



Little Girl Gone

Gerry Schmitt

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In the first Afton Tangler thriller, the unforgiving cold of a Minnesota winter hides the truth behind an even more chilling crime...

On a frozen night in an affluent neighborhood of Minneapolis, a baby is abducted from her home after her teenage babysitter is violently assaulted. The parents are frantic, the police are baffled, and, with the perpetrator already in the wind, the trail is getting colder by the second.

As family liaison officer with the Minneapolis P.D., it's Afton Tangler's job to deal with the emotional aftermath of terrible crimes—but she's never faced a case quite as brutal as this. Each development is more heartbreaking than the last and the only lead is a collection of seemingly unrelated clues.

But, most disturbing of all, Afton begins to suspect that this case is not isolated. Whoever did this has taken babies before—and if Afton doesn't solve this crime soon, more children are sure to go missing . . .

Little Girl Gone Details

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From Reader Review Little Girl Gone for online ebook

Book of Secrets says

LITTLE GIRL GONE (not "Little Gone Girl," as I keep seeing it!) is a fantastic start to the *Afton Tangler* series. It's a different kind of mystery/thriller, as in it's more of a whydunit than a whodunit, which I liked very much. I loved Afton's character. She's a family liaison officer for the police department, though slowing working toward becoming a detective.

Afton is assigned to the case of a kidnapped baby girl as a social worker, but she ends up tagging along with a seasoned detective named Max to help solve the case. Afton is a tough, strong, and very brave woman, and I'd totally want her on my side if I was in trouble.

The story is told from different points of view, including the bad guys. It was quite interesting and disturbing to get inside their heads too. This was a suspenseful, exciting, page-turner for me. I stayed up until the wee hours fighting off sleep so I could find out how it ends. Nice combination of police procedural and suspense. Enjoyed it!

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Chelsea Humphrey says

This was one of those **edge of your seat-biting your nails-ripping your hair out-piling up snacks in your bed and strapping on a clean Depends because you simply can't risk having to take a potty break** kind of reads. Oh, do I have your attention now? Good. I'm quite confident this will be one of Berkley Publishing's top books in regards of sales and quality of writing for 2016. They timed its release perfectly as this is a fantastic summer read (but really anytime read). It's the beginning of an addictive new series starring Afton Tangler, a Community Liaison Officer with the Minnesota Police Department.

"Push through the pain, she told herself. They were words that were fast becoming her everyday mantra. A messy divorce had turned her into a single mom again, and her job as community liaison officer for the Minneapolis Police Department meant she had to deal with people in the messy, tragic aftermath of their worst day ever."

I haven't quite pegged her yet, as we are still getting to know each other, but she kept me on my toes throughout the entire book. Here is a character who emits strength-single, working mom, climbing dangerous, icy rock walls in her spare time and taking forensics classes in hopes of joining the force as an officer; however, many times throughout the book she was broken, weak, and felt as though she was failing at every step and questioning every moment of her investigation. This might be a turn off to some who enjoy reading only those "superwoman" type protagonists; I personally enjoyed the change of pace and seeing a character who could be strong and weak simultaneously. I think what made this work was the fact that, unlike most crime thriller stories with a female protagonist, she is not in a position of high authority. In fact, she's quite low on the totem pole of police politics.

Another aspect that made this a 5 star read was the setting. I have a soft spot for the Twin Cities as my husband was temporarily relocated to Minneapolis right after we were married and I was able to travel with

him. Since I was completing my college courses online, I was able to do my work and explore the surroundings while he was working, and it was magical. The people were so friendly, but the atmosphere was absolutely breathtaking. I'll never forget the beautiful homes, the lush, green parks (clearly we weren't there for winter), and the quaint home town restaurants; that experience allowed me to fully imagine this book as if I was in the picture. The author's descriptions were so on point, and she used her knowledge of the area to draw you in through the descriptions of the roads and the weather, especially when it came to the ice storms near the end.

