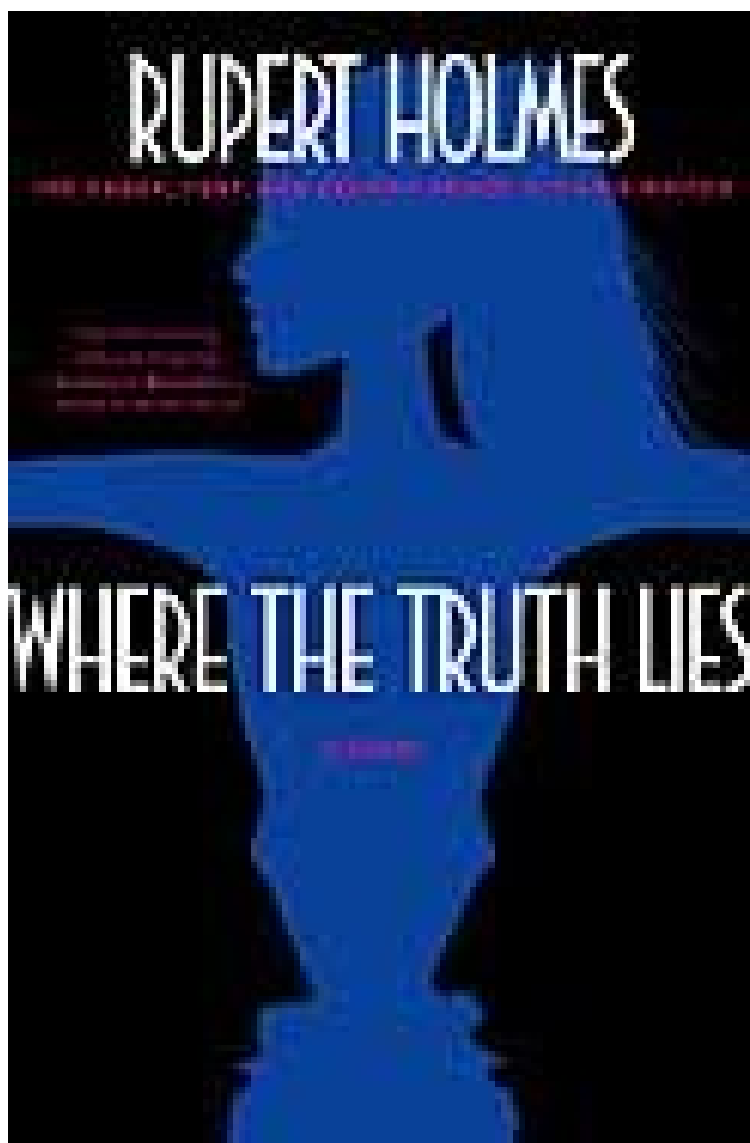


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Where the Truth Lies: A Novel



Par Rupert Holmes
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWhere the Truth Lies is a tour de force of sinister mystery, sly comedy, grand cuisine, and incredible sexa sensual, sardonic, neo-Dickensian thriller in which a latter-day Alice careens through the seductive Wonderland of New York and Los Angeles in the dark heart of the 1970s.This novel of intrigue speeds from one vivid setting to another, all of them factually real even as they are fantastically surreal: a clandestine club in Disneyland with a dazzlingly well stocked bar; a dizzying Shangri-La of a castle hidden away in Burbank; a drive-in movie theater nestled below the most chic streets of midtown Manhattan; an elegant table for four perched thirty thousand feet above the earth. Written by Edgar, Tony, and Grammy Award winner Rupert Holmes (who first came to public attention in the mid-seventies as a singer and writer of story songs), Where the Truth Lies will wine and dine you in wickedly whimsical company, all the while

