



Then You Were Gone

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In the tradition of *13 Reasons Why*, a suspenseful and heart-wrenching novel from the author of *Nothing Like You* and *Her and Me and You*.

Two years ago, Adrienne's best friend walked out of her life. One week ago, she left Adrienne a desperate, muffled voicemail. Adrienne never called back.

Now Dakota is missing. She left behind a string of broken hearts, a flurry of rumors, and a suicide note.

Adrienne can't stop obsessing over what might have happened if she'd answered Dakota's call. And she's increasingly convinced that Dakota must still be alive.

Maybe finding and saving Dakota is the only way Adrienne can save herself.

Or maybe it's too late for them both.

Then You Were Gone Details

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From Reader Review Then You Were Gone for online ebook

Michelle (Pink Polka Dot Books) says

Adrienne hasn't talked to Dakota in 2 years. That's how long it's been since Dakota walked away from their friendship without so much as a glance back. Sure Adrienne has moved on, she has a new BFF, a boyfriend. But there's always been a part of her that has hung on to Dakota. Dakota has turned into a rockstar. The girl everyone wants to be and nobody really knows.

Then one day Adrienne gets a mysterious voicemail from her old friend... and when Dakota turns up missing, Adrienne feels a crushing guilt for not answering the phone when her ex-friend may have needed her most. A suicide note is found and everyone is acting as if Dakota must be dead... but that is too much for Adrienne to take. Soon she finds herself caught up in an investigation to find out what happened to her ex-bestie. So what really happened to Dakota Webb?? Is she dead? Run away? And can Julian (Dakota's boyfriend) help Adrienne figure it out, or does he know more than he's letting on?

My Thoughts:

This is not my first book by this author. I read *Nothing Like You* last year and really liked it, so I knew I wanted to try more books by Lauren Strasnick. The thing I love about this author is that her main characters are NOT perfect. Sometimes you literally want to smack the girl. But at the same time they are like real freaking people. Because in real life people don't act the way you want them to. They don't make all the same choices you would've made. Heck who knows what choices you would make unless you're in that moment anyway right?? The other thing about both these books is that the author is not afraid of teen sexuality. And I love that sex is a big issue in this book, but at the same time it's not like preachy or lesson-ey... it's just what these characters do. Right, wrong, whatever.

So in this book you have Adrienne, who I'm not going to lie, got on my nerves a lot. It's like once she found out her friend that she doesn't even talk to anymore is missing, she starts wanting to be her. Honestly I felt sad and embarrassed for her. I wanted to shake her and be like "quit being a god-damned poser, and just be yourself!!!". I felt bad for her friend Kate and especially her boyfriend Lee. Man she was harsh to him!! But I get it. I SO get it. I've been there.... there's this really nice guy and he's being so good to you, and all you can do is shit all over him. Because you can, because he's there, because what you really need isn't some guy catering to you. It doesn't make sense, but I so know what this is like.

What I love about this author's writing is I swear she's the queen of short, amazing chapters. I've never read books with so many 1 or 2 page chapters and felt like they were the perfect length. This author doesn't waste scenes. The characters are somewhere, the point is made... and then 2 pages later they are somewhere completely different on a different day. It just works. And it adds to the over addictiveness of her books.

This is not going to be a book that everyone will like. I think you have to identify with or relate to something going on in the book to be able to like it. For me I totally know what it's like to be in a friendship where one person is dominant over the other one. I had a friend like that once. She was rich and cool and had more experience with guys than I did. She got mad easily, and I became a weaker person because I didn't want her to get mad and leave me. It sounds dumb... but we had a lot of fun together and I didn't want to lose that even though the friendship probably wasn't the healthiest. And that's sort of how Adrienne and Dakota were, so I was feeling it.

I could have lived without Adrienne leaving all her sentences off in the middle though. For instance here is a

typical dialogue for Adrienne: "I told you I-" "I should...." "I just- I think-"

The ending... well I don't want to give anything away, but it was just meh for me. I wanted a bigger thing and I didn't really understand what all went down.