The story itself was difficult to peg; it was full on police procedural but this was not really a mystery. Everyone knows that I prefer who-dun-its and figuring out the who, what, and why, but this is a story where you know the who and figure out the why fairly early on (not because of a poorly written mystery, but because this is as its intended). There were some unexpected twists (bless my soul!!!) and I have to admit I actually enjoyed this one and didn't regret that my detective skills weren't put to the test. There are some dark, disturbing concepts discussed per the investigation, and as a mother of a 3 year old and 1 year old, both little girls, I had to remind myself "this story is fiction, this story is fiction, this story is fiction", even though the scariest part is that it has a VERY realistic aspect to it. In terms of the continuing story/characters, I really love that we are given just enough about our main characters that we are sucked in and left wanting more. I honestly enjoyed the personal storyline of Afton and Max as much as the thrilling action scenes. There is no giant cliffhanger to make you want to slowly peel your fingernails back while waiting for the next book so THAT'S A RELIEF.

Its safe to say that I would highly recommend this one, but I'd go as far as saying this is a must read. Don't let the word "Girl" in the title fool you; this is nothing like the previous psychological thrillers you've read and grown tired of. I swore a few months ago that I would stop picking up books with that dreaded word "Girl" in them, as I was tired of the same old after the first few greats were done, but this isn't even in the same realm. This book is not about a missing, broken, unreliable narrator; its about a kidnapped baby girl and how far our justice system would go to bring her back. If this is on your TBR list- please move it promptly to the top and pick it up when you have hours to devote to it. You won't want to put it down!

*** I feel its necessary to note, without spoiling the read, that there are a few highly disturbing scenes with triggers involving small children. These are not sexually related and the babies are not physically/violently abused by the captors, but these scenes are crucial to the storyline.**

**** I'd like to thank Berkley Publishing for sending my a hardcover (how often does that happen?!) and being the coolest publisher on social media to date.**

Nancy says

4 star debut! Really enjoyed this one, already looking forward to and added Gerry Schmitt's next one (titled Shadow Girl, expected release August 2017) to my TBR list! Always fun to find a new author with a great first book to follow!

Chloe says

Little girl gone is not a thriller or a mystery but I would put it in a cozy genre. Afton is a Minneapolis family

liaison officer in charge of a baby kidnapping. Baby Elizabeth 3 months old has been kidnapped from her home in a rich neighborhood and her baby sitter attacked. The parents especially the mom Sarah is distraught over the kidnapping and though you know by whom the baby is kidnapped it's the way the the police come to the conclusion that makes up the story .The book is mostly about how the detectives find and investigate clues. Afton who wants to become a police officer tags along with Max, and tries to follow the clues. The reborn baby portion of this book though was totally creepy.

There are no sudden surprises or ending in this book .It was a quick cozy mystery and I would love to know more about the background of the characters .In all an interesting series to look forward to and I would give it 3 1/2 stars.

Denise says

The debut in a new series introduces Afton Tangler, a single mom of two girls, who works as a family liaison officer with the Minneapolis Police Department. Afton is out ice climbing in the frigid Minnesota winter when she gets a call about a kidnapped 3 month old baby girl. Little Elizabeth Ann Darden was taken from her crib at home while she was being watched by a sitter. The wealthy parents, Susan and Richard, are frantic as the local police, the FBI and other jurisdictions are called in on the case.

Afton becomes extremely involved in the actual investigation of the case, far beyond the scope of her liaison job. Although the reader knows who took the baby and has an idea of why, the crime investigators are without much to go on as they attempt to track down the abductor and rescue the baby. Yes, it's a bit farfetched -- the degree of civilian Afton's involvement partnering with a detective -- but it is a quick and entertaining read that has a lot of drama. The "bad guys" are nasty enough and Afton is clever and strong enough to provide a solid start to what will likely be a popular series. I enjoyed the details about the Twin Cities geography and the winter weather features strongly in the story.

I was turned down when I requested an ARC but the synopsis interested me enough that I obtained it elsewhere on my own.

Bent Hansen says

Gerry Schmitt has apparently written a truckload of books under the pseudonym of Laura Childs (none of which I have read), but Little Girl Gone is the first under her real name. However, it seems like it will not be the last as a series with Afton Tangler has been planned, which I welcome enthusiastically.

"Little Girl Gone" is an effective and entertaining representative of the crime/mystery/thriller genre. Afton Tangler is an interesting protagonist with flaws but also an iron will and a big heart - and Schmitt handles that balance quite well.

The shifting focus between the main characters - protagonists, villains and important supporting characters - adds a certain pace to the story which makes it a very easy read with the pages practically turning themselves.

