



Mute Witness

Rick R. Reed

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Sean and Austin have the perfect life. Their new relationship is only made more joyous by weekend visits from Sean's eight-year-old son, Jason.

And then their perfect world shatters.

Jason is missing.

When the boy turns up days later, he has been horribly abused and has lost the power to speak. Small town minds turn to the boy's gay father and his lover as the likely culprits. Sean and Austin struggle to maintain their relationship amid the innuendo and the very real threat that Sean will, at the very least, lose the son he loves. Meanwhile, the real villain is much closer to home, intent on ensuring the boy's muteness is permanent.

Mute Witness Details

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Author : Rick R. Reed

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From Reader Review Mute Witness for online ebook

Cindi says

This is one of the most difficult books I've ever read. If you've read the blurb, you are aware of what the book is about. Rick R. Reed has never been one to shy away from real issues in his stories and Mute Witness is no exception. This is one of those books where you want to walk away because of fear of what will happen next but you know you can't. You have to keep reading to see how everything is resolved.

Another outstanding book by Rick R. Reed.

Full review can be found at [On Top Down Under Book Reviews](#).

Joyfully Jay says

A Joyfully Jay review.

4.5 stars

This is not a romance...repeat, this is NOT a romance. This story may feature a gay couple, but it is not a romance story. It contains subject matter that some readers may have issues with. These include child molestation, child abuse, and kidnapping.

Sean and Austin are the perfect couple. Though Sean is older than Austin, Austin is his perfect mate. They share the same interests, the same sense of humor, and a satisfying sex life. When they both take the day off of work to spend together, they are not expecting their glorious day together to turn into their worst nightmare. When Sean's ex-wife, Shelley, calls to tell him Jason is missing, their world and their life together goes into a downward spiral. Starting with Austin being left out when it comes to searching for the missing child.

Shelley is still bitter over the fact that her husband came out as being gay – despite the fact that she has remarried. She fought hard in their divorce to minimize his visitations with their son. Sean never gave up, and worked hard to create a loving household for Jason to visit. While Shelley may have softened a bit when it comes to sharing parenting with Sean, she wants nothing to do with Austin. So when she calls Sean about Jason, she tells him that she doesn't want Austin around.

Read Wendy's review in its entirety [here](#).

Jen Pinto says

This book was very well written, but extremely hard to read. I was angry through almost the entire book. Its definitely not a book for anyone who wants a light humorous read. The grandmother's ridiculous religious

views made me curse out loud quite a few times. I absolutely despise people like her. I thought the father was too weak, he should have fought back more. The grandmother used an attorney and the courts and I just couldn't understand why he didn't go to his own attorney after the very first time they denied him access to his son. The way he sat at home cringing every time the mail came was seriously pathetic. The father did not do one thing that showed any depth of character throughout the entire book. His actions were weak and cowardly all around.

I might have seriously disliked some of the characters and their actions, but the way Rick Reed was able to manipulate my emotions throughout the book shows what an excellent writer he is. Only a great author can bring about such righteous indignation and I can say with certainty that I was righteously pissed most of the time. I wanted to shove a Bible down Estelle's throat half the time and up her ass the other half of the time. I seriously hated that woman. I know too many people like her that use the Bible to hurt others and I can't stand any of them!

Good job Rick, you definitely got me fired up! ;)

Al says

Too much . Too much obvious. Reminded me of going to the school playground to collect my friend's kid, and automatically standing aside from the parents. Now is that me or them ?
I realise that probably makes no sense.

sue says

Subject matter such as this in reading material takes a certain kind of author to relate things in writing to their audience, the reader. And I feel this author selected the right balance.

It is not just about a missing child.

This is also about a gay couple that live in the same village as the missing child and one of those partners is the child's Father.

Sean is his partner.

We all know how most villages are said to be, gossipy little places.

But then, most people gossip they just don't admit to it.

When Jason, his little boy goes missing he unites with his wife to look for their missing child.

