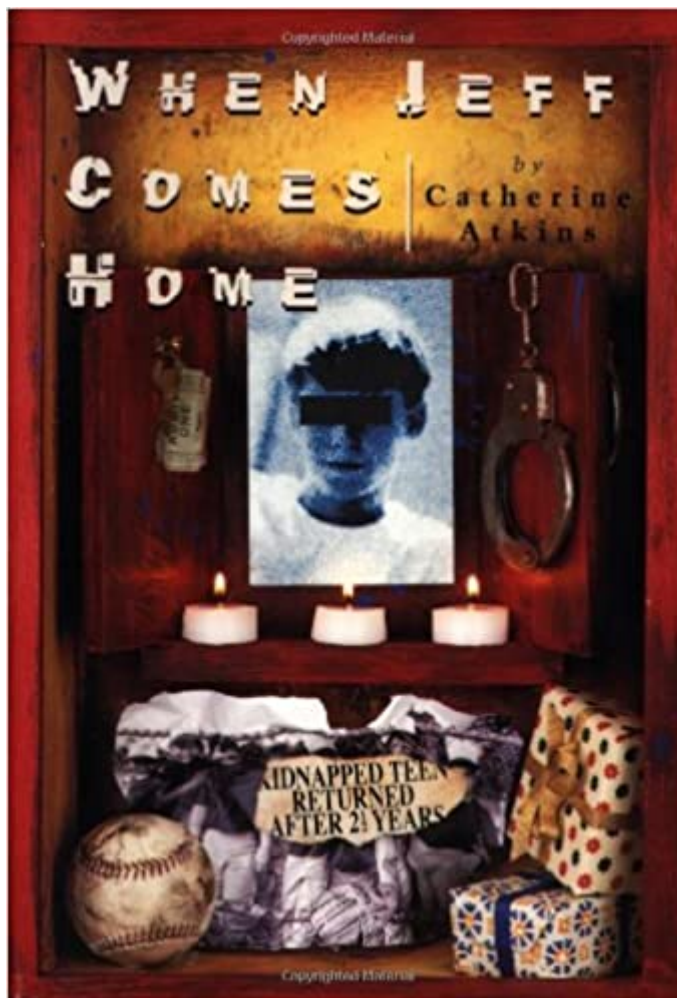


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# When Jeff Comes Home



## Synopsis

Jeff Hart was thirteen when a man kidnapped him at knife point. Now he's sixteen and back with his family. But how can he adjust to the "normal" life of a California teenager? What will it be like to see his old friends, even to go back to school, when everyone is wondering exactly what happened to him? What does his family, and especially his father, think about the relationship he developed with his kidnapper? And how can Jeff live with himself after all he has been through? This powerful and unsettling novel explores the mind of a boy struggling to come to terms with who he was, and who he is now, after an experience that has changed his life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kidnapped from a roadside rest stop by a man named Ray, 16-year-old Jeff has spent the past two and a half years locked in a dark basement. He was whipped, mentally abused and forced to have sex with his captor if he wanted to eat. Now his kidnapper has brought Jeff home. The first half of this tautly written debut reads like a thriller: Jeff, the narrator, relates his gruesome history in bits and pieces; initially, he's wrapped up in twisted loyalty to Ray, who begins to stalk his family. The author builds the tension to an almost unbearable peak in scene after scene, such as when Ray leaves the clothes in which the teen was kidnapped on Jeff's front steps or when Ray still anonymously chats with Jeff's father in public while the threatened teen chooses not to identify him. Jeff is in deep denial about his repeated rape; looking at mug shots and rap sheets for the FBI, he cries out, "Why is every man in there some kind of sick rapist pervert?... I told you Ray isn't like

that." About halfway through the novel, Ray is caught, and the breakdown of Jeff's denial makes up the rest of the book. Jeff's recovery is sensitively and dramatically handled, but the tension eases up as he no longer seems threatened and as the mystery of what really happened to him is revealed to match everyone's initial assumptions. Although it doesn't quite deliver on its promise of suspense the whole way through, this chilling story will put readers through an emotional wringer. Ages 12-up. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 10 Up-Abducted from a California rest stop and abused-physically, emotionally, and sexually-by his kidnapper for 2 U years, Jeff, now 16, is finally released and allowed to return home. Once a star athlete and quintessential "good kid," he is reunited with a family and friends who have become strangers and is caught in a maelstrom of emotions he tries desperately to suppress and deny. Once the apple of his father's eye, Jeff now has a strained relationship with him. His siblings are eager to reconnect, but treat him with a mandated fragility. Consumed with self-loathing, feeling ashamed and unclean, Jeff refuses to cooperate with investigators and name his abductor. The denial comes to haunt him when his kidnapper asserts that their relations were consensual, thus destroying the tentative trust Jeff had rebuilt with an old friend and making his return to school a nightmare of persecution. This is a strong, uncompromising first novel. Jeff's awkwardness and raw pain at having his outlook on life forever altered are drawn with a remarkable sensitivity and honesty. Supporting characters are equally well realized, with each individual differently, yet relatedly affected by the teen's abduction. There can be no instant resolution, ironically no return "home," and there is none. Jeff's emotional scars run deeper than the physical ones scored on his back. There is, however, positive motion toward healing. At last, the boy begins to talk, breaking through his denial and expressing his anger. A powerful, difficult, yet cathartic read. Jennifer A. Fakolt, Denver Public Library Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"When Jeff comes Home" is reminiscent of and probably inspired by the experience of the late Stephen Stayner who after being held for 7 years by his kidnapper returned home to be bullied and harassed by his schoolmates for "being gay" or at least having done "gay things" to the point where he dropped out of high school and had many issues, married young, and sadly died in a motorcycle accident at the age of 19. Stephen would deny the sexual aspects of his abuse till his death resulting in his abductor being charged solely with kidnapping and receiving a measly seven year sentence. In creating the character of Jeff the author captures what the conflict and emotions that a boy this age would have coming off this devastating experience, trying to reintegrate with his family