OVERALL: YES to more Lauren Strasnick!! Her books aren't for everybody, but they're for me. This book is about mystery and friendship- good and bad.

My Blog:

Kelly says

Adrienne and Dakota stopped being friends two years ago, but it's Adrienne who receives a mysterious call for help from Dakota before she goes missing. Before she's presumed dead. Before she's presumed dead because she killed herself. There's no body found, but Dakota's reckless rockstar lifestyle is all the clue anyone needs to draw that conclusion.

It's then Adrienne sinks into deep grief over the loss. Is it her fault since she didn't answer the voice mail for days? Why does she miss Dakota so much when they hadn't even been friends? The further she sinks, the more she moves away from best friend Kate and devoted boyfriend Lee. She finds herself instead drawn to Julian -- the last guy Dakota was with -- and together, Julian and Adrienne are all the wrong things to one another.

Strasnick's book is an excellent exploration of the lines between grief and intimacy. The sharp, fast-paced writing keeps the mystery of Dakota's disappearance propelling forward, but she offers equally sharp sensual scenes between Adrienne and Lee to slow the momentum down to where it needs to be in order to offer up real insight into who these characters are. Because the thing is, none of the characters in this book are exactly who they appear to be. Adrienne may not be a saint, and Dakota, for all she seems to be, may be but a hollow shell of that.

(view spoiler)

Though a small detail, I loved how this featured a blended, non-traditional family, with a live-in boyfriend of Adrienne's mother, Sam. And he's not just there, but he's THERE -- he and Adrienne have a great relationship, and it's through something small he tells her that Adrienne puts together the pieces of what happened to Dakota. Or rather, who happened to Dakota.

My one disappointment with the story came when (view spoiler)

This book reminded me a lot of *Like Mandarin*, and I think readers who liked that book will dig this. But it is also a deep grief book, and there were certain moments that reminded me of a number of contemporary grief-themed titles. Strasnick's style works for me as a reader, with so much left unsaid or understated and yet, there is so much to be teased out of the story and the characters.

Full review here: <http://www.stackedbooks.org/2013/01/t...>

Angela says

Actual rating: 2.5 stars

I didn't know what to expect when I went into this, but it's wasn't this. Maybe something darker?

Then You Were Gone is a very fast paced book, and incredibly short. I read this in one sitting and in not even two hours.

None of the characters were developed very well, but this is a very short book so I guess that's why. I didn't like Adrienne because she was focused on all the wrong things. Her relationships were weird, if you can even call it a relationship. Lee was an okay character, and I felt sort of bad for him. But gosh, he sure moves on fast. And Julian wasn't much of a character. I can't say I see the purpose of his being there.

I had a huge problem with the story. Dakota's missing, and possibly dead, yet it's more focused on Adrienne and her relationships. I thought this was going to be about how Dakota's suicide note and her call affects Adrienne, and about grief and coping or whatnot. But that's not at all what this book is about. And that ending! What was up with that? (view spoiler)

The writing wasn't anything to admire. The sentences were choppy and short. A lot were only a few words long and were very weird to read. "I [verb]. He [verb]." The writing was very simple and this felt like it was written for a young audience.

Oh, and Nick Murphy is so messed up. (view spoiler)

Overall, this is a book with a bad plot, bad writing, and bad characters. I am not going to re-read this again, and I wouldn't recommend it.

Ari says

The story could have been interesting but I couldn't get past the writing style. It felt like a movie script with commentaries and it played in my mind like some movie flashbacks: short phrases, pretty easy to read but pretty easy to lose interest in as well.

