



The Last Track

Sam Hilliard

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Mike Brody, the man you want when the one you love is missing.

After an asthmatic boy witnesses a murder and goes missing in the Montana wilderness, police turn to Mike Brody, a former Special Forces operative and master tracker with psychic abilities. But as Mike and a local officer follow their elusive quarry deeper into the woods, the killer begins a hunt of his own...

Some say his gift is supernatural, others consider it a curse. To Mike Brody, it's a penance.

From the back cover:

“A good mix of mystery and adventure, The Last Track will appeal to any thriller reader. A good yarn, not to be missed . . . highly entertaining and extremely difficult to put down.”

~John A. Dunay, Police Lieutenant (Ret. ‘06)

~Police Advisor to Department of Justice, Dinwanyah and Kurdistan, Iraq ‘08

“The Last Track, by Sam Hilliard, is full of mystery and suspense to intrigue the mind. The story captures the thrill of the chase and the fear of the unknown. What kept my interest was the struggle for that we desire most in the form of love, success, money, and complete control. This book will keep your reading lamp on in the wee hours of the night!” ~Spc Amanda Daigle, Jan-Dec 09, Kirkuk, Iraq.

~Purple Heart, Feb 09

“The Last Track is one of the best thrillers our book club has ever read. Chock full of unexpected twists and turns, this well-crafted mystery kept us guessing up until the very last page. A natural storyteller, Hilliard knows how to build suspense and create compelling characters. We can’t wait to go on another adventure with Mike Brody!” ~Revolution Reading Club

The Last Track Details

Date : Published (first published 2010)

ISBN :

Author : Sam Hilliard

Format : Kindle Edition 291 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Fantasy, Paranormal, Mystery Thriller

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From Reader Review The Last Track for online ebook

Avid Mystery says

Based on a couple of strong reviews here, I gave The Last Track a chance, and I'm glad I did. Hilliard is new on the mystery/thriller scene but he writes like a well-practiced pro. The plot has enough twists and turns to keep you guessing right to the end.

His characters, including Mike Brody, are believable and well thought out. In fact, Hilliard gives you just enough background to suck you in, but not quite enough to completely slack your thirst for Brody. (NOTE: I am a major Robert Parker fan and love Spenser.) This book demands a sequel.

The dialogue throughout keeps the story moving and the "24" style time breaks that the author used in place of chapter breaks adds to the suspense. This is made for book groups (I'm recommending it to mine), plane trips, beach reading, or anytime you just want to curl up with a great read

Elizabeth A. says

Mike Brody has led an adventurous life. Formerly a special forces operative, upon leaving the military he worked as a smoke jumper - a firefighter who parachutes into remote areas to fight wildfires - until a catastrophic knee injury forced him to give up the job. Now working as a guide for extreme adventure tours, Brody is trying to take a break from his hectic life by traveling with his son and ex-wife for a relaxing vacation at a dude ranch in Montana. Fortunately for the reader, it's not in the cards for Brody to lead a life of relaxation.

Shortly after their arrival Brody is contacted by the local sheriff and enlisted in the search for a boy who's gone missing in the forest surrounding the ranch. It turns out Brody has a special talent for tracking people, and a few high profile cases have made him the "go to" guy for law enforcement when all else fails. Complicating matters in the current situation is that the boy didn't just wander off, but is actively on the run because he witnessed a murder.

Before Brody knows it he's deep in the wilderness searching for the boy, saddled with a deputy he's not sure he trusts, and receiving threatening phone calls from a mysterious figure called "The Partner" who says they'll harm Brody's family unless he tips The Partner to the boy's location once he finds him... before he tells the police. It all makes for a thrilling, multilayered plot that will have you turning pages late into the night.

Debut author Sam Hilliard has created an immensely likable reluctant hero in Mike Brody, and he's only scratched the surface of the character's potential. Though we know Brody's ability to track people borders on the supernatural, how he first discovered his talent and the inner demons that compel him to answer every request for help are only hinted at. Given the undoubtedly rich backstory available for Hilliard to mine, it's exciting to know that a second book featuring Brody is already in the works. It's clear that both Sam Hilliard and Mike Brody have very bright futures ahead of them.

Kristina says

This one was different and interesting! I normally don't give my own summary of a book in my reviews, but I feel like I just want to explain this one a little.

