

A Lost Gun

Wix Simon

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Detective Jessie Sands stumbles onto much more than a horrific crime when she witnesses a brutal murder. In fact, the events that transpire immediately following the tragedy set off a series of crimes and mysteries that Jessie becomes determined to solve in *A Lost Gun*.

When she suddenly becomes the target of the murderer she pursues, Jessie panics and inadvertently loses track of her gun. As she follows the trail of her lost weapon, other crimes and conspiracies come to light, most of which seem to revolve around a mysterious cult and a cop gone bad. Detective Bud Prior, newly assigned to Internal Affairs in Atlanta, soon joins in the pursuit of the man behind all of these crimes, and he and Jessie are pulled into a dangerous and deadly game with a particularly ruthless villain.

Author Wix Simon tells an intriguing story with enough narrative tension to keep the reader turning the pages. The villain's identity is apparent early on, but Simon keeps adding more characters and crimes to the mix, resulting in plenty of action. The writing is clear and flows smoothly, and the editing is thorough.

Most of the characterization has some depth, particularly in the development of the villain and Bud Prior. Jessie, who carries the story from start to finish for the most part, is less fully realized. While some backstory is given, her motivations are sometimes unclear and her personality lacks full emotional depth. Toward the end of the novel, both she and Bud make some surprising personal decisions which are at odds with the previous development of their characters. This addition to the plotline seems superfluous and has the potential to lessen reader empathy as well as emotional connection to the characters.

Although Simon's novel is largely well written and engaging, there is occasionally an unfortunate lack of believability. The characters in *A Lost Gun* often behave in ways that will leave many readers scratching their heads. For instance, the opening scene in which Jessie ultimately loses her gun is likely to rouse many questions: why would a homicide detective decide to pursue a dangerous criminal without a partner or backup of any kind? Why would she choose to hide as crimes continue to occur, and subsequently neglect to check on the victims or summon assistance? Simon states that Jessie has held her position for more than a year, thus her ineptitude as well as her solitude is curious.

Lack of credibility is also present in other areas. While one might expect that a lost police officer's weapon would constitute an immediate search to ensure public safety, no one bothers trying to recover Jessie's gun for several days. When a young woman goes missing, the police seem to shrug it off, but when a prominent attorney hasn't called his wife in eight hours, a detective immediately begins searching for him. These and other events come across as unrealistic and created primarily to move the plot in a certain direction.

Simon, who also wrote *A Toxic Assault*, clearly has the ability to craft an intriguing tale. The credibility issues detract from the otherwise well-crafted novel, however, and while *A Lost Gun* succeeds in many areas, further attention to those details would definitely be worthwhile.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (September 5, 2012)

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