Not much character development - maybe because it was quite short, maybe because of the way it was written. Didn't care much about the characters, didn't relate to the girl's grief at all and I really wanted to punch Dakota in the face. I didn't get the connection with Julian either but I support Lee in his decision to take a break, a final one, because it was obvious that Adrienne didn't give a damn about him anyways (not like he was a perfect boyfriend, because I didn't even like him - too shallow, too egocentric, didn't impress me at all)

I assume many people might like this one, unfortunately it was not really for me.
Have fun reading guys, maybe you'll have better luck than I did ;)

Michelle says

Then You Were Gone is a quick read. Literally. I read it in about two hours, one sitting. Which sadly, has become more of a sign that a book didn't hit the mark with me than I was just so into the story that I couldn't stop reading. And that's just it. The story was quick and then it was over and I felt no differently about it at the start as I did at the end. For me, that's all there was: quickness--well-paced scenes that eventually led to a rather generic conclusion. For such a strong premise, the book lacked any real depth that made me invested in the characters' lives and the story being told.

The only "showing" scene we see between Adrienne and Dakota is a single flashback that is extended each time we read it. As that's the case, it's hard--right out of the gate--to be emotionally invested in the fact that the two of them abruptly ended their friendship two years ago and now Dakota's disappearance is revealed as a suicide. I wanted to care, or even understand Adrienne's confusion/distance/pain/attitude about Dakota's disappearance/death, but I couldn't. Because we never really see their friendship. So just like her best friend, Kate, and boyfriend, Lee, couldn't understand why Adrienne was letting a girl who ditched her as a friend two years ago come back and muck up her life, neither could I. We're more like Kate and Lee in the story than Adrienne. We don't know much about the relationship Adrienne and Dakota had, we don't really get why she's so attached to it, and as a result, I couldn't get invested in the overall plot--which was, Adrienne coping with Dakota being gone and obsessing over what really happened to her.

The plot tends to lose itself, though. It isn't hard to follow, but it becomes a little convoluted. The over-arching story is, as I said, Adrienne wanting to know the truth about Dakota's disappearance/death. But there's also the story of how Dakota affects Adrienne, and likewise, her relationships with her friends and boyfriend, who never knew Dakota, and aren't sure how to help Adrienne cope as a result. We see Adrienne's relationships slowly fall apart as she loses herself in Dakota's story, and for a while, it seemed the main focus of the plot would shift to one of Adrienne having to learn to move on and save herself, even if it meant letting the truth about Dakota go. Then, there was the cryptic friendship between Dakota and Adrienne, whose fallout we never get a clear explanation of, (view spoiler) and I thought maybe the end point would be Adrienne finding closure and an understanding of why they parted as friends, and then move on. Also, we see a budding mutual understanding/relationship develop between Adrienne and Julian, one of Dakota's bandmates, who she connects with because he, unlike her own friends, knew Dakota and gets what Adrienne is dealing with, so then I thought maybe the focus would be on them figuring out the truth together, which it mainly was.

But then there was also some of the standard melodramatic, predictable intensity that these types of contemporary stories stray into from time to time...and it fell flat. The truth of Dakota's disappearance seemed really out of nowhere to me, especially since there are no hints of it, and we don't see Dakota's character enough to understand the underlying motivations. We, also, don't really see enough of the other character involved in her disappearance to get a strong reaction, either. My reaction was purely indifference, and I couldn't help but have expected and wanted more out of the entire book. More depth, more characterization, more of something stand out.

I will say that Lauren Strasnick has an interesting writing style, very sparse with a lot of loose sentences and short, punchy fragments. It worked especially well for this story since that's kind of how Adrienne's thoughts become--just little fragments she can't really process deeply or reflect on for long. I'd argue, though, that it makes it hard to learn about these characters and truly see them, which is something I didn't care for, but at

the same time, it suited Adrienne's character, who begins pushing away her friends and loved ones because she's so caught up in everything with Dakota that she's not really seeing anything else that's happening around her. It was a little jarring, because I'm used to more description and more reflection in the books I read, but I do feel that the style fit the narrator and the story, and it was one of the things I enjoyed about the story. Even if I didn't care for the book, Strasnick wrote it well, and I can appreciate it that.

