



Without Trace

Simon Booker

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For four long years, journalist Morgan Vine has campaigned for the release of her childhood sweetheart Danny Kilcannon - convicted, on dubious evidence, of murdering his 14 year-old stepdaughter.

When a key witness recants, Danny is released from prison. With nowhere else to go, he relies on single mum Morgan and her teenage daughter, Lissa.

But then Lissa goes missing.

With her own child now at risk, Morgan must re-think all she knows about her old flame - 'the one that got away'. As the media storm around the mysterious disappearance intensifies and shocking revelations emerge, she is forced to confront the ultimate question: who can we trust...?

Without Trace Details

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Author : Simon Booker

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From Reader Review Without Trace for online ebook

Pat says

WHO CAN YOU REALLY TRUST?

Morgan is convinced her childhood friend, Danny, is innocent of killing his 14 year old stepdaughter 4 years ago, despite his conviction for her murder. But when he is actually exonerated and released from prison things are not as rosy as she imagined and many people, including the police, are still convinced of his guilt.

Danny is evasive and there are trust issues on both sides. There are still question marks about his missing wife, and the witness who curiously recanted his statement of 4 years ago when he claimed to have seen Danny fleeing from the scene of the murder.

When Morgan's daughter, Lissa, goes missing however, she puts her faith more in the police than in Danny to find her. Events seem to be converging and Morgan has to decide who to trust. But has she made a terrible mistake? Morgan realises that childhood friends may be unrecognisable as the same people in adulthood.

I thought the book dragged a bit in the middle particularly where Morgan was trusting Danny then not trusting him, rinse and repeat a few times. I was going to take off a star but the book redeemed itself with a nice suspenseful and twisty ending.

Dane Cobain says

Disclaimer: While I aim to be unbiased, I received a copy of this for free to review.

Two things convinced me to read this book – the first was that the story line sounded interesting, and the second was that it's published by twenty7, who've sent me a few awesome books before. I'm pretty impressed by what's coming out from them, and I hope they send me some more.

Loosely speaking, the story follows what happens when a woman campaigns for the release of her childhood sweetheart, who's imprisoned for a murder that she believes he didn't commit. Eventually, he's released, but shortly afterwards, our protagonist's teenage daughter disappears.

This book is the first Morgan Vine thriller, a new series of books coming soon from Simon Booker. I enjoyed this one so much that I'm looking forward to reading the next one, and I hope that I get to read it. Whilst Booker does a great job of tying up all of the loose ends here, there's still plenty of room for new developments, and Morgan herself has a number of choices to make.

I just couldn't give this book anything lower than a nine – it's very well written and a lot of fun, full of plenty of twists and turns. It's also kind of a detective novel and kind of not, and I like the way that the author plays with genre. It's fun to see him flexing his authorial muscles, and if this first book is anything to go on then this is a series to keep an eye on.

It's also interesting to note that despite the length of this book, it's a lot of fun to read, and it never feels tedious – in fact, it forces you to keep on reading, because there's always something just waiting to happen.

The foreshadowing is great, the characterisation is good, and I'd be up for re-reading it again sometime in the future.

So there you have it – it's a strong start from Simon Booker, and definitely a book that I'd recommend if you're interested in thrillers, and crime. Another interesting thing to note about it is that it's contemporary, too – it refers to current popular culture, as well as technology and stuff in a way that feels refreshing. It's a nice surprise to be sent books like this. Big up twenty7 books!

Christine says

This book seriously messes with your head. Did he do it? Didn't he do it? Yes Danny must be guilty. Maybe he isn't! Simon Booker's Without Trace is the kind of book I adore. It sends your head in a spin!