Basically, Mike Brody (an ex super guy) goes on vacation and gets snared into a search for a missing boy. What Mike doesn't know is that he just stepped into a huge pile of trouble by agreeing to help.

Now, I liked Mike, although flawed like everyone else, he has a good heart and wants to help others. He was a really likable character in my opinion.

The story itself was also very good. I'll admit that it took me a little bit to understand the full depth of the situation and how things were connected, but once I got into it, things started to fall together for me. The story picked up a quick, almost urgent pace as you waited to find out what would happen. The plot was great, and the scheming and conniving characters kept the story going in unexpected directions.

I was kept guessing throughout this whole novel on who was really the good/bad guy. Appearances are deceiving! The end of this one came together nicely. I was satisfied that this story was closed out, while leaving room for future books. (which I must say I would like to read)

Susan Pettrone says

As a starter novel, Sam Hillard has a fantastic beginning in the first of (what I hope) will be a series of books about Mike Brody, a tracker who uses somewhat unconventional methods to track missing people.

Mike Brody is somewhat apprehensively looking forward to a vacation on a dude ranch with his ex-wife and son Andy, setting aside (hopefully) their disagreements for the sake of their son. But nothing turns out as well as we wish it would on a vacation and Mike is no different than the rest of us. He is soon sought out by Lizbeth McCarthy, detective who knows Mike's tracking past and wants him to put his talents to work to find an asthmatic boy who somehow disappeared in the woods around their dude ranch.

During The Last Track, we see Mike with a variety of people, all so different in personalities and lifestyles that quite frankly are as mysterious as they are fascinating, it is hard for the reader to say "I know who dunnit" until the very last bit of the novel. For me, an avid suspense reader, this is what makes Sam's book a hit! There is nothing quite so annoying as figuring out the storyline during the first few chapters yet feeling you must finish the book to make sure.

To be sure, Sam doesn't fully explain all the characters but in the first book of a series that is to be expected as I am sure many of these self same characters will appear again and again, revealing bits about themselves

as they evolve within Sam's book.

Sam, throughout the book, does not want to talk about his "gift" which to some may seem supernatural but to this reader, I see it as a gift given to help him to go to the aid of others when they need it more quickly than in perhaps the use of more traditional methods of tracking. I find this aspect of Mike to be appealing and endearing while I also see an inner strength in him through his gift. Though he seems like a regular guy, nothing about Mike's past is ordinary. Mike is also an ex-Special Forces operative, a smoke jumper, and at this time, an extreme adventure tour guide, so fear is not in his vocabulary. But because he is such a private person he keeps his gift of having an extra ordinary ability to "feel and see" the memories and emotional state of those he is pursuing.

But a teen from a nearby campsite is missing and Mike has been asked to help find Sean who has inexplicably disappeared without a trace. Here is where the reader must place himself/herself in the shoes of Sean's parents. Suddenly they discover their son is missing. The last time they saw him, he was safely near their campsite and was happy. Then mere hours later, without a trace he was gone. Add to that the fear that Sean's asthma requires him to take medication on a regular basis and you have a suspenseful book with a clock you can almost hear in the background. It is a matter of life or death for Sean when it comes to his asthma and running through the trees, does nothing but worsen this problem for Sean.

But Sean must run. He saw something transpire that he knows if he is caught by the wrong person or persons, he is as good as dead, so despite his weariness and declining health, Sean runs on from an unseen pursuer bent on finding him before Mike does. His love of running and stamina is of utmost importance as the reader finds out soon that Sean is capable of pushing himself far beyond what his limits should be. As Mike works in the woods, behind the scenes is his ex-wife, who just happens to be a well-connected journalist who has endless contacts of which she uses to unravel the truth behind the murder. Undoggedly Jessica digs and digs until the ace reporter in her shines and she finds the information through a maze of leads and contacts, that searchers and Mike so desperately need.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to any and all who love suspense novels with a bit of the unusual and a lot of tension combined. Author Sam Hilliard has done all that and more and in my honest opinion, has a firm start to what could be an exciting series starring Mike Brody ahead!

Donna says

Suspense and Intrigue

Suspense and intrigue fill this action packed story. A family vacation at a rugged dude ranch bring Mike Brody and his family into the middle of a murder and a missing boy. Can Mike and ex-wife Jessica, along with son Andy survive the intrigue when local law enforcement ask for Mike's help? A real page turning mystery.