Kelsey says

This is my second book by Lauren Strasnick, the first being *Nothing Like You*. Each of these books deals with heavy subject matter and Strasnick is a very strong contemporary writer. All of her characters feel extremely real and her writing is fantastic. I was immediately drawn into *Then You Were Gone* and I was completely engrossed in Adrienne's story. Adrienne is such a complex character and she had a lot on her plate. I'm sure people will find a way to relate to at least one character in this book and even though this was just over 200 pages, we got to see them each develop in various ways.

Then You Were Gone was a quick read, not only because of the low page count and short chapters, but because of the fast-paced plot. Adrienne's childhood friend went missing after leaving her a voicemail, and Adrienne is left trying to piece together what happened to Dakota. Adrienne learns a lot not only about Dakota, but about herself, as well. Adrienne doesn't always make the best decisions, but she is very determined and independent throughout the book.

Every chapter left me wanting to read more because Adrienne was discovering something new or figuring out a new clue about what Dakota's life was really like. Strasnick tackled a variety of issues in *Then You Were Gone* and she seems to truly understand teenagers. Strasnick did not try and make Adrienne something that she wasn't and it made her a very believable and realistic character.

I liked the mystery angle of *Then You Were Gone*, but I felt like everything was leading up to a big revelation which never happened. Things felt a bit abrupt and I was hoping for something more. Still, everything was wrapped up and there were no loose ends.

All in all, *Then You Were Gone* was an intriguing third novel by Lauren Strasnick. While the ending left me a little disappointed, I liked the grittiness of the novel and how developed the characters were. If you're a fan of darker contemporary reads, I definitely recommend this one and I am eager to see what Strasnick writes next.

Overall: 3.5 out of 5 stars

Jasprit says

“Either way she did this. She chose this. There’s nothing you need to sort out. Finding her, jamming all these jagged, arbitrary puzzle pieces into place, won’t get you any closer to understanding why she shit all over you and your friendship”

Adrienne and Dakota have been best friends forever, they were inseparable until little cracks started to

develop and then one day Dakota and Adrienne just stopped talking. The sweet innocent Dakota that Adrienne knew abruptly changed into some dark edgy person that Adrienne didn't know anymore. They went two whole years without talking until Adrienne receives a random voice message from Dakota out of the blue, asking her to call back. Adrienne thinks nothing of it and so leaves it until Dakota's announced missing a few days later. Adrienne's happy with her current life she has a boyfriend who loves her and a best friend in Kate who she can confide in at anytime. So she's not expecting to find herself caught up in the middle of the investigation with the guilt of not calling Dakota back clawing away at her.

The changes of Adrienne's character over the course of this story were heart wrenching to watch. The happy girl who had fun with her friends; was a dedicated student all disappear in the blink of an eye. A lot of her friends didn't know she was so close to Dakota and so don't expect any of her behaviour. Or they don't understand how she could be affected so much by the disappearance of a girl who she hadn't spoken to in two years.

But the more Adrienne's behaviour changes, she starts turning up drunk to dinners, is dressing in more darker clothes with dark make-up, isn't making the effort in her school work and becoming more withdrawn. The more concerned her boyfriend and friends become. But Adrienne can't do anything about it, she finds herself spending more time with Dakota's on/off boyfriend Julian smoking and following a dark and dangerous path, but she can't stop until she uncovers the truth.

I hated watching Adrienne come apart when she had friends who truly cared about her and when were given flashes of her friendship with Dakota in the past it had me thinking what did Dakota ever do for Adrienne? Dakota didn't deserve this time and frantic energy that Adrienne spent worrying away over her. What I enjoyed the most with this book was the mystery part of it, of slowly unravelling the clues along the way and discovering the secrets into Dakota's character. I'm glad that Adrienne did have Julian there as a form of support as they went into their journey about Dakota, a person who they both thought they knew. Because with the shocks and twists that were thrown their way I'm glad they weren't alone in their road to discovery.