luring you into a labyrinth of ever-sharpening bends and darkening corners. The tale is told by O'Connor, a vivacious, free-spirited young journalist known for her penetrating celebrity interviews and bent on unearthing secrets long ago buried by the handsome showbiz team of singer Vince Collins and comic Lanny Morris. These two highly desirable men, once inseparable (and insatiable where women were concerned), were driven apart by a bizarre and unexplained death that may have cast one of them as a murderer. As the tart-tongued, eye-catching O'Connor ventures deeper into this unsolved mystery, she finds herself compromisingly coiled around both men, knowing more about them than they realize and less than she might like, but increasingly fearful that she now knows far too much. At once funny, frightening, delightful, and disturbing as it restores the opulent Hollywood and Manhattan of the seventies to their garish glory, *Where the Truth Lies* drops its veils like a giddy and voluptuous Salome who knows not what reward or punishment awaits her when she is at last naked. It is the work of a master storyteller and wit at the very top of his form. From the Hardcover edition. Extrait

AUTHORS NOTE As a twenty-six-year-old woman, I had an undepleted girlish energy that allowed me the capability of living a life and writing about it at the same time. Astounding. Thus a majority of what follows was scrawled by this scrivener as it occurred in the 1970s, often within hours of the events described, the alphabetic characters and my own character being formed in the same moment and the same manner: recklessly, hastily, often indecipherably. However, I eventually came to realize that I could not publish any of what I'd written until at least one person who figures in this narrative had died. (It's nice to have something to look forward to, don't you think?) It was not, in fact, until this year that these pages could be printed, along with certain other writings that bear closely upon a story I've wished to tell for so very long. I must admit I'm somewhat alarmed by the naiveté I display in some of these pages, as well as the chauvinism of not only others but myself. Things were simply very different then. I will also confess outright that I have occasionally touched up what I wrote (though perhaps you will think I have not touched up enough). Having admitted this, let me rush to add that most of what follows is actually worded as I first inscribed it, with only some proper names and present tenses changed. My *Prose Nouveau* (being of a vintage frequently purple, with a tart finish) remains largely as it was, to my immense mortification and, hopefully, your mild amusement. The writings of Lanny Morris and related material derived from my conversations with Vince Collins are reproduced here by express agreement and may not be used without written permission. K. O'Connor

Kiawah Island, S.C. CHAPTER ONE In the seventies, I had three unrelated lunches with three different men, each of whom might have done A Terrible Thing. The nature of their varying things ranged from obscene to unspeakable to unutterable, and you will surely understand if, as a writer, I was rather hoping that each had. (Done their particular Terrible Thing.) In the case of my lunch with the first man, I knew by the time he rested his gold *Carte Blanche* card upon the meals sizable check that my hopes were abundantly justified. In the case of the second lunch, even while a busboy filled our water tumblers, I realized that my dining companion was as innocent (and inevitably tedious) as a playful pup. But neither of these men need concern us here. As for Man the Third (whom you shall meet in but a few paragraphs), I left our first repast feeling much the way I feel after a dinner of chirashi and green tea . . . full but starving. To paraphrase Mark Twain regarding a literary puzzle, it seemed my studies had already thrown considerable darkness on the subject, and if my research continued, I would soon know nothing about the matter at all. He had agreed to meet me for lunch at the restaurant of his choosing, *Le Carillon*, which is gone now but which was, for that particular month of the mid-seventies, the restaurant of choice for the Hollywood community. Lots of brass, both hanging on the walls and seated at the tables, was the look of the period. Heaps and heaps of flowers everywhere. I was greeted (if a full military dress inspection can be called a greeting) by a searingly stunning young girl who had almost as many inches on me as I had years on her. This is my way of saying that I was a jaded twenty-six when all this took place, and if you picture me at all, you might picture me five-five in height and fairly trim from a steady diet of Tab, menthol Virginia Slims, and encroaching deadlines for slick publications. I apparently was also fairly cute, or so lots of married men had taken the time to tell me. I gave the hostess my name and she went searching for it in her reservation book, almost certainly the only book she had ever read through to the very end. O'Connor, O'Connor, she murmured, pleased to have learned a new word. I'm meeting with Mr. Collins, I added. The Gossamer Girl (not just her hair even her exposed navel was somehow gossamer) nodded in recognition and said, Oh yes, he's just finishing his first lunch. She indicated the restaurant's small bar. If you'll take a seat, Miss O'Connor the use of Ms. was still quite new at the time, and she buzzed charmingly on the letter s I'll let you know when he's ready. So it seemed I was taking a seat at the bar, which was tended by another fair Ophelia, who was just as uselessly lovely as the hostess. She stood on endless legs capped by a