We follow Morgan Vine, journalist, prison helper and mother to Lissa. Her long term friend and ex-boyfriend, Danny is accused of killing his teenage daughter and being responsible for the disappearance of his wife. Everyone believes Danny is guilty of murder. Morgan campaigns on his behalf and eventually Danny's sentence is quashed. On his release, Danny gets in touch with Morgan and Lissa. Soon Lissa vanishes and Morgan is bereft searching for her daughter. Where is Lissa? Why would she go missing? Morgan is forced to start questioning her faith in Danny. Did Danny kill his family? Are the public right to think Danny got away with murder? What really happened to his wife and daughter?

There is a delicious theme of trust throughout the book. Who can we trust in this day and age? We live in an age, where we don't trust politicians, estate agents, teachers and all the establishments we grew up with. We are sceptics. Booker exploits this facet of modern day living. Morgan Vine is brilliant. Initially she seems a bit too trusting. It makes sense thought, that she would trust a long term friend and believe the best of him. She learns over the course of the book to think about who she shares information with. She is left increasingly isolated. Who can Morgan turn to?

I had loads of fun reading this. Without Trace is an excellent thriller, with a bewitching lead in Morgan. It is full of enough twists and turns to send you doolally. I seriously could not work out what was going on and who to trust! Thankfully the ending tied up all the loose ends perfectly.

Recommended!

Kate~Bibliophile Book Club says

Review to follow!

Louise Wilson says

Morgan Vine, a journal has been campaigning for the release of her childhood for 4 years.

Danny Kilcannon was convicted of killing his 14 year old stepdaughter. After a key witness recants he is released from prison.

With no where to go he moves in with Morgan and her daughter Lisa. When Lisa goes missing Morgan has to rethink what she knows about Danny and when the media gets involved in the disappearance it intensifies and shocking revelations emerge.

Another brilliant debut crime novel that you won't want to put down.

I would like to thank Net Galley, Bonnier Publishing Twenty7 and the author Simon Booker for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Raven says

Without Trace is a humdinger of a thriller with more twists than a barrelful of adders. With summer holidays approaching and either being stuck in a caravan in rainy Rhyl, or on a flight to a more exotic beach vacation, this could be a perfect read...

Being practically impossible to review in terms of plot, due to the pitfall of numerous potential spoiler moments, I'll steer clear of the plot as much as possible, as I read this in a vacuum avoiding every other review of it. What I would say is that from the outset, Booker has tremendous fun with his readers, all believing ourselves to be pretty good amateur detectives, in a murderous tale packed full of red herrings and twists aplenty.

As our intrepid heroine Morgan Vine, a fairly normal divorced mother of one, expends her entire strength into clearing the name of her childhood sweetheart, Danny Kilcannon, having campaigned for his release from prison, she is increasingly drawn into personal danger when her daughter disappears. Some would say that her daughter, Lissa, is such a charmless little madam, that we shouldn't care too much about her fate, but Morgan is not to be thwarted. As her suspicions about Danny rise, and she gets drawn in deeper with two female detectives investigating Lissa's disappearance, Morgan finds herself increasingly isolated and at physical harm. Is Danny really as innocent as she believes him to be, and just where the jiggins has Lissa gone?

This is a good old page turner, using the pace and strategic reveals so beloved of American authors like Linwood Barclay and Harlan Coben, and so leads to a book that one finds quite difficult to put aside as the energy and pacing of the plot drives you onwards. The characterisation has just enough clarity and depth to keep you intrigued by their personal travails, and Danny's character in particular sways your empathy back and forth throughout. I will be honest and say that my incredulity was stretched as the end of the book approached, and the final denouement does take more than a bit of suspension of disbelief, as Morgan does suddenly morph into Lara Croft in a violent conclusion to the tale, but for all that, I quite enjoyed reading this entertaining thriller with its curve balls and false leads. Switch off, relax and enjoy the ride.

I still think the dead sheep was in on it though...

Breakaway Reviewers says

This leaves a very big trace!!

The first thing that attracted me to this book was the location. I used to visit Dungeness and Romney Marsh when I was a kid and I loved how bleak and desolate it appeared to be. The idea of living on the beach was so appealing that my parents had to drag me away sometimes. In later years I also had the amazing good fortune to visit a Martello Tower which is described here too. And the entire mood of those visits was captured here from someone, I suspect, who loves the place too. So from the start there was much to endear me to this novel.