Then You Were Gone was book I picked up spur of the moment, but I'm so glad that I did as it resonated with me days afterwards. Then You Were Gone is a dark, gritty novel chock full with surprises that I highly recommend giving it a try.

Isamlq says

The girl's life is shaken up by a certain someone's absence. It shakes up all aspects of the lead's life, touching a little on BFF who read smart and funny and not at all lacking in personality... as well as affecting the romance she was having with a boyfriend who in turn read like a puppy too loyal for its own good. Or maybe that's Adrienne? Puppy dog loyal even when she's aware of how and who Dakota was/is/could be?

It's Adrienne's eventual frank recognition of where she'd fallen short as well as her (not so easy) acceptance of the consequences of those things that mark her truly different. In this lead is no 'woe is me/pity me' lead rather she knows what's up and deals... except her manner of dealing has her behaving bat shit crazy. It's the *why* (or more apt, the *who*) behind this that confused me (just as it confused boy-lead) the most.

It's Dakota. She's different and with this ineffable quality drawing others in. There's this odd fascination people have for her... that in her eyes borders on pathetic because while they're watching/wanting her, she knows it but doesn't care. For her they're malleable boys? Funnily enough there's truth there, even when it's

hurtful. Hurtful truths, that's what this girl embodies. And for some reason, I feel there could have been more to her (for all the characters in fact.)

The writing in this one, of Adrienne's voice specifically, is different and at times even disconcerting. She's in your face and factual about the day to day of her life; there's a presentation of teen girl's life of hooking up and getting smashed, hanging out and being an ass) peppered with said teen girl's confused/confusing thoughts. I thought it all different as it's not filled with bubble gum-pop niceties (though there are those, too.)

So her voice was interesting a bit confusing but definitely different EXCEPT I do feel TYWG could have been more emotionally intense. The turn out is almost a let down the way it stands. Would it have been more interesting to let things continue on with the idea of the other being gone? I think so. Why? It's the in-between Adrienne's finding out then later knowing the facts where a lot of the ~~crazy~~ true emotion happened. There she was: reacting and slowly driving herself (and all others) bat shit crazy. And I loved it... because I saw her becoming this person she didn't like.

Instead of that, here there's a return to the before. And I'm stuck wondering if a 'return to the before' was really possible with everything else that had happened. More than the neat pairing offs, I'd have preferred more emotional confrontation and recognition that you so and so behaved the way they did because... because of ... something more. And see, this is my problem: for such an confusing emotion heavy progression in the story, that ending felt way too neat; it's the ending that's almost too happy (save the lack of consequence for key people, of course.)

3/5

Debbie Narh says

Although my hopes were high for this novel and I was very disappointed, I think that it might be able to touch someone's heart. But it could also annoy the crap out of them just like it did me. Then You Were Gone is told from the perspective of Adrienne, a girl who seems to be freaking out over the disappearance of her ex-best friend. Everyone around her has told her again and again to forget about her, yet she can't.

At first, I really liked the writing style. Very short chapters, and short sentences too. But after awhile I realized that there isn't much description of things and that the writing just jumps from one thing to another with no smooth transitioning. Which also explains the characters.

The characters in the story are all very annoying and shallow. I understand that Dakota is supposed to be mysterious and that everyone hates her but secretly envy her but I would have enjoyed a lot more information about her. The only flashback or memory told in the story is from a few years ago when they were pretty good friends. That's it. What annoys me even more is that this same memory is repeated throughout the book but with a little more information every time. There isn't much (if any at all) backgrounds or personalities for the characters which left me frustrated. Because of this, it was very hard for me to get through much reading because Adrienne didn't pull anything out of me. All she seems to do is complain, whine, or piss off the people who care about her.

