



Convictions

Julie Morrigan

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An abducted child.

A family destroyed by grief and guilt.

A man of God.

When 12-year-old Tina Snowden and her little sister Annie gratefully accept a lift from a helpful stranger, she has no way of knowing that only one of them will make it home.

As Tina's life is torn apart by pain and recrimination, the only evidence the police have points to George Cotter, a pillar of the local church. But as the investigation continues, it seems that perhaps a deeper and more disturbing truth may lie behind little Annie's abduction ...

'Convictions' is the first novel by Julie Morrigan, the critically-acclaimed author of short story collection 'Gone Bad'.

Praise for 'Convictions':

Tina as the troubled surviving sister is an amazing character, full of charm, vulnerability and strength in turn. The book feels in some way like an update of Ordinary People, crossed with a wonderful police procedural/mystery.

Josh Stallings

'Convictions' by Julie Morrigan is a pulse-pounding thriller with its feet on the ground and its big heart peeking out from under its ragged, bloody sleeve.

Paul D. Brazill

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Convictions Details

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Elaine says

A chain reaction of hateful and illegal acts occur when one crime is committed. Such is the case after young Annie is abducted. Being only a child herself, Tina, Annie's sister who managed to escape during the abduction, doesn't escape her mother's wrath and unforgiveness and is the prisoner of her mother's angry words and hateful looks for years. Her mother makes no bones about Annie being the favored child.

Ruth, an officer, never giving up on her search, is the family's liaison, keeping them up to date on the findings of the case and for years, being Tina's only real support and friend.

Is he or is he not? Guilty that is. Throughout, I couldn't be sure whether a certain person was guilty of the committed crimes or not. All becomes clear and it's a story worth reading though I'm not certain as to the whys of the abduction.

Amie says

Interesting mystery of abduction and how it screwed up some (likely already messed up) family dynamics. There are some very heroic figures (like Ruth) and some others you just want to either shake violently or punch in the face (like Penny or the Christian cop). At times the story moves along slowly - but I think that has more to do with me being impatient and wanting to scream at the characters that certain other ones looked really shady - check into them! - but they didn't so I believe that was my own internal frustration. The story ends pretty abruptly making you wonder what happened to the main characters you are left with at the end of the book. I don't believe there was enough open ends to create a series from this initial book so leaving those ties still waving in the proverbial breeze rather than all tied up in a neat little bow kind of bothers me.

Huw Thomas says

This is a carefully crafted thriller. No purple prose just a good, solid read with very real characters.

The book begins with a child abduction and follows events over the next six or seven years. This isn't just a police procedural: the novel also tells its story from the point of view of victims, investigators and abductor, showing how tragic events can rip relationships apart and the impact that crime can have on all involved.

I'll be looking out for more of Julie Morrigan's books.

Kira says

The ending of this book ruined it for me. The rest of the book was ok but it felt like the story was cut off too

quickly without any real resolution for one of the main characters.

Melissa says

The book started out good and kept me wanting to read more and more. I felt the author did a good job of showing how the parents felt when finding out about their daughter's disappearance. However, I felt like more should have been given to us about Tina. More of her life as she was growing up.

Towards the middle of the book the story line started to become predictable. The ending did leave a slight twist with Jason Christopher character. I closed the book with frustration. I wanted more information about George Cotter who was intertwined in the story, as well as what happened to Annie and Tina.

Mxyzptlk says

First of all, if you haven't already read *Gone Bad*, this author's short story collection - read that first because it is a superb collection, and like this full length is also a great bargain, and shouldn't be missed. This one has a great story; a "missing person" novel that moves along at a quick pace and will not disappoint. Also don't let the fact that this is only available as an Ebook (or because it is so inexpensive,) lead you to believe that this is anything less than a top notch effort - I would easily rank this in the top 5 crime fiction debuts this year alongside many of the books currently sitting on my bookshelf!