Sean sort of takes a back seat as he isn't really involved at first only in the support of Austin and of course, his concern over the child. But it's his partner's child he had with the Mother when they were together.

Someone leaves the child battered and bruised and in a bad way outside the hospital.

The parents are told and they go. Yes, it's their son.

The sexual predator that made their son a victim is 'out there somewhere', but of course, the parents concern

is to get their child through this. He is not only battered he has emotional scars and physical ones from the sexual acts that were performed on him.

Its not an easy book to read but its a 'unputdownable' book to read in that the author does a good job of 'what next' and it involves a whole heap of stuff.

Rapes, kidnapping, road traffic accident.

Getting in the mind of a parent is easy if you are one, and this is one of the hardest things to accept that there are people out there like this. We cannot bury our heads in the sand.

I know this is fiction but it could very well be fact.

Going back to the open gay couple in the village, people start to suspect Austins partner Sean. Of course, easy target. But was it him?

Narrow minded people.

I haven't read one of this authors books before as he usually writes horror and I hide behind sofa's with that genre, so this one must have come as a surprise to many of his fans.

I was expecting something horrific, and this was certainly horrific.

I couldn't help but wonder how Jason is going to fair out there. Its hard enough for adults who have been raped but a little kid?

And as a Mother, would you want them to leave your side ever again.

This is NOT a love story this is a tragedy that brings two people closer together and friends and family.

I wondered about the Police bit though, because that annoyed me, I didn't think enough was being done.

I recommend this book, just remember, its hard to read, but the author has done a superb job if you can face facts that things like this DOES happen and we need to face it, deal with it and protect our young.

I also feel the lesson is

1. Stop judging people on their sexuality
2. Predjustice is not justice.

There are a heap of things going on that it is fast paced.

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CrabbyPatty says

Wow. Every page of this book, my stomach was in knots. There is an unbelievable tension throughout as the story progresses, as each POV is brought into the narrative, as the story builds and finally comes to its conclusion.

It's an indication of Rick Reed's stellar writing skills that as I read the POV of the person who abused Jason, I felt sorrow for the perpetrator because of what happened when the perpetrator was a child. And Sean god, that man suffered. A stunning book.

I received a review ARC of the book from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jeff Erno says

Being a big fan of horror author Rick Reed, I was a bit surprised when I read his book Mute Witness. It was quite different than anything I'd have expected. The story dealt with a topic which is most disturbing, and at times I found it difficult to even continue reading. Eight-year old Jason Dawes is the victim of child sexual abuse. He suddenly comes up missing and is later mysteriously dropped off at a hospital emergency room where it is discovered that he's been raped. The boy is so traumatized that he has been rendered mute. A mystery unfolds as authorities and family try to determine who is guilty of this horrendous crime against such a helpless and innocent little boy.

Jason's parents, Sean and Shelley, are divorced. Sean is openly gay and in a committed relationship with his life partner Austin. Shelley has remarried, and her new husband is Paul. The married couple has custody of Jason, and Sean has merely been awarded visitation rights.

Due to the fact that Sean is gay, the narrow-minded prejudice of the small Pennsylvania town lends credence to ill-founded speculation that Sean may in some way be responsible for the molestation of his son. A series of heart-pounding, page-turning events ensues which take the reader on an emotional journey typical of Reed's fantastical storytelling.

The strength of this story, in my opinion, is the raw portrayal of the depth of parental love. The unconditional, all-consuming love that these parents have for their missing and then victimized child is touching and palpable. Reed's ability to convey this emotion is remarkable and very convincing.

The plot was fast-paced, and arguably a bit crowded. It contained so many shocking elements that it was almost unbelievable. These include two rapes, a kidnapping, a near-fatal automobile accident, a police chase, and even an afterlife paranormal sex scene. I was nearly out of breath just from reading it all. There is no denying, however, that it is an exciting read.

Overall, I was indeed thrilled by this novel, and do not hesitate to recommend it highly. As I may have expected, it moved me to tears on more than one occasion. I commend Reed for having the courage to tackle this very contentious and potentially violable topic.