blank, beautiful face with the big, empty eyes of a murder victim. Ophie (as I'd now named her) asked me, with the delivery of an actress trying to give importance to a perfunctory part, what I'd like to drink. Dry vermouth on the rocks, twist. Noilly Prat if you have it, I pronounced perfectly. This was my good-behavior drink. Vermouth on the rocks at lunch was the seventies equivalent of mineral water. We all drank at lunch in the seventies. How any competent work was done after three in the afternoon during that decade is, for me, as mysterious a question as the one I had for Mr. Collins, upon whose pleasure I was waiting. There was a brass-framed mirror behind the bar, hung on the bottle-green velvet wall between an ornamental brass coal scuttle and an ornamental brass footbath. In the mirror, I could see the back of Vince Collins's head. He was seated with a female who was dressed in a women's business outfit of the time: pin-striped jacket, vest, extremely tight skirt riding high on her thighs. I couldn't see Vince's face, but the female alternated between an earnest "Does what I'm saying make any sense?" expression and an occasional giddy laugh, apparently more at something he had said than at something she had said. I couldn't hear his voice as more than a low, burry murmur. My vermouth was set before me by the Oph. I had the thought that when Vince finally allowed me to sit at the grown-ups table, I would not want to be making my business pitch while contending with food that required advanced cutlery skills. I had once tried to promote a series of essays on high infidelity to an editor at *Viva Magazine* while simultaneously attempting to disassemble the near covey of quails that littered my plate. Never again. We were now, in the seventies, well into the Age of Egg-Based Skillet Cuisine, and I wondered if a ratatouille crepe or Gruyere omelette was on the bill of fare. I certainly wasn't going to order anything that couldn't be cut with the side of my fork. Might I see a menu? I asked of the Oph. Oh, don't worry, they'll be giving you one when you sit down at your table, she reassured me in her most affable Braniff Airlines stewardess manner and moved to the other end of the bar. In the mirror, Vince's table companion laughed again, displaying several sets of teeth. Vince laughed as well, low and lovely, as one might expect from a pop recording artist who'd been heavily influenced by Crosby and Como. In a magnificent manifestation of the Totally Disproportionate Reaction, I was now beginning to feel . . . rejected. Yes. Hurt, jilted by this man who had never met me. My ears were roaring with embarrassment and jealousy. His pin-striped lady friend in the mirror had become the embodiment of girls I'd loathed in high school: hurtful girls whose names I'd long ago forgotten, Janet Maitlin, Ann Rakowsky, Lisa Robb, Sarah Connelly, and Barbara Tozer. The goblet of vermouth before me was the humiliating punch bowl of the Sadie Hawkins dance where Kevin McMahon had arrived with me but danced the evening thereafter with another. And Vince: Mr. Collins is ready for you to join him at his new table, said my perishable hostess. I got down from my seat at the bar feeling, yes, a bit absurd about my wounded heart. My left eye saw Vince's dining companion departing the restaurant. She had stopped to laugh with a table of men. One slid his hand onto her pin-striped rear end. She laughed at this as if her left buttock were the Algonquin Round Table and his flattened palm George S. Kaufman. The hostess led me like a sedated calf to a spanking-brand-new table where Vince was waiting upon my arrival. The restaurant's lead busboy rushed around Vince, transferring his half-finished bourbon on the rocks and chaser from his prior table to our new table, wiping the glasses clean of condensation as he set them down. Sorry to keep you waiting, said Vince in an absurdly familiar baritone. People think to themselves all sorts of things that would be embarrassing or humiliating if heard aloud, and thank God, they rarely voice them. As a writer, however, I've always felt it's precisely my job to voice exactly such things and for you to enjoy hearing them and for me simply not to mind my embarrassment and humiliation . . . as a diabetic doesn't mind a hypodermic injection, as a boxer doesn't mind a sharp blow to the head. This is nothing more than the shamanlike obligation clearly stated in the job description when I first applied to the Famous Writers School for Famous Writing. So I will voice that, in the moment when I first met Vince Collins, my rush of thoughts ran: My God he is truly gorgeous (gorgeous not being a word I can recall ever using previously), He's a little shorter than I thought he'd be, That cashmere turtleneck and camel's hair jacket must have cost a fortune, and I wonder if he's circumcised. Please understand I was not thinking this last thought because there was anything visibly bulging in the vicinity of his crotch. I just had this premonition that I would have a definitive answer before I was done with him, or he with me. It was, however, a very nicely trousered crotch. Not at all, I said, which was a bit of a mismatch to his Sorry to keep you waiting. I sat, but as I attempted to segue into the clever opening I'd formulated over the course of several days and practiced to a state of careless perfection, Gossamer Girl intruded herself, bearing my half-finished vermouth from the bar. As she set the goblet down before me, its oversized straw fell out of the glass and onto the carpet. Oh, your straw, she said, as if I were the one who'd dropped it. Reflexively, I reached to pick it up, but she corrected me. Don't do that, she said. We have more. She gave a