But I'm not here to reminisce about my childhood haunts! For me this book was a slow burner, building up very nicely until I just couldn't put it down. There are so many red herrings you could open a stall at Billingsgate and I just never second guessed any of them!! Now that makes me mad!! Why? 'Cause I'm a smartass who likes to think they know their way around a crime novel! BUT it also makes me jump for joy because it means the writer has an imaginative brain and isn't afraid to use it!!

To a certain extent I would say some of this story is contrived but intelligently contrived so it didn't grate. It was a fine line between four and five stars and I deferred to four because of this and the slowish start. The tension was palpable. It was contemporary, well plotted and the main character, Morgan Vine was real, flawed and vulnerable as we all are, but tenacious too and all the more a heroine to me, because of it. The book gives us two stories, Morgan the adult now and Morgan as an adolescent. The two work well in tandem and fuel the psychological aspects of the tale and inform our perceptions and understanding of her current situation. All the ends are tied up and the two tales dovetail into a satisfactory conclusion.

This is a debut novel but a little research showed me that this author is an experienced writer and screen writer and this is evident in this first psychological thriller. I hope he decides that Ms. Vine is worth at least another outing although I'm not sure where he could take her. But I'll throw it down as a challenge, Mr. Booker. Please?

Whizz

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.

Monika Zbínová says

Už viackrát sa mi potvrdilo, že najlepšie knihy sú tie vydané potichu, bez veľkého kriku. Novinka Komu možno veriť môže pokojne konkurovať trhákom ako Dievča vo vlaku? i Stratené dievča. Únos dievča je otrepaná zápletka, no postava Dannyho miešala karty v odhadovaní toho, „kto je vrah“ až do úplného konca. Práve vo chvíli, keď všetky náznaky ukazovali na neho, stalo sa niečo, čo ma donútilo opäť pochybovať o jeho nevine. Neurotická matka, zvlášne odkazy, neistá spolupráca s políciou? i novinármi bažiacimi po senzáciách knihe súčasťne nepridávajú na originalite. Samotný štýl písania ma však natočko bavil, že som ju úplne hltala.

Celá recenzia tu: <http://www.monicqa.sk/knihy/simon-bo...>

Abbie says

Simon Booker's Without Trace had me hooked from the very first chapter.

Morgan Vine is a journalist who runs a reading group in the local prison, the prison in which her childhood sweetheart, Danny Kilcannon, is serving time for the death of his step-daughter, Zoe. His wife has also been missing since the death of Zoe. Four years into his sentence, he wins his appeal and is a free man. This is where the story starts and what a story it is!

Morgan hopes their relationship will be re-kindled, however following his release her daughter, Lissa, goes missing and this event puts doubt in Morgan's mind about Danny's innocence. Throughout the book I changed my mind constantly as to whether I thought Danny was innocent or guilty, whether or not he had done something to Lissa and whether or not I liked him. I also found myself at various points in the book doubting every character. If Danny is innocent then who is the guilty person?

I wondered how Morgan could be sure of Danny's innocence at the beginning, especially as she hadn't seen him for two decades prior to his conviction, however, we learn about her past through flashbacks to 1989 and it becomes clear why she views him through rose-tinted spectacles.

Morgan's life is pretty sad - her relationship with her daughter's father failed, she has no contact with her ailing father, her journalism career has failed, her daughter is a spoilt brat and yet she has the tenacity to find out the truth and follow every lead to find her daughter. I really travelled this journey with Morgan and Simon has done a great job in building her character and this is a huge strength in this book. I look forward to the next novel featuring her.

The suspense build up is second to none and I had to keep turning the pages and reading more to find out the truth. The sentence structure during tense times is cleverly done, making you hold your breath in anticipation. Full of perfectly placed red herrings, this book had me questioning everyone until the shocking end.

