



Birthday Girl

Matthew Iden

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Blow out a candle. Make a wish. Your last one.

Eight years ago, Elliott Nash's daughter was murdered. Since then, everything the brilliant former criminal psychologist had is a memory—his child, his career, his wife, and his home. Now he lives on the streets around Washington, DC, with only a bottomless well of guilt and nightmares to make him feel alive. Until Amy Scowcroft solicits his help.

She refuses to believe that her daughter, Lacey, who was kidnapped a year before, is dead. To the police, it's a case gone cold. To Elliott, it's redemption. In fact, Amy has stumbled upon an unnerving new clue: Lacey is just one of seven children from broken homes who vanished near their birthdays. Right now, it's all they have to run with. Right now, they have no idea where the chase will lead.

As Elliott navigates the streets he knows so well, he and Amy will discover how dark they are—and how many secrets they conceal. Because in a search this harrowing, everybody has something to hide.

Birthday Girl Details

Date : Published March 20th 2018 by Thomas & Mercer

ISBN :

Author : Matthew Iden

Format : Kindle Edition 314 pages

Genre : Thriller, Suspense, Psychological Thriller

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From Reader Review Birthday Girl for online ebook

Angela Holtz says

I received a digital copy from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

I have been following Matthew Iden since his Marty Singer series started. I honestly thought this was another one of those, and I was excited.

It's not.

This is a stand alone thriller. The story is told from 5 character perspectives.

Amy is searching for her daughter, now that the police have given up, she knows time is precious.

Elliot is a homeless man, who used to be a forensic psychologist. He lost his own daughter and it crippled his life. He hopes that by helping Amy, he can redeem himself.

Then you have Sister and Charlotte. Charlotte and the other children are afraid of Sister. But why?

And finally Detective Dave, he is the one who was on the case with Amy, and suggested she find Elliot.

This was such a wild ride! It honestly kept me guessing all the way through. Best book yet, by Matthew Iden.

Amanda says

This is my first Mathew Iden book and won't be my last, I was hooked from the very beginning and afterwards kept thinking about the ending and how this book kept me so engrossed!!

TR says

I'm dipping my toes into the world of ARCs and this is my first one, so business before pleasure, thank you to the author, Matthew Iden, and the publisher, Thomas & Mercer, for allowing the privilege of reading it. I ended up giving the book 4 stars. On the one hand, it was a fast paced thrill ride that was easy to enjoy and well written. However, some of the characters you were supposed to like and feel for, I just...didn't. I don't know if that's me or the way it was written but that's the way I felt. Hopefully I'm in the minority, and the twist at the end didn't really make much sense to me, in that it seemed unnecessary. But all and all, I enjoyed it. A very good read.

Available: March 20, 2018

Annie ~ The Misstery says

Okay, first take a good look at that creepy cover and try to understand why I couldn't pass this up. Birthday Girl by Matthew Iden is a book that I haven't seen on many blogs, which is a pity since this is actually a really gripping thriller.

This is the story of Elliott Nash, a homeless man who used to be a brilliant psychiatrist but the death of his daughter left him completely desperate. Eight years after her daughter's death, a woman called Amy looks for his help to find her missing daughter Lacey, whom she believes to be alive even after almost a year. Elliott and Amy start investigating Lacey's disappearance, which they believe to be connected to other missing kids that were found killed around their birthdays. But what exactly is going on?

This was a quick and fast-paced read, I read it in about two days and it was one of those stories that I was quite excited to go back to. I really liked Amy and Elliott's characters because, despite their flaws, you could see that they were actually really good people. I also loved how the author, Matthew Iden, explored the topic of living in the streets. It really made me think, especially when Elliott's character mentioned how sometimes homeless people scream at you, not because they're crazy, but because they want to feel visible. It was heartbreakingly real.

There were several points of view in Birthday Girl, yet the most gripping were those who featured Sister and the children. My favorite kids were Charlie and Charlotte, of course! Oh, and if you read that prologue and don't become immediately hooked, I don't know what else will do, really. It was so so creepy and scary that I had to keep reading!

A minor issue I had with Birthday Girl was that the last part felt a bit rushed and you actually knew everything before the characters found out, something which I found rather anticlimactic. However, later, there was also a small twist that was smart and satisfactory and in the end, I did love how things turned out to be.

REVIEW: BIRTHDAY GIRL BY MATTHEW IDEN

Jayme says

Elliott Nash was a renowned criminal psychologist who often testified at trials, helping to put criminals away.

Until one abducted and murdered his daughter.

Despite his degree, he could not cope with his own loss, and he lost his marriage, his career and his will to live.