look at the busboy, pointing at the straw so that he and everyone else in the restaurant would see it. I looked back at Vince. My lemon wedge was sitting stupidly in the middle of my glass before me and I was sitting stupidly in the middle of my chair behind me. There we all were: my chair, my lemon, my straw, my self.

I've never been here before, I said unfathomably. Have you had something to eat? he asked. Oh sure, while cooling my heels at the bar I consumed a bowl of lobster bisque, Chateaubriand for two, potatoes lyonnaise, petit pois with pearl onions, scarfed up a half carafe of pallid claret, and concluded with a large Dairy Queen dipped in rainbow sprinkles. You made a lunch appointment with me, I've been seated at your table all of forty seconds, and you want to know if I've eaten. Of course I haven't eaten. Of course I didn't say this. I opted instead for a chipper No, but actually I had a late breakfast. I'm not really very hungry. A waiter appeared.

Vince looked at him and said, Nope. The waiter understood and turned to me. Vince counseled, If you're hungry, the soft-shell crabs here are out of this world. Soft-shell crabs it is, I intoned smoothly with a small-mouthed smile, handing the waiter my menu while suppressing a tidal wave of absolute panic. I've avoided soft-shell crabs my entire life. I'm not comfortable with any mode of consuming them. I've actually seen people hold them in both hands, biting away at an entire dead animal as if it were a foul gray sandwich. I hate soft-shell crabs. Good choice, nodded Vince. Yum, I concurred. He took a small pull at his bourbon on the rocks. I could detect its aroma from across the table, caramel and chocolate and grown-up. Vince was a grown-up. A lot of guys my age sported hair twice the length of mine, wore chokers of faux jade and faux teak, and favored bracelets carved from rhinoceros bone. Vince wore a watch. A thick, heavy, expensive watch. If he were ever kidnapped, he could turn that watch over to his captors and walk free, and they'd probably give him twenty dollars for cab fare home.