A fantastic thriller that will keep you guessing throughout and on the edge of your seat. Cannot wait to read more by Simon and meet Morgan Vine again. Highly recommended.

Thank you to Simon Booker, Twenty7 and Netgalley for the ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review.

For all my reviews visit www.bloominbrilliantbooks.com

Annie ~ The Misstery says

Read the review here >> I read this in exactly two sittings. I couldn't stop: it was so addictive and thrilling! The main character is Morgan Vine, 37, "celeb" journalist and occasional cleaning lady. She has an 18 year old daughter (fierce and wild) and has been campaigning for the release of her childhood friend: Danny Kilcannon from prison. Danny supposedly killed her stepdaughter and wife, but Morgan never doubted his innocence. However, when he finally goes free, she begins to wonder if she could have been wrong all along...

I can't help it, I enjoy these storylines way too much. Is he innocent? Is he guilty? He can't have killed them, can he? But what if he did? Surely, he couldn't have. But he looks so suspicious... Or was he framed? That was me while reading the book, never stopped wondering. And I can assure you you'll be the same. Don't trust anyone.

A fast-paced story with plenty of small twists and a satisfying ending. The last thirty pages were unputdownable and Simon Booker clearly knows how to write a gripping thriller that keeps us completely hooked.

My only issue? I believe Morgan seemed too calm and willing to forgive anyone. I don't know, I guess I didn't like her that much because I would never behave like she did if I were in her shoes. I won't say more because of spoilers, but she was too trusting for my taste. By the way, I liked her daughter a lot, her character was so fun to read.

Kim says

This was first in a new crime series. It's a thriller that keeps you guessing and draws you in. Morgan had campaigned for the release of a childhood friend and when he is released he comes to live with her and her daughter. But now he is released- does she really know who he is and what he's capable of? Is her daughter in danger? It really makes you question and raises the issue of trust. There are lots of clues and twists- which path will the story take? It's very chilling in parts and full of suspense and makes you wonder what you would do in her position and whether everything is going to be ok! You really don't want to leave it and are anxious to read more.

I would be keen to read the next in this series and will look out for the next book.

With many thanks to the publisher and Net Galley for a copy of this book

Cleo Bannister says

Simon Booker seasoned screenwriter of prime time TV drama has turned his hand to writing a new series of crime fiction, *Without Trace* is the first book which introduces us to Morgan Vine, a journalist and childhood friend of Danny Kilcannon. Danny is in HMP Dungeness after being convicted of killing his teenage step-daughter Zoe four years previously.

Unusually for crime fiction much of this book focusses on the end result for the perpetrator of crime, prison. Danny is in prison, his life has been narrowed down to the confines of his cell, one of the few highlights being the prison book club which his old friend Morgan runs as a volunteer. What most of the other prisoners don't know is that Danny and Morgan were close friends, went to school together and she has been one of the chief campaigners for his release. Absolutely convinced that he didn't kill Zoe, likewise she also believes that his wife Rowena committed suicide and that's why she disappeared without trace. When a key witness withdraws his statement Danny earns his freedom. But, then Morgan's own teenage daughter goes missing.

This is a tense book, with flashbacks to her teenage years in the late 80s, a time when Danny was one of the closest friends of the girl whose father was headmaster of the school. In these excerpts we understand a little of what makes Morgan tick, why she has been so determined to free her former friend. In the present in the

aftermath of her daughter's disappearance it is only too easy to see why the doubts, never previously voiced or entertained begin to trouble her.

It might be tense but this book is also a fast moving thriller with new evidence, false leads and dodgy characters present on practically every page there was a point where I thought it was inevitable that the book would fall into the mid-section dip, surely unable to keep the frantic pace going while still holding the multiple strands of plot into any semblance of order. I was wrong, this is a book that doesn't let up so don't start it late at night if you have to get up early the next morning! With its short chapters a style that any serious bookworm knows just begs for 'just one more chapter before...' it was definitely hard to put down! In many ways the style reminded me that this author has been a writer of TV drama as the focus was definitely on the action and the complex plot while most of the characters being drawn with a broader brush, to keep the story moving at a pace.