Ivy M says

I got this as a Goodreads giveaway book. I had not heard of this author before so was not sure what to expect. I found that the plot moved along with lots of twists and turns, just fast enough to keep me wanting to know what was going to happen next. I fell asleep last night with the book in my hands because I couldn't put it down. The main characters were well described and had just enough back ground to give you an idea of how they fit together. I will have to check out the next book in this series to see what kind of trouble Mike Brody will get into next.

Deborah says

Wednesday, March 30, 2011 "The Last Track" ~ New Suspense Author: Sam Hilliard!

About the Author: Sam lives outside of NYC with his girlfriend and an army of four cats--one feline under the legal limit. Working at an all-girls boarding school, he knows world-class drama firsthand. It's also the reason he studies Krav Maga and Tai Chi.

Book Summary from Cover:

Mike Brody--the man you want, when the one you love is missing.

More than just a master tracker, Mike is a former Special Forces operative, smoke jumper, and now extreme adventure tour guide who can tap into the memory and emotional state of those he pursues.

In *The Last Track*, Mike is recruited to find an asthmatic boy lost in the dense woods surrounding a dude ranch in Montana. An unwitting murder witness, the boy burrows ever deeper into the rugged terrain, fearful of being found by the killer.

While Mike tracks the boy, his ex-wife, a journalist, uses her contacts to unravel the truth behind the murder. Her discoveries threaten to snare them all in a treacherous conspiracy...

My Review:

Sam Hilliard needs to quit his day job and write full time. He's a born writer of the first caliber. "Get out of prep school," as my preppie, grown children say, Sam, and go for your true profession. You have what it takes.

In "The Last Track," Mr. Hilliard introduces us to a cast of unforgettable characters. If he isn't writing a series of books about his main character, Mike Brody, the infamous tracker in question, I'm liable to send out a posse to track him!

With all the panache of a seasoned, gripping suspense writer, new author Sam Hilliard scores a direct hit with this book. Character development and His creation of an environment for them is at it's height. I actually saw myself there and felt the angst.

His tracker, Mike Brody, is a complex, infinitely intriguing man displaying a keen ability to track the lost in wilderness situations. He also is an apparent student of how to handle people, include those in positions of authority. His military background lends itself to his tracker abilities.

Using a sort of sixth sense that guides him, comes from an unknown source, and that he keeps close to the vest, Mike Brody is a quietly capable, and virtually unknown man. Personally, I loved this twist on an otherwise familiar protagonist. One not necessarily psychic, but just the right amount of odd. We never quite get a bead on this ability and I'm thinking that leads to another book.

Much could be said about the insights we gain into advanced computer espionage, wilderness survival and law enforcement cooperation, but these things play in accompaniment to the human story of the lost boy and Mike's connection to his family. His spicey ex-wife is an asset to Mike and the story overall. This balance of story lines renders a wealth of knowledge that keeps the entire piece flowing. "The Last Track" is a page-

turner.

Self discovery, coming of age, awareness of womens' issues, and loyalty are themes, as well, in this book. It is a mark of excellence that Sam Hilliard manages to get so much value into his novel without spoiling it. What an accomplishment, particularly for a first time writer.

If I were to give a black-eyed critique of the book, I would say this one thing: it starts off too slowly to capture the average reader. Having said that, I can only encourage readers to persevere. Believe me when I say that this book is worth the effort.

Given Sam's astuteness and his obvious writing skills, we can only believe there are more Mike Brody tracker books in the future. He's left too many unanswered mysteries. We are left begging for more explanations. This is one of the great things about this book.

Who amongst us doesn't love anticipation?

Recommended for all lovers of mystery and suspense novels. For all who love Jeffrey Deaver, James Patterson, Patricia Cornwell and Michael Connelly. Yes, Sam Hilliard is that good!

Deborah/TheBookishDame

Darcia Helle says

Mike Brody has a knack for tracking the lost. In *The Last Track*, Brody gets tangled with murder and unknown enemies, as he races against time and nature to save a missing boy. The characters are well-developed and Brody is a likable and imperfect hero. This story has a good pace and will keep you guessing right up to the twist at the end.

Jim Kratzok says

Nicely done!