I enjoyed this book immensely and fans of e.g. M.J. Arlidge, Sue Grafton and Elizabeth George will swallow this in one delicious bite. I will look impatiently forward to the future adventures of Afton Tangler.

[An advance reading copy of this book was generously provided by the *First to Read* program]

Debbie says

Okay this Afton chick is seriously is one Big Bad A\$\$\$. And this is one Big Bad A\$\$ debut. And if this is going to be a series, I am seriously sitting here raising my hand as high as I can, pick me! I want more!!

This chick isn't like all invincible or can do special fighting techniques or whatever, she's smart. She's really smart and I like that. She's doing the job that is like two or three pay scales above her without a whole of training. She makes for a great protagonist.

I think the suspects could use a little work, but the plot twists and everything else were excellent. It was fast paced, entertaining and I could not put it down.

I received this from Penguin Random House's First to Read program in exchange for an honest review.

Sheyla ✂ says

3.5

Someone has taken a 3-month baby girl from her home. Time is of the essence for detective Max Montgomery and family liaison Afton Tangler. They are part of the investigation in combination with the FBI. The parents are frantic and they want their daughter back. Of course, the husband is hiding something but he's not the only clue.

The day before the abduction, the mother had an interaction with a woman selling "reborn dolls". These dolls look almost human and they can be pricey too. Afton and Max figured out this woman is a person of interest in the investigation. Tying up all the clues takes time and dedication.

I liked Afton, she was smart, daring and determined. She was the mother of two, recently divorced and doing the best she could with her situation. She seemed to enjoy the investigation part of her job more than the liaison part. I'm not sure her behavior would have been accepted in real life. The Chief was easily persuaded into letting her help Max.

Little Girl Gone has multiple characters POVs. I believe it made the story much more realistic. I like the suspense and intrigue it carried, despite knowing who the culprits were from the very beginning. The whole idea of these reborn dolls gave me the creeps and I won't be buying one.

I'm happy this is turning into a series. I can see how much more potential Afton has in her.

Cliffhanger: No

3.5/5 Fangs

A complimentary copy was provided by the publisher via netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

MrsLeif's Two Fangs About It | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram

C.W. says

Full Video Review: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZUqd...>

Amy says

This year I am going to be tough with handing out the stars and this one doesn't make the cut. Let me say the book has got a great title, there's Girl there's Gone yeah predictably I am hooked. That's my fault and still I am warning you not to fall for it. The whole premise looks good on paper but when you are reading it's not that great. It has got plenty of unbelievable scenarios and I am not going to go into all of them but what's irritated me the most is that it's Alton who's solving the problem, connecting the dots, chasing the guys with a seasoned officer huffing and puffing on her heels. Even the FBI is no match for her prowess. Not to pull down a character that is trying to be portrayed as a strong character but it should have been more convincing than convenient.

The scary villains were cardboard pieces. Not brainy not a worthy opponent and the reader gets to know them from the first page. While it was interesting it soon became like a game where you are waiting for the detectives to catch up and finish up already.

I think the author was trying to build up a horrifying image with all the doll's and a witchy character who snatches babies, it should have worked but it didn't manage to be spooky. Maybe it can be tweaked to be converted into a show or a movie but it's not a thriller, not a mystery and not a horror.

Ok read.

Rana says

This is a very standard, cliched thriller. Which isn't bad necessarily. But it is bad when it's combined with stilted, awkward writing. The kind of writing that makes you speak the dialogue out loud because it just sounds so strange you have to confirm that yep, nobody fucking talks like that.

And I'm also kinda pissed and offended that this is written under the pseudonym of an author who writes something called Tea-Shop Mysteries. Like this book needed a more masculine name to be able to write a thriller? Or because those other fucking books are so terrible that the publisher needed to hide the connection?

But also, what the fuck kind of name is Afton Tangler? Stupid names are my biggest pet peeves and will yank me so hard out of a story. I might have accepted one or the other but not both. Just fucking name your character Elizabeth and move on. I read for the story not for the interesting name.

But PS: I might read another one in this series (if it ever even gets published because this one was such shit)

just because it's set here in Minnesota. So, I mean, yeah, I guess that this book was a success.