Although fictional, and obviously so; I simply couldn't really buy into the fact that any police investigation would sanction a journalist, the missing person's mother to boot, being told key details along the way, it is also just as obviously well-researched. The scenes in the prison (which although a fictional HMP) felt entirely authentic with the smell and the unpredictability of men locked up while still coming across as human come from the author's own volunteer work for restorative justice and prison reading groups.

As I stated at the beginning this is the first in a new series featuring Morgan Vine and I will definitely be interested in how her character develops. I know some of her background now, her fierce maternal instinct and her thwarted journalistic ambition which is plenty to build on for a second novel and I can't wait to see how, following the fantastic resolution to this book, what is in store for her next. Unfortunately the next book isn't due to be published until 2017.

I was lucky enough to receive a proof copy of this book for review purposes.

Verushka says

Solid 3.5 in reality.

What is this about?: Morgan has spent four years working to help Danny Kilcannon prove his innocence, and a lifetime nursing her childhood love for him. But when he's released, it's her daughter that he sleeps with before she disappears. Did Danny kill her? Did he really kill his wife and step-daughter after all?

What else this is about?: There's no need for much else. Booker weaves an intricate mystery that forces Morgan and readers to question everything. He brings the threads of Morgan's investigation and her search for Lissa, her daughter, together with the larger question of trust about Danny.

Should you read?: Yes, absolutely!

Morgan Vine is a struggling journalist and cleaner, working to make ends meet while she tries her best to prove her teenage boyfriend's, Danny's, innocence of the double murder of his wife and her daughter. Morgan has been steadfast in her belief in him, going so far as to start a reading group at the prison where he is. Ultimately, he is released, and to Morgan's dismay her dreams of a reunion are crushed when he doesn't show as much interest in her as she has been harboring in him.

That's not to say he isn't grateful, and when he comes to thank her, he meets her daughter, Lissa. She is 18, a handful and has no regard for anything but herself -- still a girl, despite her age. Soon after, Lissa disappears and Morgan is forced to question everything she thought she knew about Danny.

During her investigation of Lissa's disappearance, she meets two cops, Jacqui and Donna, and together they work to uncover Lissa's whereabouts. There's also a reporter, Clive, intent on getting her to write about Killer-cannon for his paper, and is willing to pay handsomely. There's a slimy prison employee, Nigel, intent on dating her and lustng after Lissa -- these characters are compelling additions to the cast, and Booker makes use of them all as this story progresses.

As much as this is a story about Lissa and her disappearance, I can appreciate the care that Booker has given all the players: Morgan's character is explained through well-used flashbacks, revealing her relationship with Danny, and why she believed in him so much. It requires a deft touch to be able to balance the hope she harbored for a future with him and the revelation of his relationship with Lissa, without making Morgan look positively sad. Instead, she is strong but not unaffected by the revelations of his relationship with Lissa -- and that's what resonated with me -- Morgan stumbles, she's not perfect but I could understand and empathise with her.

Jacqui and Donna are drawn with broad strokes, giving us just enough of their history with Danny's case, and their desire to help Morgan find Lissa. It's the present that Booker focuses on, building them up as Morgan's strongest allies -- those to whom Morgan finds herself turning more and more, despite their completely opposite takes on Danny's innocence.

Danny himself is broken. He knows what he did with Lissa was wrong and works hard to prove to Morgan that he is innocent and even tries to help find Lissa. However, he has a breaking point too, and when Morgan's distrust of him goes to the point that it's unavoidable for him to endure, whatever relationship they might have had breaks.

But, no-one is what they seem and this is one twist I can appreciate because as I mentioned, Booker's writing is deft, bringing his plot points together by the end.