Mute Witness is a must-read. I give it four-and-a-half stars.

Betryal says

Damn... I really am unsure how to review this book or what to say about it. Gut wrenching? Suspense to the max? Horrific? Appalling? Too many words and descripts come to mind at the moment. But all are said in good taste and respect for this book that Rick has produced. The story culminated a parents worst fears to the realities out there and the profound affect on all the surrounding parties involved.

The indepth points of views from the parents to the child to the police and the public involved was truly amazing.

Rick did in this story as he does in all his: leaves you with a sense of wonder in what happened after the ending, but maybe sometimes the ending is just enough and you wouldn't want to ask for more, but rather be left with your own conclusions to how it all turns for the better and leaves you with a smile from your own make believe imagination that all the is well ends well.

Two thumbs up, Rick!

FantasyLiving says

4.5 Hearts

This story was intense, dark, and horribly confronting. There is nothing fluffy or dismissive about it.

Sean and Austin live in a small town of 12,000 or so people, and have weekend visitation with Sean's son, Jason. A frightened midnight call from Shelley, Sean's ex-wife, reveals that Jason has gone missing, and Sean's life starts to crumble around him.

When Jason is found, suspicions and suggested whispers start to stir around town, starting with Shelley's Homophobic mother. Jason has been traumatised, and cannot speak of what happened to him, which puts a strain on the family, and does nothing to dispel the accusations that are being thrown Sean's way.

KimberlyRose says

Damn. I really wanted this to be a solid, emotional, thought-provoking book... but it wasn't.

The story had a lot of important messages and several well-written scenes... But...

First, it was bogged down in too many POVs, losing my interest in all of them and making it impossible to be transported into the story's world. And second--oh my god--way too many annoyingly small-minded, hateful people. Homophobia? Check. Perpetuation of negative stereotypes? Check. Prejudice against mental disorders and "bums"? Check. Wild, judgmental, worse-of-the-worse Christian religiosity? Check. Ignorant, lynch-happy law enforcers? Check. Stereotypes everywhere. I'm not enjoying this.

And the relationships between Sean, his lover, his ex-wife; between the mother, her messed-up husband, and her messed-up mom (who is just as problematic as her husband); between the parents and their child... all of it was sheer irritation to read. The human connection from writer to reader was lost in an overly-ambitious novel that was trying too hard to make too many points. There was just too much unlikeableness everywhere and it was tiresome.

Stacey Jo says

This was a very powerful book that evoked a lot of emotion. It's worthy of way more than the 5 stars allowed and gets placed squarely on my favorites shelf. I found it hard to not pace while I was reading because so often I was so angry at the characters. But this is a good thing. There is nothing better than a book that gets you so engaged that you feel that you need to get up and move around.

Sean and Austin are in a fairly new relationship together. They are fixing up their home and enjoying weekends with Sean's son, Jason, when he comes to visit his dad. Sean and his ex-wife, Shelley, have managed to form a relationship where they get along for the sake of their son, and Shelley realizes that Sean is a wonderful father and so she helps Sean to ensure he sees his son when Estelle, Shelley's overbearing, prejudiced, evil, hateful, disgusting, religious zealot of a mother tries to influence Shelley to not allow Sean to see Jason, simply because he is gay.

Sean gets the worst phone call any parent can imagine from Shelley one evening... Jason didn't come home. They search for him and after a few days, a guy living in the woods finds him and drops him off at the hospital, in very bad shape. He's been raped, badly beaten, and refuses to speak. Shelley brings him home with her and her husband, Paul, another disgusting character.

Shortly after bringing him home, Shelley is hurt and out of the picture for the time being so Estelle steps in and takes Jason, with Paul's approval, because according to her small and stupid little mind, gays like little boys. I was so furious reading about this woman. I wanted to reach into the book and slap her. But what is so infuriating is there are so many self-righteous, closed-minded people out there who stand behind their religion to wrongly prosecute people when they are so clearly wrong. It was just so maddening to read it. But with Shelley out of the picture at the moment, Sean had no one to defend his rights and everyone, Estelle, Paul, and Estelle's husband against him to make sure that he couldn't see Jason.