Another thing that bothered me is that the book is rushed a lot. Don't get me wrong, I love a book that's fast paced and full of emotions but this is not the case. It jumps from two girls who don't talk any more to one of

them gone and the other going berserk like her life depends on finding her. It doesn't fit, it's too confusing and too odd.

There are quite a few relationships in this book and one of them is the relationship with Lee. At first, it's cute and all, the right amount of affection in the writing to keep it interesting. But after a few chapters, everything just changes and leaves behind a big mess of things. It's all disorganized and odd, Adrienne doesn't seem to do anything while Lee doesn't either. They're written like stick figures trying to go together which left me kind of annoyed. I was looking for a relationship that went with the story, not something that leaves it in a mess. To be honest, I wouldn't recommend this story to anyone just because I couldn't even finish it. But if you're up for it, give it a try.

Michelle Wrona says

3.5 star rating

FRIENDSHIP IS PRECIOUS. I guess in more than a thousand ways, that's the main message of this book. And that tears me up, mainly because we don't get a lot of books that revolve around the importance and beauty of friendship. WHY DON'T WE, HUH, HUH? I really don't know, and the fact that I don't know makes me even sadder because the world of books is a mystery and we actually don't know anything about what this book is about.

But what I can tell you is that this is a crazy mystery that will leave your head spinning. I honestly didn't even have a close feeling to what was going to happen next. The author added over 20 plot twists and 'suspense moments' where I was unable to put the book down and let what else was going to happen **stop from happening**. That's a definite good sign, people. I recommend reading this because it gave me such an enjoyment and I loved almost everything about it.

It's true. The story began when Adrienne met Dakota. They were inseparable for ages, until they freakishly torn apart and didn't talk again for more ages. They were two completely different people, almost nothing alike. And of course at the same time, they both had shocking secrets that they didn't dare to tell one another. Who's secrets hurt and ruined the most was Dakota's, and now she's missing, all because Adrienne didn't pick up a phone call from her ex-best friend. Adrienne has never cared as much before, and she's on the lookout to find out what really happened and where the girl who changed everything is.

But who can blame Adrienne? She hasn't spoken to this "freak" for years, and suddenly she calls her and tells her she needs her when it's all her fault for letting the friendship go to the roots? Those thoughts were circling my head until I found out the truth, and then I understood why Adrienne was why. I'd be a wreck if you put me in their situation.

Now you see, the real magic of these kinds of books is that you tend to imagine yourself in the protagonist's situation over and over again. At least, that's me. The concept of this book was gorgeous and simple at the

same time. In the end, all of the questions were answered but I was a little bit upset with the way everything turned out. I wish I got more of a surprise and something heart-stopping. It was just a loaf of bread and butter. *Where was the jam and honey?*

As I began reading, I was taken away into this world very quickly, and I left quickly as well because this was such a quick read. A quick mystery, as well. But as you'll figure out the ending, you'll find yourself surprised because this turned out to be a total contemporary with some drama mixed in. The positive here was that it was **all fast-paced**.

That was Adrienne for you. At first, she didn't care at all. But as the mystery evolved and the police began to question her and ask her about the events prior to her disappearance, I guess you can say we all saw Adrienne going into the situation because she felt like she had to. She was a selfish person at times, and tended to do whatever it takes to prove herself right. She blocked out her romantic relationship when her boyfriend really loved her, and her friendships with others as well. All on her mind was Dakota, and that was pretty awesome if you ask me.

The contemporary was there, but the mystery really wasn't. I wish that I could completely demolish the ending and make it my own. But other than that, the rest of the novel was promising and pleasing. I'll be sure to be looking for more by Lauren Strasnick in the future!

This review can also be found on A Thousand Lives Lived, check it out for more reviews!

