

Book Review: Paper Cut  
By Rachel Taff

Thanks to NetGalley and Kasey Feather at William Morrow Books for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "Paper Cut" is scheduled for release on January 27, 2026.

"Paper Cut" is a dark and deeply disturbing novel. Dark because of its subject matter: a cult and its members. Disturbing because of how many people still fall victim to the brainwashing tactics these groups employ.

The story opens in Los Angeles in 2022. Lucy Golden is a celebrity because she killed a man while escaping from a cult at age 16 nearly twenty years ago. Her book, *Rattlesnake*, details her coming under the influence of, and escaping from, a cult called The Oasis located in the desert. But fame is fleeting. When a successful documentary filmmaker offers to make her the subject of his next film, she sees it as a way to rekindle herself as a true-crime icon while publishing an anniversary edition of the book.

But jumping down that rabbit hole brings back memories and raises questions about a time Lucy would love to forget. Did events unfold exactly as told in her book? She battles through that journey attempting to fend off an online stalker while simultaneously moderating a long-standing feud between her acclaimed photographer mother, Diana, and her successful but scandalous rock star sister, Odette.

The narrative alternates between present day as Lucy undertakes filming the documentary, and excerpts from her book *Rattlesnake*, the latter providing solid backstory for the events that occurred twenty years ago. The pacing begins a bit on the slow side, but by midway through picks up speed that's maintained.

Neither Lucy nor her mother are likeable characters, but that's probably Taff's intention. They're extremely flawed, self-centered (especially the mother) people who are easy to root *against* rather than be supportive of. But what else would you expect from emotionally compromised individuals; exactly the type attracted to join a cult.

There are no major reveals that can't be figured out in advance. But they're still unsettling because of how twisted the people are that dominate these cults. Rational minds are not present.

I hesitate to use the word *enjoyed* to describe my experience reading "Paper Cut" because the subject matter is so jarring. But it is well written. And unless you're turned off by this type of dark and gritty novel, it's certainly worth the time.

Four stars for this debut novel from Rachel Taff.