Jeanie says

A predator was out there, one who was bold and crazy enough to break into a private home and steal a baby. If Elizabeth Ann hadn't been safe in her crib, then no one's child was safe.

This was a little tense for me because just a few months ago, my first granddaughter was born. You remember the vulnerability of a baby and this tense thriller plays on it.

The first chapter begins with the depravity of predator. A doll maker of live looking babies, she sets her sights on a client that she has deemed unworthy and uppity. With the help of her son, she kidnaps baby Elizabeth while brutalizing the babysitter. Everyone's worst nightmare.

Afton Tangler an advocate for families that have been victims of crimes, starts out on the wrong foot of the victimized family. But with her good instincts, the Minneapolis police department assigns her a new task of uncovering who is behind the kidnapping and why.

The why is not clear in the beginning and I think that is what keeps you intrigued. I know my thoughts were all over the place. When it comes to babies and puppies, you have to be careful not to push your readers away, but to put them at the edge of their seat and go to the very end. I think that this read did that.

A Special Thank You to Berkley Publishing and Netgalley for the ARC and the opportunity to post an honest review.

LORI CASWELL says

Dollycas's Thoughts

Author Gerry Schmitt is also known as cozy mystery writer, Laura Childs. Warning – this is not a cozy mystery!

The story opens with Marjorie Sorenson at a doll show selling her “reborn dolls” (definitely not something I would buy). When Susan Darden shows her interest in the dolls she never could have imagined the terror that would follow.

Afton Tangler is a family liaison officer. She is assigned to a child abduction case, Susan and Richard Darden's case. It turns out to be a difficult case and she works very closely with Detective Max Montgomery and the FBI to find the baby and the kidnapper/s.

I was drawn into this book immediately. The story is told from multiple points of view and for me this made the story exciting and fast paced.

I liked our introduction to Afton. She is a divorced mom, raising her two daughters, who just happened to receive some impressive vehicles as part of her settlement. She is an intelligent woman with a stick to it

attitude. She and Detective Montgomery work so well together. Afton hopes to be a detective someday and working with Max may help speed up the process. I really enjoyed the way she investigated this case and followed the leads. Sometimes into very dangerous situations. The chief of police did give them a lot of leeway in this case leading me to think he knows more about Afton than we readers do at this point. I am anxious to see where these characters go in the future and excited to learn about their families and any past they may have.

The story does have a very creepy start and Marjorie is a really creepy person and so is her son. They really did make my skin crawl. After the first chapters it turns into more of a police procedural story but they are revisited throughout the whole book.

All of the characters are well written and realistic from the Dardens to their teenage babysitter and the other officers and agents. Even the over the top, pushy reporter, seemed just like a Fox broadcaster.

I loved that the story starts in Minnesota and that clues lead them to Wisconsin, and the way the law enforcement agencies worked together.

The author is off to a great start for this series. The main characters are engaging and the story was interesting with a edge of your seat ending. I am looking forward to book #2.

Maureen DeLuca says

This is the first book in the Afton Tangler series - and I really, really liked it! Afton Tangler is a family liaison officer for the police department, though slowly working toward becoming a detective. In this book, you have more of a 'why done it' rather than a 'who done it'

This story is about a child that was kidnapped from her home. We know who did it- so the story is now about how Afton Tangler and the FBI put clues together to try to find this little girl who was taken. Great all around characters- good ones and really creepy ones too!

It was a fast read- and a very good one at that! Highly recommended!

Lynn says

Would have given a 3.5 rating if possible.

I am not going into a synopsis of the plot as many other reviewers have done that. I will say instead what I liked and didn't care for in the book.

First, I know this is minor but the name of Afton Tangler sounded like a somewhat maniacal machine to me. Almost like it could be in a Stephen King novel. The fact that Afton became involved and rode along as a police officer when she was a family liaison person wouldn't happen in real life. Afton always knew more than the police officers and the FBI. The ending was unrealistic and would never happen like that. It is fiction I know but would like it to be somewhat believable.

What I did like quite a bit was the location. I lived in the area some years ago so knew the areas that were mentioned. The book did show probably more what police procedures are like. Many leads that the reader knew were false were checked up on by the police. The readers knew who the culprits were from the beginning of the book. Also, there were chapters showing the criminals POV so there was no doubt to the readers who it was. They were creepy villains.
