

A White Male of Light to Medium Build

the tragicomedy of the hunt for the Louisiana serial killer

Christopher & Kathleen Riley

Every time a serial killer pops up these days, a mob of lawmen form a task force to hunt him down.

The brunettes of Baton Rouge must have breathed a sigh of relief when dozens of police agencies banded together to form the Southern Louisiana Multi-Agency Homicide Task Force to catch the killer who stalked them. Coeds at LSU tuned in for every press conference. They were comforted to hear of the 878 years of law enforcement experience on the task force.

Problem is, when all was said and done, the lawmen of the task force failed to get their man.

But that's not the worst of it.

The real tragedy is that the killer didn't have to break down the front door of his final victim. *The task force opened it for him.*

This is the story of what went wrong.

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From the first frame, we know that Derrick Lee is our killer. The DNA has him dead to rights.

From that knowledge comes edge-of-your-seat terror. Because we also know that beautiful, smart and sexy Carrie Yoder, an LSU grad student, is his final victim. For the two hours it takes the story to unfold onscreen, we beg the task force to stop Derrick Lee before he kills again.

As we watch, we follow Derrick Lee, the flashy-dressing, handsome ladies' man of African-American descent. He tells jokes and leads Bible studies and moves effortlessly beneath the noses of an entire community on high alert, literally getting away with murder.

We fall in love with Carrie Yoder, the savvy 26-year-old world traveler who knows how to take care of herself. Vivacious and intelligent, she's one step away from reaching her goal of a PhD. And she's just found the man of her dreams.

We get swept up in the desperate fight of David McDavid, the small-town detective ignored by the task force, as he battles to prove what we already know is true: Derrick Lee is the killer.

As the clock ticks down on Carrie Yoder, she refuses to play the victim. She moves into a safer neighborhood. She puts a peephole in her door. She even considers dying her hair.

McDavid appeals for help from the state attorney general's office, racing to find a way to test Derrick Lee's DNA.

And the task force intensifies its hunt for the wrong man, pumping out sketches and descriptions of "a white male of medium build with an intimidating stare." They hypnotize a witness to fine-tune their description. With repeated press conferences they focus the public's attention away from Derrick Lee, who looks nothing like their sketch. The task force is so fixated on the flawed profile that when Lee's name is offered to them on at least two separate occasions, they do nothing.

Derrick Lee finally knocks on Carrie Yoder's front door. She looks at him through the peephole she so carefully installed. In that instant she compares him to everything she's been told about the serial killer. She sees exactly the opposite. This is a smiling black man asking for directions. No threat. The task force told her so.

And that's why Carrie opens the door.

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This story is an urgent look at what happens when a cocksure task force provides cover for a killer. When the information released to the public is hopelessly off the mark, it creates a phantom suspect who acts as a decoy. That phantom suspect blinds the task force to the real killer even when he is repeatedly handed to them.

Like *Traffic*, this film is built around three juicy leading roles that thread through three colliding storylines. It is fueled by the terror of an inevitable murder like *Silence of the Lambs*. And it is told with the irreverent black humor of *The Positively True Adventures of the Texas Cheerleader Murdering Mom*.

This story maintains its harrowing appeal long after the headlines fade.