From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* "Where the Truth Lies is a beguiling suspense novel. It's sexy and surprising, witty and intriguing. I was hooked from the very first page." CANDACE BUSHNELL, author of *Sex in the City* and *Four Blondes* A big, juicy book with pungent dialogue, vivid descriptions, [and] outsized characters . . . Its not surprise that when Holmes wrote a mystery it would prove so entertaining. . . . Where the Truth Lies is a labor of love. Every scrap of lawyerese or Mafia-speak, every tidbit of Hollywood lore, every scene of mental or physical intoxication, every tightening of suspense is beautifully rendered, polished to a sheen. Holmes seduces us. Los Angeles Times Book Holmes, who has won honors galore for his inventive storytelling on Broadway, [delivers] a giddy fun-house ride through bygone eras. The New York Times Book [A] tour de force . . . Pulitzers . . . do not commonly go to mysteries. But for Holmes to win his third Edgar for first mystery novel that would not be out of the question. Chicago Sun-Times Delectable . . . a wonderfully witty first novel . . . It'll keep you tossing and turning pages all night long! Newsweek Holmes is . . . one of those gifted people who seem able to do anything they want with the English language. So its no surprise that [his] mystery . . . would prove so entertaining. Every tightening of the suspense . . . is beautifully rendered, polished to a sheen. Los Angeles

Times Book Engrossing from start to finish. Entertainment Weekly Giddily sordid, ridiculously pleasurable. The Onion Entertaining . . . Fictional characters collide with real showbiz people as Holmes deftly re-creates the smoky, seductive mood of the disco decade. His breezy, witty prose perfectly captures an era when style meant more than substance, airlines served gourmet in-flight meals, and charity telethons were the only reality shows on TV. Atlanta Journal-Constitution Highly recommended . . . Notable for its wit, snappy dialog, and uncanny sense of Hollywood glitz, backstage politics, and dirty deeds . . . [A] cant-miss

novel. Library Journal (starred review) Deliciously entertaining . . . Holmes sustains intrigue until the denouement. New York Daily News Exceedingly clever . . . A slick, often sophisticated piece of popular fiction. The Washington Post A hilarious send-up of the entertainment industry. USA Today Days after you finish this book, you'll still feel the narrators voice elbowing through your brain. Fully realized characters, ruthless commentary, and a beautifully dark sense of humor all masquerading as a hyper-clever mystery. You won't look at the truth the same way again. BRAD MELTZER, author of *The Millionaires* [Holmes] is a gifted plotter . . . The story line is refreshing. People Literate, witty, and atmospheric . . . What will probably knock [readers] out is the dead-on way Holmes captures the comedy teams speech cadences and sybaritic habits, making what is known of Martin and Lewis wild celebrity ride a compelling backdrop for villainy. Booklist (boxed and starred review) A taut thriller . . . Swiftly paced . . . [Where the Truth Lies] builds in intensity and in plot development right to the final twists. Houston Chronicle Rupert Holmes seats you gently next to an irresistible narrator only to entangle you completely in her twisted, dark, exhilarating troubles. The ensuing thriller crosses a Dickensian world of deceit and destiny with the slipping glory of 1970s New York and Los

Angeles. Every character is so alive with delicious secrets that you'll never suspect Where the Truth Lies. MATTHEW PEARL, author of *The Dante Club* Five pages into Rupert Holmes's Where the Truth Lies,

I was intrigued. Twenty pages in, I was laughing. A hundred pages in, my wife told me to turn off the damned light already and come to bed. This is a book astonishing not only for its intricate plot and rich characters but for the ways in which it finds humor in the darkest of places. ERIC GARCIA, author of *Anonymous Rex* and *Matchstick Men* Splashy and amusing . . . [A] sickly funny showbiz romp with lots of great scenery. Kirkus's (starred review) Hugely entertaining . . . Witty, sexy and suspenseful . . . Holmes has a wonderful feeling for period detail. . . . A glittering ride. Publishers Weekly A sexy, intriguing story. Hartford Courant Rupert Holmes is a genius. JASON ALEXANDER