Sean's whole world starts crumbling as he and Austin begin having issues as so many couples do in these high stress situations often do. His only champion, Shelley, isn't there to support him. His son needs him but he isn't allowed to see him and the one who hurt Jason is much closer to home than everyone realizes. So Sean, in desperation, devises a risky plan to protect his son.

So if you're looking for a highly intense read that ends well for everyone (meaning the jerks get what's coming to them and the good ones have a happy ending), then this is the perfect book for you. It's a wild ride the whole time; a very intense read.

Alex says

Overall

I was under the impression that this book was a romance, which it really isn't as the romantic elements take a back seat to a lot of other dramas and the traditional story of a romance (two people struggling to be together) is lacking, although there is discord among the couples. That aside, I think some people may be able to (and obviously have) enjoy this book more than me. While the writing was good and the story itself was rather interesting, I never became attached to most of the characters, and as this was a third-person, limited omniscient point of view, that made my job reading difficult--and it did feel like a job. At 60% of the way I started skimming, especially when less desirable characters were narrating. I only started really reading again toward the end. If I was giving this an enjoyability score, it would be a 1. The writing pulls it up to a 2 for me, and knowing that this story just wasn't my cup of tea but recognizing its strengths brings it to a 3.

Warning: Contains homosexual and heterosexual couples and scenes. Also, people sensitive to rape should be warned.

Strengths

The writing was good, definitely smooth, well constructed and enjoyable. I think if the writing style had been weaker, I would have given up on the book much sooner.

The characters are all very realistic with faults and good points. None of them are black and white but instead fall in a wide spectrum of gray, often questioning their behaviors but still making choices, even when they are conflicted about them. I recognize this as a good thing, even if I didn't particularly enjoy it in this circumstance. The plot, overall, was realistic as well, aside from one point made below.

Weaknesses

I am in no way involved in the justice system, so I could be wrong here (most my education comes from Law & Order: SVU). But when they had a DNA sample from Jason, wouldn't they automatically take DNA samples from all the men he encounters on a daily basis who could have been suspects, thus cutting down on who could have done it? Obviously this is a small town, so things could be different, but that bugged me a little (especially since it was so important to the story).

Characters. I never really connected with any of the characters, and those I did didn't take the role of narrator very often. Austin and Jason were two of my favorites, but they only had snippets of focus. The one detective (Alan) annoyed me in the beginning, but I grew to understand his torn perspective and desire to escape the town. However, the majority of the book is spent in the heads of characters I don't care about (Paul, Shelley and Shelley's mom) or Sean, who I feel conflicted about. I think having a child may help the reader associate with more characters, although it shouldn't necessarily be the reader's job to bring the emotions to the table.

Pace. As I was reading, I wanted to know how everything worked out, which is why I kept going, even as I started skimming. However, so much of the story felt overburdened by description and all the thoughts

behind an individual's actions that it slowed to a drudging pace. As I wasn't emotionally involved with most of the characters I was reading, I didn't care what they were thinking/feeling. However, I also understand that if the reader is emotionally involved, then they will feel the same struggles that the characters feel and will probably enjoy this drawn out struggle as the different characters try to figure out everything. It just didn't work for me. At all.

Be sure to check out my other reviews on my blog.

Ruth Sims says

I dislike the star system of rating because it's so limiting. This book is an example of its shortcomings. It's definitely more than a "4" but a tad less than a "5" and they don't have a "4 1/2"

Rick Reed has written so many books I haven't even scratched the considerable surface of his output, but I do know that he is one of the best and most prolific of mystery/suspense/horror writers. Many of his titles deal with bloody death and are appropriately hair-raising. I think Mute Witness, because it involves child abduction and molestation and the resulting trauma on the child, is the most gripping of all.

