting their final flight. *Wilde Lake* takes you to the shores of human nature in which deception wades slowly into the lives of these characters. But is it enough to weigh them down forever?

Joshilyn Jackson says

My new favorite Lippman, which is saying something.

?Karen says

Finding Lippman's *Sunburn* this year to be a 5 star studded book, I found a couple of her older books in audio from OverDrive. This is the first of those, and it is thoughtful in its plotting, full of old secrets that if revealed could change her family and how she sees it. The audio version employed different female voices to tell of Lu's motherless childhood and her adult years as an elected state's attorney, following in her father's footsteps. Her first murder case brings back the time when her father was involved in a case where a trashy girl accused a black man of rape and her brother accidentally killed someone. And oh yeah, she was a tomboy as a girl and brought a boy home for dinner who was lacking in manners. Ring any bells?

I need to research why Lippman went with the obvious comparisons to *TKAM* . . . it may be that she's simply paying homage to and reimagining a favorite classic. It kept it interesting for me, because it's certainly my favorite. But even without that, this is a very worthy, inspired crime novel.

"We always want our heroes to be better than their times, to hold the enlightened views we have achieved one hundred, fifty, ten years later."

Roger Brunyate says

Diffuse

Forget the dark-and-stormy-night implications of the garish cover. Far from wild, *Wilde Lake* is the man-made centerpiece of a manicured subdivision in a new town arising out of the idealism of the later sixties: Columbia, Maryland. Laura Lippman makes no bones about this; one of the most interesting things about her new book (especially for a reader who came to America at about this time and lives close by) is the time-capsule it offers of its place and period. The novel proceeds in at-first-alternating chapters in two time frames. Those in regular type are set in 2015, and cover the first few months in office of Lu Brant, widowed mother of two, daughter of a revered State's Attorney, and now elected to her father's old position. The others, in a light sans-serif that is harder to read, start with the family first coming to Columbia, before Lu was even born, and continue with her tagging along as a naive but observant kid sister as her brother AJ and his friends go through high school and off to college. Not only does Lippman know the setting, she clearly knows families, and is an acute observer of changing mores.

It is not uncommon for mystery novels (and television shows) to alternate work on a case with glimpses of the investigators' private lives, and for a while that is what seems to be happening here. Lu's first case is the murder of a middle-aged woman in an apartment complex. Fingerprint evidence leads quickly to an individual who may either be the killer, or an intruder who unwittingly stumbled on the scene. Soon, it is not only the flashback chapters that delve into the past, but the present-day ones also. The slightest cue will send Lu recalling something else in her childhood. The trouble is that with the leisurely pace of the recollections, and the lack of forensic interest in the murder case, there is simply not enough propulsive energy in either thread to move the book forward. I was just about prepared to accept that, unlike Lippman's famous detective stories, this would turn out to be an ordinary novel with just a small law-enforcement element thrown in. As

such, I would have found it somewhat interesting, but almost fatally diffuse.

But then the two time-lines coincide. We find ourselves in the present throughout, but new mysteries come out of the woodwork that do indeed have their roots in the past; I shall not say more. For me, though, this was too little too late. I found it difficult to believe in the motivation of most of the people involved. I wondered if Lippman was trying to write a novel about how ideals become tarnished and even the most admirable figures show feet of clay. It would have been a worthwhile theme, but it suffers from too long a build-up to too questionable a payoff, despite her many acute insights along the way.

switterbug (Betsey) says

Fans of Laura Lippman's detective series and stand-alone novels may be surprised that this is less a mystery than it is the story of family and community, and the narratives that shape our lives. It is also an exploration of memory, the mineshaft between facts and truth, and the precarious tunnel between parental and self-protection. "The truth is not a finite commodity that can be contained within identifiable borders. The truth is messy, riotous, overrunning everything. You can never know the whole truth of anything. And if you could, you would wish you wouldn't."

The preplanned, sculpted suburb of Columbia, Maryland, where this story takes place—from the manmade lake to the cookie-cutter villages—is also where the fairytale façade eventually peels away after years of secrets and tweaked retrospection. During its genesis, the prim, trim, identifiable borders of Columbia are a contrast to the untidy truth of the occupants within.

Luisa "Lu" Brant, the 45 year-old newly elected County State's Attorney, is an ambitious and competitive widow of young twins and the daughter of a prior State's Attorney, Andrew Jackson Brant. After Lu's husband died, they moved back to Columbia, into her childhood home. She has come full circle, living with her father again, and the community in which she was raised. Her brother, AJ, who is seven years older, has made a name for himself in the green sphere of sustainable living. Lu and AJ have a close, loving bond, no doubt triggered by the death of their mother, Adele, when Lu was only a week old, and AJ seven years older. To make her mother come alive in her mind, she depends on other people's memories, the facts of Adele told to her, instead of remembered.

Lippman quickly delves into a grievous incident of the past and keeps us tethered to the darker side of the Brant's suburban childhood. A young man died while AJ was trying to save a good friend's life, on the night of his high school graduation. Fortunately, AJ was found to have acted in self-defense, and the family never spoke of it again. "It was common then not to speak of traumatic things, to assume that a firm silence would lead to the fastest healing."

Lu's first case as State's Attorney is prosecuting a mentally ill man, accused of killing a woman in her home. Since murder is rare in Columbia, she's due some recognition if she wins the case. But the investigation reveals some surprises, jogging old memories and finding that they don't always fit the "facts" as she knows them. Plus, she has a secret life of her own, a clandestine lover who she knew as a child. "Which just proves...how very good she is at compartmentalizing."