and community and coping with the expectations of a loving and concerned but none the less control freak father. The book made me tense like I could feel his stress and confusion. The only thing I was troubled by was the character of the enigmatic abuser who after essentially allowing himself to be caught continues to manipulate the facts and control Jeff from jail. The story should not be about him but I would have liked to see some closure about him.

This is a fictional account about a young boy who is kidnapped at a rest stop with his parents nearby and his held for several years by his sexual abuser. The focus is mainly on the boy after his kidnapper/abuser drops him off near his home and how difficult it really is for him and his parents to really understand the deep trauma and emotional upheaval the boy has experienced. The FBI is very involved and the ending is well done. I found the method of capture and the circumstances involved somewhat unbelievable, but overall the story should hold the readers attention.

I'm really interested in kidnappings and have read lots of books about them, both fiction and nonfiction. This I think is one of my favorites. All the characters were very well done, particularly Jeff and Vin. Vin was my favorite character, the way he wouldn't give up, trying to help Jeff even as Jeff pushed him away. What happened to Jeff, the beatings and the molestations, are written about in such a way so that you know it all but not too much -- many writers less talented would turn this story into something like sadomasochistic pornography, but Catherine Atkins is much more subtle than that. Jeff's recovery with all the fits and starts seems realistic to me, and I felt like cheering when he said he was ready to talk though of course it will be years before he ever feels really safe again. A great novel; I look forward to reading future works by this author.

I have no complaints on the author's style, grammar, or character development, but I found the subject matter dark and disturbing. It's says it's for young adults, but I would think that most young adults would not have common ground with the main character Jeff and his awful experiences, thus finding the book, not only unsettling, but unrelatable.

This is an amazing book. It was given to me years ago by a therapist to help me process my own painful story. I lost it in a move many years ago and repurchased it here. It was just as great as I remembered. The subject material is mature, but it is tastefully done. I would strongly recommend it for ages 13 and up. Even as an adult, if you have ever experienced abuse you may find this story helpful.

To be honest I picked this up randomly at the library. Literally! I just picked it up and started reading. I loved it, I couldn't put it down and I even reread it (something I almost never do). This book was written in the most straightforward, honest, and down to earth way. It was so real and believable yet still so extraordinary. The entire story really was just a story of connections. The ones Jeff lost, found again, and the unwanted one he formed with Ray. The emotions are carefully shown so nothing is given away easily (I hate when an author just basically tells you in the first chapter how everyone feels about everything). This novel was different, it never just threw anything in your face. It made character development so much more meaningful. The story itself was heart-breaking and raw. I've never heard a detailed account of child abduction (only posters and faces on the news) The entire thing made me cry more than once and I really could see every single time Jeff hide away in his shell. I don't think this is a book just for parents, or young adults. This book is for anyone who has a heart. Anyone who is willing to walk with Jeff as he tries to make heads or tails of his own life after trauma.

I randomly picked this up from my library and I think my life is (somehow) better for it. This story is dark; the only time there's any hint of happiness is between page one and the 1st half of seven. After that the story of Jeff Hart who was kidnapped, tortured, & sexually abused [at age 13] for almost three years, sounds like something you'd only hear on Oprah. Catherine Atkins doesn't hold back as she lays every detail out in the open, without overly saturating the already dreary plot or sacrificing character development, as we walk with Jeff on his road to recovery. I've never considered myself an overly emotional person, especially over a book, but there's several key scenes that either had me crying or yelling out at no one in utter frustration. The story isn't wrapped up with a big, red bow. In fact it just ends, with a slight sense of closure but no real resolution. I would have enjoyed seeing Jeff's journey to the very end; definitely would have liked to see Ray get his comeuppance, but if at the end of reading a novel you feel emotionally & physically drained then you've experienced something truly amazing. I recommend this to any & everyone

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