Nicole says

As seen on The Quiet Concert

DISCLAIMER: I understand that authors write these conflicted novels for one reason or another but there should be some clear cause and effect to explain why a teen could stumble down a dark path. Without that clarity, the book loses its purpose.

Adrienne and Dakota were "friends" growing up and by "friends" I mean Adrienne followed Dakota like a cowed puppy. She didn't make her own decisions and wasn't her own person. Even though Dakota was selfish and manipulative, Adrienne worshipped the ground she walked on. Then after Dakota breaks all ties on their "friendship" Adrienne still obsesses over her from a distance. I really couldn't understand this relationship, or Dakota's appeal. Yeah sure, we all have friends who may have the more dominant personality, or who we secretly envy a little for being skinnier, or prettier, or whatever, but a true friendship implies trust and caring and some level of equality. But Dakota selfish and controlling. How did Adrienne fall in love with her? The whole dynamic seemed extremely unhealthy and unjustified.

When Dakota disappears, Adrienne falls apart and destroys what semblance of a life she has made for herself since she broke up with Dakota. Adrienne is convinced that Dakota wouldn't kill herself despite the suicide note and washed up boat. But this isn't a mystery novel. Instead, its 200+ pages of Adrienne treating her self, her boyfriend and friends like shit before she stumbles across the truth of what happened. It was so frustrating to read through. She makes bad decision after bad decision like the entire reason for her existence was Dakota. She stopped going to school. She started smoking. She dressed and acted different. She even

slept with her boyfriend just to distract herself.

I didn't understand her reaction at all. I would understand sadness and I would understand a desire to know what happened for closure. But that didn't seem to be what compelled Adrienne. It was more like she still felt rejected over being dumped 2 years ago, and not having Dakota to fixate over anymore. Again, I couldn't understand why Adrienne became so unstable, even with the information we get at the end of the novel. Maybe if I did, I wouldn't be so harsh on this book, but I probably still wouldn't like it.

To top it all off. The writing and dialogue was choppy and unnatural. People do not speak every sentence in three words or less. It drove me crazy. I don't know if the author was going for an informal style but whatever it was meant to be, i didn't like it.

I hate to say it, but I can't recommend this novel. As I reflected back on this read I had to reduce my initial 2 star rating to 1 star. I just didn't like it and I was confused the entire time. This novel is neither suspenseful nor heart-wrenching. Rather, it represents poor decision making and unhealthy behaviors. If you would like to form your own opinion, at least I can say that this book is a very quick read.

Jacquelyn says

[the entire mystery and the finding of Dakota all happened so fast and I felt as if there was no build up whatsoever. (hide spoiler)]

Renaë says

The thing when writing a book that deals with serious issues is that, well, you have to deal with the issue well. It's important to be respectful of the issue, to portray it accurately, to not rely on stereotypes or weak devices. *Then You Were Gone* is not a respectful book; Lauren Strasnick does not deal well with the issues she chose to write about. Beneath a tired, overdone concept, this book trivializes suicide and makes rape look like a joke. This book is insensitive and thoughtless. It gives awful people a happy end and makes the rape victim look like a whore who deserved what she got.

I can't even believe someone actually sat down and wrote this book.

We open *Then You Were Gone* with Adrienne. She has just found out that her former friend, Dakota, has gone missing. Her life then implodes, for reasons that I couldn't understand. When Adrienne and Dakota were friends, things weren't good; it was an extremely unhealthy relationship. Dakota led and Adrienne followed, blindly, without question. She was not her own person in any way, and it's very clear that ending the relationship was in Adrienne's best interest. In the present, Adrienne has healthy friendships, a good boyfriend, and is doing well in school. So why does she self-destruct when she finds out that Dakota is missing? The reader doesn't know, because Strasnick doesn't make this clear.