Until Dave, a former colleague from the police department, steers Amy Scowcroft his way. Amy's daughter, Lacey, disappeared about a year ago, and despite the statistics, she refuses to believe that Lacey is dead. But the police have labeled her case, a "cold case", so she must continue this investigation on her own.

Reluctantly, Elliott agrees to help, and the two stumble upon a link between Lacey's case and a few others, but the link involves the abductees birthdays, and Lacey's is coming up soon...

The reader is privy to all of the characters knowledge, so you have a pretty good idea of what is going on and as the race against time continues, you will feel the tension as you wait for the protagonists to catch up to you!

This is the second book that I have read by Matthew Iden (One Right Thing-Marty Singer #3 being the first) and if you enjoy crime fiction, I recommend that you give either (or both) a try!

Elaine Appelle says

A wonderful novel, moving, touching, with characters that will make you cry, sizzle, and empathize with. Fast paced thriller with an ending that will leave you breathless. I enjoyed every single page and give the author five stars for an unusual plot, great writing, and also for keeping me up until 5 a.m. because I just couldn't stop reading. Don't miss this one, whatever you do!

Phrynne says

I just read this book in one sitting and it was really good! Matthew Iden is a new author to me but I will certainly be looking out for his books now.

Birthday Girl: A Thriller is, as it says in the title, a thriller and it certainly serves up a whole lot of very suspenseful moments. The story is about missing children and one totally crazy adult and it moves forward at a great pace. Each chapter is short and fast, and each one relates to the point of view of one of the many different characters. As the book builds to a conclusion there is just no moment at which you want to put it down.

I found Birthday Girl: A Thriller to be well written, full of interesting characters, full of suspense and occasionally even scary. There is a small gas oven which could be the thing of nightmares! If you enjoy a good thriller then this is a book for you.

Joyce says

4 and 1 / 2 stars

Dr. Elliott Nash is now living on the streets of Washington, DC. Since the murder of his daughter Cee Cee eight years earlier, he has been homeless. His marriage broke up and he felt he had no place left to go. He feels guilty and is still bereft.

Interspersed with Elliott's remembering, are vignettes of Sister. She is a very strict – and cruel – caretaker to some children. Who are these children? To whom do they really belong?

Amy Scowcroft's daughter Lacey has been missing for a year now. Refusing to believe she is dead and with the police having shelved the case, Detective Dave Cargill refers her to Elliott. But, first she has to find him somewhere on the streets. At first, he refuses to help Amy.

However, in saving a little girl's life, he came alive again. He felt something. He tells Amy he will help her. Detective Dave Cargill drops by with the police files to aid in their search. Going over their research, Amy and Elliott notice a pattern. Some of the children died on their birthdays. What is the significance of this? They make other connections and Elliot feels they are onto something.

Meanwhile Detective Cargill responds to a police call of a young boy found in an alleyway. He is an apparent drug overdose. He is barely alive and rushed to the hospital. The drug he overdosed on was fentanyl.

Cargill has a luncheon date. The clues given during that date are very revealing. Oh, oh turbulent drama is on its way.

Amy and Elliott notice on the television a report of a young boy named Jay Kelly who was found in an alley. The report doesn't mention the drug overdose, but Elliott gets an idea. He calls Cargill and ascertains that the drug was fentanyl. How interesting... They must talk to Jay. They manipulate their way to his bedside in the hospital and get some answers. Then Jay suddenly codes and Elliot and Amy go on the run – literally. Elliott calls Cargill with what he knows and asks for another favor. This is a very big one.

Detective Cargill is driving home and has an epiphany. Something about Jay's case is teasing his memory. What is it? A visit to the courthouse by Elliott and Amy brings the case to a head. They now know the identity of the kidnapper/killer.

Along with Cargill, they race to the last known address of their suspect.

This book is about the severe abuse of children, kidnapping, murder and the twisted mind of a person who thinks that they are doing right. It's about love, loss and survival on many levels. The loss of a child is most painful. The guilt feelings weigh heavy. The "could have, should have" feelings overwhelm the individual into a state of almost catatonia. How sad the whole thing is.

This book is very well written and plotted as are all of Matthew Iden's novels. While the identity of the kidnapper and murderer came as no surprise, the book is riveting. (The tacky cover picture aside.) The reader is entranced from the beginning of the story trying to sort out who these children are and from whence they came. The storyline was superbly put together, save the ease of being homeless in Washington, DC. That was a little hard to take. Either Elliott was extremely lucky or DC must be a good place in which to be homeless. The tension in this story continues at a fairly high level until the speedy denouement when all is a rush to save the children. Very well done, Mr. Iden.