Jean says

The story opens with two young girls being abducted. The older girl, Tina, manages to escape from their abductor, but Annie, the younger one is taken away. The investigation begins into the disappearance of the two girls. Tina is filled with guilt that she was the one who escaped and Annie didn't. Her mother feeds on her guilt and makes Tina's life miserable every day of her life. Tina's anger is brought to the forefront when she learns the man who was jailed for the abduction of her sister is to be released. She attempts to kill him and ends up in jail herself. You will need to read the story to find out what happened to Annie and see how Tina fares.

Lynda Kelly says

This was quite good. It's about 2 young sisters abducted some years ago and one managed to get away from their kidnapper. Her mum pretty much made her life a misery after this feeling that as the eldest she should have protected her younger sibling.

The police are convinced a local church are involved and someone confesses, goes to prison but then retracts his confession. And still Annie hasn't been located. Years pass and the police don't give up and meanwhile there are more kids disappearing off the face of the earth.

I enjoyed this but it all got very rushed toward the end and a lot was crammed into the final pages and a lot never answered or completed tidily enough for my liking !! It was only 196 pages so it could have been made into a proper novel size and padded out properly.

There were of course the obligatory apostrophe errors it seems every book published these days seems to

have which continues to drive me to distraction !!

Rita says

A Wonderful Story!

I loved this book. I loved the plot with the wonderful characters. I felt the emotions and pain that the characters were feeling. The author was able to make you feel every emotion. She describes everything in detail. I will be following this author and looking into more of her works. I am glad to have read this book.

Pauline Ross says

This starts out as a straightforward child abduction case, but quickly becomes something more complicated. Two sisters, aged twelve and eight, sneak out from Grandma's house during an overnight stay to go to a concert. When they find they're too late to catch a train or bus home, and have no money for a taxi, they accept a lift from an apparent good samaritan. The older daughter manages to escape but the younger vanishes. The family implodes during the police investigation, there's a suspect but no evidence and no sign of the missing daughter. But then, strangely, the suspect confesses. The story then jumps forward several years...

The biggest problem for me is that all the characters are completely colourless, and never come to life. Even when they're ranting and raving and falling apart, there's no impact behind it, no emotional engagement. The facts of a child abduction, a guilt-ridden survivor, a cruel mother are not enough in themselves to arouse sympathy in the reader. After all, it's not an original idea, we've all read similar tales and seen them on TV. It needs something more from the author to make us feel for these characters. It doesn't help that there is no real focus. Who is the book about? Is it Tina, the daughter who survives? Or is it Ruth, the police officer who stays with the case and the family over the years? And the story hops about from one character to another, never long enough or in enough depth to give any real insight into motivations.

Another problem is that the settings are not terribly convincing. There's no sense of place (apart from the odd use of 'pet' to suggest the north-east, and name-dropping one or two real locations), and the prison seems to be a terribly nice, cosy affair, less brutal than the average girls' school, where the inmates fall out over a bar of chocolate. The police don't seem very convincing, either. Right the way through, they fail to ask obvious questions and follow up on possibilities that would occur to any reasonably sensible person.

However, once the police manage to get themselves on track, the book becomes something of a page turner, although there's never any real tension. It's not just the prison inmates who are unusually nice here, even the child abductors are mild-mannered gentle souls, shocked by the occasional swear word and clearly incapable of actual violence, so despite the police flap, the reader feels no real fear that the abductees will ever be killed. This is revealed at an early stage, along with the abductors' motives, so the only real excitement comes from watching the police gradually circle in on the perpetrators.

And then it ends, just like that, leaving readers to imagine for themselves just what would become of the various characters, which isn't very satisfactory. On the whole, this is a readable little book with a few logic flaws, which suffers from trying to cover too many aspects of the story. I get the point of the prison story,

another instance of a vulnerable youngster falling under the influence of a strong character, just like the obedient young people of the church, but it felt like an unnecessary distraction. The story would have been stronger, I think, if it had focused solely on one side or another. This just about scrapes three stars.