The majority of the book features Adrienne acting like a spoiled brat, which she definitely is. She resides in a well-to-do section of L.A. and is basically a privileged white kid who's every wish has been granted by a doting mother. Throughout *Then You Were Gone*, Adrienne treats her good friends like crap, cheats on her genuinely nice boyfriend just because he doesn't understand her self-centered angst with a "bad boy" who

does understand. It didn't even feel like Adrienne's freak-out was because of Dakota disappearing; it was entirely self-indulgent, like a little kid's temper tantrum when she doesn't get her way.

Finally, we learn what really happened to Dakota (hint: it wasn't suicide), and that's basically where an already awful book became downright abysmal.

Turns out, Dakota faked her suicide and ran away because she was pregnant. With her English teacher's kid. So Dakota is a rape victim and she needs help and compassion. Does she get that? No, of course not. Strasnick portrays Dakota as a "crazy bitch" who's overdramatic and selfish. Adrienne and her Bad Boy make fun of Dakota for being a "slut who bangs her teachers". Are you kidding?

In what world is the victim of rape a slut? IN. WHAT. WORLD. Dakota was a child who had sex with an adult. And maybe she thought she wanted it at some point, but she was a child, and she was the victim. Dakota was a victim. What she needs from Adrienne is compassion; what she needs is professional help. She doesn't need judgment or her peers calling her a crazy, slutty bitch. *Then You Were Gone* portrays the rape victim as the VILLAIN. There is no world where that is acceptable or conscionable.

At no point does Dakota's English teacher, the freaking rapist have to answer for his actions. He walks away completely free. Once she finds out about Dakota, Adrienne goes to this teacher and blackmails him, saying she'll keep quiet if he gives her an A in his class. Again, are you kidding me? Strasnick's so-called "heroine" places her GPA over the safety and well-being of others. Because guess what, that rapist will probably go after another student. And by using Dakota's rape to work to her advantage rather than turning the rapist in like any sane person would, Adrienne gave him the opportunity to keep on raping students.

This sickens me.

What Lauren Strasnick did with this book is disgusting. Her protagonist is a self-centered, slut-shaming idiot who gets a happy ending with her dream boy. The rape victim is a crazy whore who got what she deserved. What the hell was this author thinking? *Then You Were Gone* is a terrible, nauseating, horrifying book. If you need evidence that rape culture is a problem in our society, here's all the proof you need.

There are no words for how angry I am.

WJ says

This book was actually a really short read and nothing at all like how I imagined it would've been. The premise was intriguing and it seemed to be a realistic portrayal of how friendships can break down, how opportunities missed can lead to regret. Unfortunately the book didn't live up to my expectations of it and had quite a few messed up messages interwoven into it...

First of all, the self-destructive tendencies about Adrienne. She doesn't seem like a person who likes herself very much, not with her obsession over Dakota and how to be more like her, how to look more like her. I didn't like the way she wrecked the relationship with Lee and she later downplayed it as being due to her grief about Dakota. I didn't really like how nothing much changed about this aspect of her personality throughout.

Furthermore Strasnick's characterization leaves a lot to be desired. After I finished the book I honestly

couldn't remember anyone's name because there were any distinctive characteristics about them. All of them, especially the protagonist, seemed to be cardboard cut-outs whose motivations were either unclear or ridiculous. (view spoiler)

The toxic friendship between Dakota and Adrienne was disturbing throughout. I'm not claiming that all female friendships have to be supportive and strong but that is one messed up relationship being presented here. It's abusive! Despite how badly she's been treated by Dakota, Strasnick writes as though Adrienne would've gone running back to Dakota if at any point Dakota gave her a little bit of attention. (view spoiler)

I think the part that really broke the camel's back was Dakota's relationships and how manipulative she is. (view spoiler)

I'm really rather letdown but this book. Strasnick needs to work on the messages that she would like to send to YA readers and create more captivating characters. Her publishers have done a great job with the blurb but she needs to live up to expectations.

Terra says

I swear to the heavens, I wish I could write as well as Lauren Strasnick. If you haven't ever read anything of hers, start doing so now.
