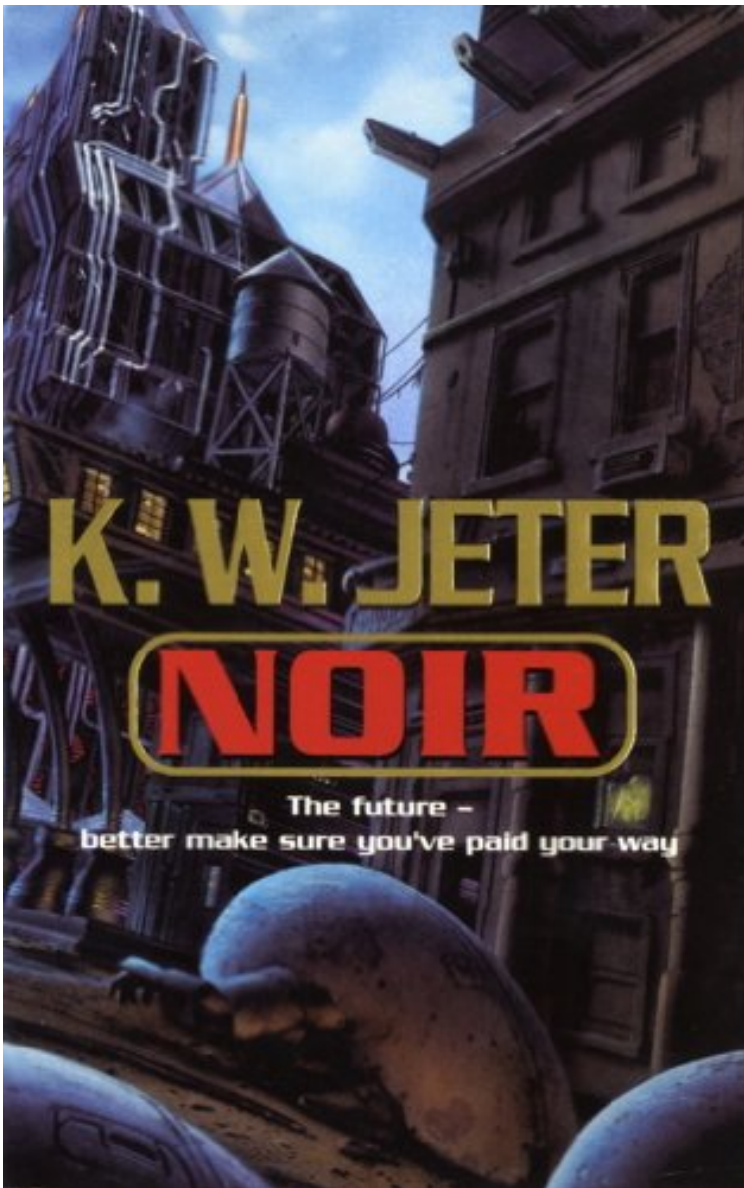


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Noir (English Edition)



Par K. W. Jeter
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTravelt - a corporate flunkey at DynaZauber Inc. - is dead, but his prowler is still stalking the Wedge. Harrisch needs the prowler back, before it spews DynaZauber's secrets to the enemy. When Harrisch approaches ex-agent McNihil with the Travelt case. McNihil's every nerve ending screams no - even though the payout might buy his late wife out of limbo. His days in the Wedge are over - too many ghosts, too many nightmares. But Harrisch won't take no for an answer. NOIR is a brilliantly atmospheric thriller, set in a Los Angeles that stands at the centre of an urban sprawl spanning half the globe. Where the haves live in splendour and the have-nots scabble in the dark. Where the dead live on until their

debts are paid. Extrait One: Sex Burned a Wire At that moment, as the blue spark of sex burned a wire through his tongue, the heavens rained fire. At that moment, all the other moments rushed inside his head. He turned from the kiss that filled his mouth, the hot copper taste of coded flesh, and fell against the glass; the window shivered with fear and mirrored his own ghost face back at him. He knew what was happening outside the window. That the fear was his alone, as much as the ghost and the kiss were; that the transit authorities had sent another drone aloft, over whatever city lapped around this building like a hectic gray ocean; that the Noh-flies had found the idiot projectile in their airspace--all air was theirs--and were busily devouring it, SCARF'd shards falling on the streets below and the face of anyone stupid enough to look up. Mere coincidence, apocalyptic phenomena synch'd-up with the battery salt leaking through his teeth. This must be how women feel, thought Travelt. Not real women, but the women of ideal and dream. Men's dreams, their dream of women's dreams. He had felt himself go all weak at the knees, a kinesthetic cliché as much as the racing heart under his breastbone, when the soul kiss had started to eat him up. He'd put his tongue in the other's mouth, as though his lips were the aggressor's, the conqueror's; he'd made the connection inside another's flesh, that point where electrode and neuron were one fated synapse--And had been conquered in turn. Battered and ravaged. That dream of rape, in which the raped are dreaming still, in which the dreaming turn their faces upward and see their own faces above them, spread out on a luminous sky like the disintegrating airplanes above the ring of cities and the uncaring, dreaming ocean. Where every hot bit of metal struck and hissed into steam, sharp as his own intake of breath, drifting into unlit depths and turning into adornment for dolphins' skeletons. Calm down, Travelt told himself. You're burning up. The window sweated against his cheek. Did the other sweat as well? His vision had blurred, everything that close out of focus, and he couldn't tell if the other's face was as wet and shining as his own felt. The kiss hadn't ended, his tongue was still there, locked in bandwidth rapture; the room around him had defocused, the city beyond the window threatened to go any second. Not that it mattered, not now. No now; all then. Memory and spasm; what had happened, what had been brought back to him. What he tasted in the mercury pool of the other's tongue. His own tongue lodged in the hinge of the other's throat, diving toward the other's heart, as though the secret that drove the sweat through his pores could be read there among the obscure saline atoms. His legs had turned to gelatin, trembling with desires satiated and yet-hungry. The other had to hold him up, its hands