Plots within plots within plots. You never know who you can trust. Although I admit to not trusting certain key characters in this story from the get-go and being right about it. I guess my Spidey-Sense was tingling just right.

This was a well crafted story with more twists than a bowl of spaghetti. As it happens, I love spaghetti so this was a good thing. I think the character, Mike Brody, has got a few miles left in him. Will he get back with Jessica, his sort-of ex-wife? I guess we'll find out in the sequel. I'd like to know more about his tracking skills and the back-story behind them.

Margaret Schaller says

Good Read

I enjoyed this book very much. I was astonished at the end and that is unusual. Consequently, a fun read.

Cyndy Otty says

Mike Brody, the expert tracker, is enlisted to search for a missing teenage murder witness lost in the woods of Montana. Aside from his vast skill set, Brody also possesses a unique ability to see beyond physical evidence left behind from those he's searching for. But those responsible for the murder counter his actions at every end, threatening the safety of his loved ones while an asthmatic boy's life lies in the balance,

From the very start *The Last Track* captivates with a frenetic pace, keeping the reader engaged in a series of suspenseful events. The story itself spans across four days and rather than use traditional chapters, the author chronicles each section by the incremental passage of time much like an episode of *24*. As time itself is the enemy, every moment proves important and each event becomes crucial in some manner. It's a different and unique approach and serves to push the suspense aspect of the mystery as the reader is often even more aware of the passage of time than the characters. Hilliard's true skill is definitely in the details because even though quite a lot happens in a very short amount of time, none of it feels rushed or forced thanks to a stunning narrative that is easy to follow and richly descriptive.

By extension the characters are easy to empathize with, appearing as three-dimensional and wholly realized entities. As the main protagonist, Brody is primarily focused on and much is learned throughout the novel of him, in particular his specific motivations for the life he has chosen. Hilliard vividly explores the sacrifices Brody has made and how these choices have impacted his family. A good portion of the novel is also given to fleshing out the villains and weaving an intricate network of nefarious subplots. In fact, there is so much going on at once that keeping track of it all can be a might confusing. Daunting as the vast amount of information dispensed can be, though, it isn't so severe as to alienate. Rather the numerous details themselves are the major draw into this story.

Often the downfall of a mystery is the simplicity with which it is built, making a story so predictable that it's hardly worth the effort of reading. But *The Last Track* manages to keep the reader guessing right up until the very last page by constantly presenting evidence against one person and simultaneously providing clear proof towards others. I won't spoil the mystery by admitting whether my initial suspect was the Big Bad or not because either way the ending was a delightful surprise; one that most certainly lends itself to a sequel.

[Originally posted at my website.]

Elynn says

This is a great read with a surprise ending which will make you question many of the scenes throughout the book and see them from a completely different angle after finishing it. In the interest of full disclosure, I have to admit that I designed the cover and read the manuscript at an early stage before editing, SO, I am sure that the book is even better now than when I read it.

Mike Brody is a very believable character even though he has the ability to sense people and places when he places his hand in the tracks of a person who is missing. All the characters are described in a way which will really let you imagine what they look like, who they are, and how they might behave in a variety of

situations. You feel that you get to know them and that they come alive. The story is so gripping in several places that you will not be able to put it down until the scenes are finished.

This is a great book to read on your vacation at the beach this coming summer! Or anywhere else for that matter. And I hope that there will be a Mike Brody Book #2 down the line!

Enjoy!

Jim says

Good read, page turner. Highly recommend and easy read.

Martin Pingree says

This was a page turner for me. Very good read. Great storyline and intriguing characters. Worth the time for sure.

K.C. Sprayberry says

Mike Brody has an uncanny ability to track lost individuals through the images left behind by their emotional charges. He's also a man with a past, as are most of us, but his drives him to find those he seeks no matter what the cost to him. His current, Sean Jackson, tests Mike's limits, but Mike never gives up.

Sam Hilliard's mystery is one of the best I've read recently. Each paragraph, each sentence is crafted in such a way to not only reveal information, but also to entice the reader to keep going, to make more discoveries, to follow through to the end, no matter how it ends. Hilliard's flawed hero, Mike Brody, appeals to everyone, to their sense of justice, to their realization they're only human, but they will hang in there until the very end. Rarely have I read a mystery with such a depth of characterization, nor have I found many who can match Hilliard for his enviable skills. I'd definitely recommend this book for everyone.