Nigel says

My immediate reaction to this was that the start was intriguing and that the premise of the story was interesting. When I'm reading a review book I take notes as I'm going along as I find it really helpful when it comes to writing the final review. With this one it starts with "readable", "contemporary" then "roller coaster" and then it all goes quiet - I was simply enjoying reading the book too much to bother! Looking back over it now I did find there was a contemporary/colloquial feel to the writing. Equally to me it had a feel of being written for broadcast in some form. The basic story is that Morgan's childhood friend Danny has been jailed for raping & murdering his step daughter and that his wife's body has never been found. Morgan has been campaigning to free him for a few years based on a miscarriage of justice. He is released just after the start of the book. The chapters are generally in the present time however there are intermittent chapters look into Morgan (& Danny's) earlier life as teenagers.

I really didn't take me long to get drawn into this book and I did find it increasingly hard to put down. It is tense, well paced and twisty - it is hard to want anything more from this sort of thriller genre. The characters

are well written if not very deep in some places. The story has a great atmosphere to it; fear, disbelief, dread and other emotions feel quite clear in the narrative. The book rapidly becomes a roller coaster with my views on characters being changed by the writing. The line frequently used in the book is "Who can we trust?" and it is so appropriate to this. It is hard to know who really is a friend to Morgan. While I generally have some idea of how a book might turn out I confess half way through this one I was really unsure on this one. In a sense I found some of the storylines crazy, however - and maybe sadly - they were valid and appropriate to this internet/social media age. Whatever reservations I might have had about minor details were simply irrelevant as I neared the end of the story - I really did find it hard to put down. In the end I simply found this a highly enjoyable read, certainly one of the best books I've read in the past few months. I will look forward to the next one by this author - I will be reading it. 4.5/5 but happily rounded up!

Note - I received an advance digital copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for a fair review

<http://viewson.org.uk/thriller/withou...>

Michelle (Michelle's Book Ends) Shealy says

"Morgan had chaired the book group for two and a half years but had no idea why most of 'her boys' were behind bars. Prison etiquette was strict-don't ask, don't tell-but nobody needed to enquire why Danny Kilcannon was serving a life sentence. Although never a household name, his face was vaguely familiar even before the trial. A carpenter by trade, he'd earned a few quid as a T.V. extra, graduation to a single speaking part as a murderous priest in a BBC drama. During his trial , the role had been a gift to tabloid editors casting around for a nickname. To the world at large, Danny was now 'Killer-cannon.' Except in here....."

This mystery thriller takes place in England. A journalist named Morgan Vine has been actively trying to seek the release of a child hood friend, Danny Kilcannon. He was accused of murdering his step daughter and causing the disappearance of his wife, if not also her murder. She found a way to see him in prison. Everyone knows the lengths she went to help him win his release.

The story takes a turn when Danny is released and Morgan's teen daughter also disappears within days of meeting Danny. Should Morgan have listened to everyone else? Is Danny innocent or did he take her 18 year old, Lissa? While Morgan continues to hunt for Lissa she also shadows Danny's life to see if she can uncover anything that will either prove once and for all that he's innocent or that perhaps he really is guilty.

She has a few friends, some mysterious messages and a lousy job she's willing to give up. Morgan also has a past of things with her family that may cloud her thinking. Can she find Lissa? Can she find out the truth about Danny "The Killer-cannon" Kilcannon? Is his wife Rowena alive or dead? Who is leaving her messages? Is it someone close or a stranger?

A steady, exciting pace. Lots of twists in this mystery you won't see coming. Not predictable! I enjoy this kind of complicated mystery. You won't stop reading until you find out what happened to Lissa or Danny and his family.

Was Morgan wrong to trust her child hood friend? Will she lose everything she loves or gain something in the end? Did she help a killer go free? Could someone really disappear "Without Trace" or could they commit murder "Without Trace?" Read and find out!

Thank you Netgalley and Bonnier Publishing/ Twenty7