locked in his armpits, pinning him against the glass, the crumbs of the eaten drone sizzling transmuted gold on the other side, an inch from his liquefying spine. His tongue in its mouth, their kiss, his senses and being penetrated by the inrush that left him limp and sweetly crucified. Invisible stigmata blossomed in his palms and groin, the feedback of flesh distant in time and space. The flesh that the other had touched, grasped and squeezed blood and lubricating mucus from, like overripe fruit trickling to the points of his elbows. He felt that now, the other's gift to him, rape of him. Slow down--Travelt murmured the subvocal command and plea. Locked so tight in the other's embrace, its reflected image in the glass next to his, that he could feel the sympathetic flutter of its larynx. As though his words had strummed the other's vocal cords like taut guitar strings, a chord of surrender and supplication. It obeyed him, or seemed to; he knew the other's response was as synchronous and acausal as the heated shrapnel falling outside. But the inrush slowed, torrent to stream, and separated into layers of incident and event, became an inventory of all that the other had gone out to seek and had brought back to him. He had smelled it on the other's skinlike skin, that muscled substance that passed for its flesh. When it had returned and let itself in to his cubapt, its key imbedded in its stained fingertips--he had smelled it then, as it had walked through one room after another and into this one with the high-luxury window overlooking the anonymous city below. The mingled overlays of sweat and semen, stale cigarette smoke and endorphins breaking down to burning, dysfunctional molecules, the shards of the other's flight through a sunless sky. Collagen derivatives, pharmaceuticals that tasted like metal and the perspiring of schizophrenics, virginal lipstick and Chernobyl mothers' milk, original sin and its photocopies--a wind from that other atmosphere, ten degrees lower than his own body temperature, had swept ahead of the other as it had strode toward him. He had turned from the window where he had stood waiting, turned upon the sense and smell of its arrival--no sound, it walked so softly, silent as that other world--and had seen the smear of blood on its brow, Cain-marked and Lilith-born, the great wisdom of indulgence in its idiot eyes. Which had scanned and judged him, like the lenses of the watching security cameras at every corner of every building. First from across the room, as he had felt the first tremors of fear move out from his gut, then inches away, then less than that as it had stood right in front of him. The other's eyes had been round dark mirrors in which he had seen himself, perhaps more clearly than ever before. That was then, just a few minutes ago--or perhaps only seconds. In any death, even the smallest, there was no east or west or other

measurement of time, no gauge of stars or the earth's rotation. In this now, the inrush had slowed and become subject to inventory; he could sort one thing out from the next. What the other had brought back to him. The Christmas morning of the genitals, each bright ribbon-bow coming loose inside his head. This is what he received from the other's kiss. What he saw, felt, inhaled in acidic, mingled pheromones: A vision of black-ink tattoos that slowly woke and shifted beneath a woman's skin, pale as unsunned cave fish, white as Bible pages, dimly phosphorescent; The swarming of those tattoos, like decorative koi or human-eyed piranha, attracted by the shadow of a man's hand over the world in which they swam; Their nuzzling beneath the palm laid on the woman's skin, their kisses' delineated teeth, the tingle of each electric microsurge, the release of musky encapsulated