Everyone feels horror at the idea of an abducted or abused child, but as a parent and grandparent, I felt a sickening, sense of "it could have been..." It was a feeling that made this book both irresistible and extremely hard to read.

It's difficult to review a book like this without giving too much away.

Reed pulls the reader right into the story. You feel the gut-twisting and soul-wrenching fear that Sean and his partner Austin feel when Sean's 8-year-old son, Jason, is abducted. There is no fear like the fear for a child. It twists the heart and soul and gut into knots. You know that the gay father and his partner will inevitably be suspected. You know they will be convicted by public opinion because they are gay.

You will feel their joy and relief when the boy is found, and you will be launched into a different horror when it is learned that Jason has been severely molested, traumatized to the extent that he has retreated into a silent shell and cannot, or will not, speak.

The monster in the story is identified early on (perhaps a little too early on, but I'm undecided about that). There is no question but what he will do anything to make sure the boy never identifies him. He is a monster. I wanted to see him lynched and I'm not a violent person.

There were some details that were a bit "off" and should have been caught by the editor. And near the end, when the abductor meets his just end, there is a bit of a weird sidetrack that really confused me. After I reread it a couple of times I realized what the author was getting at, but it did stop me in my tracks the first time.

All in all, another excellent example of fine Rick Reed writing, and highly recommended.

Lena♥Ribka says

3,5 stars. Rounded up to 4 stars.

It is not an easy book to read, and not an easy book to review. I knew when I picked it up that it deals with a heavy topic – just read the blurb!

Sean and Shelley, the parents of eight-year-old Jason, are divorced and each of them has a new life with a new partner. They both love their son above all things. When Jason suddenly disappears, their world falls apart. A few days later he turns up, but something really terrible happened to him: the kid is severely abused and horribly beaten, so that a police officer who first sees him in a hospital isn't even able to recognize him, even though his picture is everywhere all over the city. Jason is emotionally traumatized and physically shaken, he doesn't speak, and it is not possible to question him to find out who did it to him. So, the only person who could shed light on what happened to him, and it is Jason, is not in mental, physical or emotional condition to do it.

I didn't expect that I'd know very soon WHO did it to him. It is not a book where an author plays a cat-and-mouse game with his readers, throwing riddles at his audience. Even if this book deals with such serious crimes like child abuse and a murder case, I won't necessarily qualify it as a suspense mystery.

I don't think that the author here wanted to show a perfect investigation, but that

- ** prejudices and biases still dominate the public opinion,
- ** very often people are too quick to make wrong conclusions,
- ** how fragile even the most proved relationships could become in a tough time,
- ** how crises can break harmony between couples and families,
- ** how pure emotions, even if they were ruled by the best intentions, are not always helpful to solve all problems.

And in my opinion Rick R. Reed succeeded in it.

Though as a passionate mystery reader, I can't ignore the crime investigation that left me slightly unsatisfied. I had my problems the way investigations were conducted and I wasn't convinced by methods of the detective Hugh Allen. For this reason it wasn't very surprising that the crimes has been solved not by the local police department, but simply by chance.

This book is very well written, and even if I prefer the first person POV, and I don't belong to the fans of changing POVs, I think this way of telling was pretty suitable for the plot structure, and helped to see the story from all possible perspectives. Rick R. Reed has a flowing and smooth writing style, and in spite of a disturbing and depressing subject, Mute Witness is fast-paced and a real page turner.

Mute Witness can't deliver you a conventional HEA. I just can't stop thinking about Jason and how his life will continue further. Solving the crimes won't solve the healthy problems that this boy has to deal with, and I don't mean his physical wounds, but mental ones that left deep scars in his young soul. I wish this kid the best, but I doubt that he will be able ever completely recover from severe damage that this monster done to him.

Still despite a heavy topic and my weak complaints about some issues in the plot, it is an enjoyable read, though the word “enjoyable” feels out of place here – heart wrenching, horrifying and shocking would be the better choice.

****ARC provided to Gay Book Reviews by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.*