I want to thank NetGalley and Thomas & Mercer for forwarding to me a copy of this painful, yet excellent book for me to read and enjoy.

Peggy says

Someone is taking children...and then a few years later they show up dead...killed on their birthday. An unlikely pair, Elliot, a homeless man whose daughter was killed years ago, and Amy, a woman whose daughter has been missing for a year, team up to try to figure out what has happened to her daughter. With the police no longer looking for Amy's little girl, they are the last hope of saving her.

This book was a quick read for me and I had several pros and cons about it. I'll go into more detail about each.

Pros: Intriguing story plot. This book had a sufficient amount of back story and explaining to keep me interested in the characters and what made them tick. The writing style introduced me to several new words I was not familiar with...not an easy feat since I am an avid reader. I liked the way it was told from multiple points of view...for the most part.

Cons: The biggest qualm I had about this book was the ending. It felt rushed in a sense and some of the major reveals which we as a reader knew about seemed completely not surprising to characters who were just learning about these revelations. The separate characters also mentioned a few details when they came together that it was not mentioned that they knew about prior so you were left feeling like, "hey when did they find that out?" Another issue I had was that some view points were introduced in the middle of the book for like one or two chapters and then dropped off for the rest of the book. If an author is going to introduce a new character...even a minor one, there should be a bit of a wrap up somewhere from their viewpoint. When a new child was taken you get the viewpoint of his father right before it happens....and then you never hear from his viewpoint again for the rest of the story.

Overall this was a decent thriller. It kept my interest and there was enough emotion and psychological aspects to keep me invested. However, there were no big reveals that knocked my socks off. There were a few minor problems I stated above and I don't think the story will stay with me time.

Bernadette says

Four very creepy stars for *Birthday Girl*, a psychological thriller by Matthew Iden. Dr. Elliot Nash is a nonpracticing forensic psychologist who once worked with the D.C. Metropolitan's Child and Family Services unit. Dr. Nash suffers a personal tragedy which exacerbates his alcoholism until he hits rock bottom. He loses everything, living on the streets and sleeping under bridges and overpasses. Dr. Nash, referred to as Elliot in the book, is introduced to a single mom named Amy. Amy's daughter Lacey was abducted about a year ago. The pair meet via an introduction by Detective Dave Cargill who knows Elliot from his days assisting the police. Set. Cargill was handling Lacey's abduction it has hit a wall as the leads dry up. Set. Cargill is hiding his own traumatic past as well. Add into this dysfunctional bunch a character called simply "Sister." Sister Ives in her deceased parent's dilapidated home and is a caregiver for a group of children. She works a nine-to-five job and wears 70s suits. Sister is a disciplinarian who seems to be stuck in another time.

Amy and Elliot decide to investigate Lacey's disappearance who is quite a challenge for Elliot who cannot access a shower, razor or clean clothing. The unlikely pair become close by sharing their tragedies and demons.

Like many contemporary thrillers, *Birthday Girl* is broken in chapters titled after the various characters. Iden has written a solid psychological thriller. There are so many books in this genre out now, all claiming to be the next *Gone Girl*. Most seem speedily thrown together and are destined to disappoint. *Birthday Girl* is not

one of these books, the writing is solid, the ideas original and there is plenty of creepiness throughout. Iden knows how to spin a suspenseful tale; the reader is still kept guessing even after the perpetrator is identified. *Birthday Girl* has the potential for a multi-part TV or Netflix series.

Thank you to Netgalley and Thomas & Mercer for the ARC of *Birthday Girl* in exchange for an honest review.

Cathy Ryan says

4.5*

Since his daughter's abduction and murder eight years ago, Elliott Nash has lived under a crushing cloud of guilt. His marriage failed, his brilliant career as a criminal psychologist is nothing but a memory, he's homeless and lives on the streets. The only constants in his life are nightmares and pain. His natural drive to help people has diminished. That is, until he meets former addict Amy Scowcroft. Amy's daughter, Lacey, has been missing for almost a year but Amy refuses to believe her daughter is dead. Getting nowhere with the investigation into Amy's disappearance, the police have closed the case. Detective Dave Cargill, who works for the D.C. Metropolitan Child and Family Services, refers Amy to his old friend and former colleague, Elliott Nash.

Elliott is reluctant but eventually digs deep for reserves he didn't realise he still had and agrees to work with Amy. Together, using unconventional and interesting methods, they search through piles and piles of old cases of missing children until they get a breakthrough and find a pattern of sorts. It seems Lacey is one of several children from broken homes who disappeared at a certain time. It's not much to go on initially but the connecting threads begin to mount up and make some sense.