Maureen Vincent-Northam says

Convictions centres on 12-year-old Tina, whose younger sister Annie is abducted while in her care. Annie is her mother's favourite and makes Tina's life a misery. We follow events throughout Tina's young life, including time in prison for the attempted murder of the man she believes is guilty of kidnapping her sister. But with a record of more children disappearing without trace, things take a different turn and a body of people come under the spotlight.

Darren Sant says

A highly enjoyable read from start to finish. The plot is fairly fast paced and it is written in such a way that you want to keep reading. You want to find out the answers to all the questions the author cunningly leaves in your head. One of the things I enjoyed most about the book was the fact that the dialogue and character interactions were very believable, very realistic. Anyone who writes will know how tricky that can be to achieve. Julie does it effortlessly and consistently throughout the book. Probably the most enjoyable book I have read this year. If you haven't already I would highly recommend you read *Gone Bad* by the same author.

Josh says

Emerging talent Julie Morrigan showcases her diversity by crafting a haunting story of child abduction and the resulting broken family dynamics that follow shortly thereafter. While well removed from her collection of noir shorts in 'Gone Bad', 'Convictions' has enough spice to satisfy the bleak desires of the basement crazies and police procedural enthusiasts alike. In 12 yr old Tina (the escapee) and 8yr old Annie (the captured) we're given two sides of the spectrum, one perceived as everything warm and light in the world, the other, all that is dark and cold. A believable tale with an all too believable cast of characters really set this book up for great things. Add a bunch of religious zealots and a few determined cops and you've got compelling storytelling and brass knuckle personalities determined to set all that is bent straight. I loved the multiple POV told over time and from multiple locations; jail, police precinct, church etc - all this added to the well rounded characters and 360 degree of the world they inhabit. A page turner from start to finish - 3.5 stars (only because I like my crime with a double shot of noir otherwise this would've been higher).

Anne-Marie says

This book had all the ingredients to be a best seller, but three quarters through the book, the story just unraveled and the end is a big disappointment. It just leaves you hanging, with no real closure.

Bryce says

It's sad when a book that has real promise goes terribly, terribly off the rails.

At first, I was willing to cut *Convictions* a lot of slack. The plot had some legitimately surprising twists and turns. At first, I thought the book would be a straight-forward story about a child being kidnapped and then found, your basic police procedural. Then, part one of the novel ended, with the child still kidnapped and part two jumped ahead eight years. "What is this?" I asked myself. The story kept surprising me from there, tossing in a creepy religious cult, a revenge stabbing, **more** kidnappings and life in a women's prison.

But sadly, an imaginative plot can't make up for all the bad aspects of this book.

Every single character in this book is a wisp of a real person. Tina, the sister of the kidnapped girl, is sweet and naive and seemingly untouched by the darker parts of life. She's like a Disney princess, but a felon. I'm going to gloss over the details of what led Tina to be stuck in a lady-jail and instead concentrate on the ridiculousness of the lady-jail itself. It is apparently the sort of prison for violent offenders that lets the inmates spend their time shopping for new music and trendy trainer, is staffed by supportive church ladies, and whose population engages in nothing more sinister than hurtful gossip.

On to other characters: Tina's mom makes the Wicked Witch of the West look like a sweet broad. The police look to the Keystone Cops for procedural technique. One particular cop seems to believe that Christians can't lie, as if that part of their brain is removed during baptism or something. And the criminals seem to have no motivation other than to form a vaguely creepy cult of car cleaners.

But the absolute worst part of this book is the end. It is so abrupt and confusing that I actually suspect that Julie Morrison forgot to include the last chapter when she sent her book off to her publisher and it's still sitting in her desk, getting dusty. That's the only explanation that could possibly make sense, because no author would actually **choose** to have such a slipshod, half-assed ending on their work.