Compartmentalizing is a concept familiar to the Brant family. Lu's knowledge of her mother, for instance, is limited to what her father and AJ have told her, which isn't much, but arranged lovingly in recitation format. "She was like a character in a fairytale," her father tells her. And about her grandparents, in heightened

tones: “In a twist worthy of a fairytale, they kept their daughter under lock and key in a stone house with turrets, twisting staircases, and stained-glass windows.”

There are other references to fairytales, such as a “Cinderella slipper” that Andrew Brant fashioned figuratively from a shoe to win the murder case that made his career. Fairytales are an ironic metaphor that captures the bleaker side of Wilde Lake, the castles of the idyll haunted by shadows and ghosts of the past.

In this Pleasantville-esque community, breaches of silence are gradual, and secrets are deftly dismantled over the course of the novel, which is divided into alternate timelines, the past and the present. The author also examines the facts of the past in light of present perceptions and mores, and she comes by it honestly. This is the place where Lippman was raised, too, so the fiction is dusted with actual experience.

Lippman’s ingenious construction compelled me; she enlarged the scope of detail and then brought it down to its essential elements by the end of the narrative. She braids timelines gradually, expanding the action to include such a smorgasbord of events that I admit to wondering, halfway in, if Lippman’s themes would crash under its plotlines, which were numerous. A lesser author would have failed to pull it off, but Lippman prepared a feast of a story, down to every succulent bite. I wasn’t thinking of *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which she purposely used as a framework. Instead, I was installed in the myths of Wilde Lake, and the Brant family’s tangled tale of conceits.

Nan Williams says

This new novel by Laura Lippman is a great disappointment. The story started with a memory from 1980 and then moved right into the current (1/1/15) time frame giving us the basis for the plot. After fewer than 10 pages we had another flashback, to another time period. And then another chapter in the current time and then another flashback to a still different time period.

The flashbacks seemed to get more and more frequent, disregarding the actual plot completely. Also the flashbacks droned on and on being filled with lots and lots of insignificant detail. Neither were they chronological nor logical. They bounced around in both time periods and subject matter.

At one point our protagonist at age 6 witnessed 2 of her brother’s 15 year old friends having sex at her house. She commented to herself that it seemed that the girl was experienced and this was the boy’s first time. The very next chapter (in the current time frame) started with our protagonist having sex with this same boy 25+ years later. This was supposed to be interesting? It’s drivel. It’s boring.

Halfway through the book, the author had not returned to the plot. At that point I re-read the flyleaf, trying to figure out what was happening (or supposed to be happening). That made me remember the original basis for the plot ... but by then, the story had totally lost my interest and I simply didn’t care.

Don’t waste your time.

Kaora says

This book contains one of the most unlikeable protagonists that I have ever met.

Luisa "Lu" Brant is the first female states attorney of Howard County. As her first murder case comes up - a woman beaten and choked to death in her bedroom she takes it, a seemingly open and shut case - the perpetrator being a homeless drifter with a history of violence. But as she starts to look into the case it seems to be more to it than she initially thought, and ties back to memories she has as a young child.

The book jumps back and forth between two time periods - Lu's memories back when she is around the age of 8 and beyond, and the "current day" where she is the newly elected states attorney. The audiobook does a great job of differentiating the two, using two different narrators for each portion.

That's pretty much the only praise I have for this book.

The main character is a selfish, unlikeable, woman, who as a child spends her time spying on her brother, and her friends, and then grows into a woman who mimics what she sees.

She uses terms such as "butter face", then acknowledges that it is cruel later on in the book in the middle of a memory, saying that it is a term she would have used for a person if it wasn't so cruel.

Her use of hashtags throughout the book was also something I found irritating as well as the constant references to Five Guys.

When she wasn't being needlessly cruel to the women and men around her - like calling her one friend when she was young "white trash" - she was either bragging about how much money she has, and how much her suit cost, and how much the wine bottle was, OR she was criticizing herself, calling herself small and ragging on her freckles because for some reason those aren't "beautiful".

The plot also took way too long to get started, the interesting revelations only occurring in the last 20% of the book, so for the majority of the time I was bored.

I must also mention that in one of her flashbacks she spies on one of her brother's friends having sex and the next chapter she is having sex with the same person and saying the EXACT SAME THINGS as the girl was he was having sex with all those years ago. How fucking creepy is that?

Wilde Lake? This book should have been called Luisa Brant because it is all about her. And I mean ALL about her.

#sorrynotsorry (See how irritating that is?)

Barbara says

Wilde Lake is a neighborhood in the town of Columbia, MD. Lippmann seems to agree with most of the common criticisms of this planned community founded in the late 60's by developer James Rouse. Not only was it designed to create a small city with a village feel, but has the lofty aims to eliminate racism and religious and class intolerance. Lippman mentions (more than once) the fact that Columbia has an interfaith center rather than places of worship for various faiths. This has been often critiqued. It is a town divided into 10 villages, full of cul-de-sacs and almost impossible to figure out. Most businesses are concentrated in a

huge mall and an ever expanding sprawl of big box stores. I personally find it pretty soulless and before the advent of GPS avoided going there for fear of getting hopelessly lost.

The story focuses on Lu Brant, state's attorney general, and moves back and forth between her childhood, and teens and her current life. There are two past crimes that come back - a murder and an accusation of rape- and a current murder. All end up connected which is not a surprise when crimes occur in a small community.

I am a big fan of Lippman's Tess Monaghan series set in Baltimore. Her other novels are less captivating. Lippman went to high school in Columbia, which explains her setting and perhaps what comes across as a relative indifference to the community. A decent "read" (listen) but one that didn't live up to some of the accolades the novel has gotten.