Each chapter is written from a particular character's perspective, including several of the children, Elliott, Amy, Dave and the mysterious and rather chilling Sister. I really liked Elliott and Amy. There was enough back story for each to flesh them out and give a sense of who they are. Despite their flaws and the horrible things life has thrown at them, they're decent people who just lost their way and are trying desperately to get back on track. Helping Amy proves to be a lifeline for Elliott.

The story is well plotted and covers a range of disturbing issues, including homelessness, mental instability and abduction, which have obviously been well researched. Elliott's narrative from the point of view of a homeless person is realistic and eye-opening. It's very sad when Elliott remarks that homeless people more often than not feel invisible, as though they don't exist. Having the main male character in such a desperate situation gives an edge to the story and it's very easy to empathise with him. A quick, enjoyable read and although the perpetrator's identity is easy to guess once certain facts are known, there's no lack of tension, suspense and a good twist or two.

River Scott Tyler says

Eight years ago, Elliott Nash's daughter was kidnapped and murdered. Since then, everything the brilliant former criminal psychologist had is a memory—his child, his career, his wife, his lost home and is now living on the streets with only guilt, nightmares and the memory of his daughter to make him feel alive. Until Amy Scowcroft solicits his help to find her missing daughter Lacey

Amy Scowcroft is a down on her luck single mother who's daughter was kidnapped over a year ago with the police saying it's a cold case giving up the search Amy refuses to believe that Lacey is dead and to Elliott its a chance to prove himself a chance to make him feel needed a chance to make up for letting his daughter down a chance of redemption!

with Amy finding a clue about 7 other missing children that have gone missing with some turning up dead on there birthday all the children including Lacey are from broken homes was taken into foster care and all taken near there birthday, right now that's all they have to go on until the kidnapper slips up and makes a mistake!

Sister is the Kidnapper who's keeping the children in an old house she sees it as shes helping them saving them she gives them new names that only mean something to her but there was always someone with the name before them and will have the name after them if they make a mistake step out of line she will punish them to the max her idea of help is there idea of hell!

the children are scared they don't want to upset Sister because they know what will happen but with each child finding there own way of coping it can and will cause fights they are alone and only have each other will they make it past there birthday will they escape see there family's again or will Sister have one final plan to make sure the children stay apart of her family!

i really enjoyed reading Birthday Girl it was a very fast paced thriller it was a book that kept you wanting more it was great the the two main characters was either homeless or down on there luck it made a nice change i thought the story and characters was believable i didn't want the book to end i would of been happy to keep going but i know a story has to end there was a few twists that i was shocked by that i didn't see coming it got to a point where i was on the last 25% but i could not stop reading i had to know what happened next i loved the ending it was a perfect fit for the story and the Characters the writer did a great job i loved it and i will read it again some time soon and recommend it to my friends.. thank you to the publishers and Netgalley for my copy of the book .

Michelle (Michelle's Book Ends) Shealy says

"Sister was descending the stairs backward so she could drag a large bundle, something long, wrapped in a blanket, and heavy enough that she was having trouble lifting it.".....

Elliot Nash is homeless. His former life just a memory. His daughter was murdered 8 years ago. Her death ended his entire life, his marriage, and his job as a criminal psychologist.

Amy asks for Elliot's help in finding her daughter. Kidnapped a year ago, she can't accept her child is probably dead. She thinks that Elliot, with their shared grief, and his educational background, can help her find her daughter, Lacey.

As it turns out, there are at least seven children who have disappeared around the time of their birthdays. This may be the clue that will help Elliot and Amy uncover what happened to these girls. Can Elliot find his own redemption with the answers to this mystery?

Are any of the children still alive? Is it too late? The streets of Washington D.C. are dangerous and

treacherous for those who may be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Throughout, I just wanted Elliot to find some kind of peace, find a piece of his life again. I hoped for Amy to get her daughter back. It wasn't a story you could put down, and not keep wondering what happens next.

I've previously read this authors books, including all of his detective "Marty Singer," series. I enjoy Matthew Iden's work, and this book, "Birthday Girl," was also an excellent mystery, suspense tale.

Thank you Matthew Iden, Netgalley, and Thomas & Mercer Publishers.

Janeadams Adams says

Two people who are barely clinging to life after losing their children cling to each other, seeking redemption for the circumstances that left them alone, homeless, and desperate for redemption. In this riveting thriller, a forensic psychiatrist and a former addict discover links between a number of disappearances - children who were cast off or cast out, vulnerable to the machinations of a deranged kidnapper whose motive for taking them is hidden in plain sight. . Unable to help themselves, the two protagonists may be able to help each other, if the clock doesn't run out first. A strong narrative, interesting supporting characters, and solid pacing make this a standout.