opiates, the blood warmth of a close-enough approximation of real human flesh; All of these and more. The pumped-up techy stuff and the straight old-fashioned, the redheaded idiot in the cave of wonders, the soft wet hand of normal coitus. Normal as it gets. Thought Travelt: I'll have to work on this. Now he knew why people started doing this sort of thing. What the attraction was. Metal fingertips, disconnected from anything but rising tendrils of SCARF smoke, clicked against the window. And fell, pieces of the Noh-eaten drone. The larger pieces, of engine manifold and wing panels, would plummet next, fiery meteors sweeping the streets clean of any watchers. He was falling as well, the connection between his tongue and the other's mouth broken, that blue spark snuffed by his pink-tinged saliva. His jaws felt hot and vacant as the other, working off some consumer-protection coding, lowered him gently to the fleece carpet. Shame, or something like it, turned his face away from the other's gaze above. He couldn't bear to be seen, even by something empty and soulless as the autonomic truck that came every morning to change the building's air hoses. Especially by something as empty as that, as empty as the other standing over him. Judged by machines, by their hard flat scrutiny, the iris of an onrushing train. Iris and inrush; the two words remained inside his head, like prophylactic debris washed up, pearlescent and luminous, on a moonlit beach. Maybe that was how women felt as well; he didn't know. No way he would. He put his arm up across his face, as though shielding himself from the sun. The name of the flower had left its image, an intricately petaled construction, in his memory. Maybe one of the tattoos that the other had brought back to show him; he could almost see it opening in the white field of the woman's skin. Opening the way flesh opened, the dew at the petal's edge a perfect magnifying lens. I'm making that part up. That part didn't happen, thought Travelt. Or maybe it had; he didn't know. The other watched him, waited for him, for whatever he might choose to do next. The other was in that part of its operative cycle; it had gone and fetched, it had brought back, and now it waited. With the flat empty gaze of coins, of metal that had been on fire and then extinguished, smoldering to cold lead. He might stand back up on his trembling, bone-loosened legs, stand up and kiss the other again, insert part of himself into the other again, let the blue spark snap and sing piercingly high, into his throat and down along his spine, penetrated by the other and what it had brought him. The iris, the eye and the flower, each opening, flesh opening, the mouths of the tattooed koi nibbling at the other's palm, the warmth of the dead-white flesh and skin, the ocean in which they swam ...It was all there. Waiting for him. Watching him. I'll get better at this. The first time, for anything, was the hardest. He turned on his side, drawing his knees up against his chest. Closing his eyes, so he wouldn't have to see. Anything but what the other had brought home and bestowed upon him. On his tear-wet cheek, he felt fire, heat through the window's glass. The last of the drone plane fell from the sky and rolled its black smoke and insect swarm of sparks along the building's flank. From the Paperback edition. Revue de presse "Jeter is an exhilarating writer who always seems to have another rabbit to pull out of his hat....[He] accomplishes his goal of updating the genre, and he does so with commendable energy and imagination."--The New York Times Book "A master of dark visions, Jeter delivers his most...ambitious book to date....an SF equivalent, perhaps, of The Name of the Rose."--Publishers Weekly "Impressive."--Locus From the Paperback edition.