

And Then There Was One

Patricia Gussin

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The poet William Cowper said, Absence from whom we love is worse than death, and frustration is despair. This perfectly describes the fever pitch of anxiety and fear that pervades *And Then There Was One*. An interracial family, the scars of the Detroit riots, the New York Yankee parent's worst nightmare Gussin combines these high-tension elements to weave a complex web that ensnares the reader from the very first page.

Forensic pediatric psychologist Katie Monroe seems to have a charmed life. She's well liked by the Yankees catcher Scott Monroe, and has a prominent career and identical nine-year-old twins. One would envy and one that is destroyed in an instant. Her three daughters go with their parents to movies, but only one emerges from the theater. Over the phone, Katie learns that two of her daughters were kidnapped, with no trace and no leads. In a heartbeat, this powerful woman's world is shattered. She sits in front of the cameras, teary-eyed and in voices hoarse from endless crying, pleading for her daughters. Both parents had experience with the media, but huddled together, they look at each other, so pathetically scared were they. In their worry, Katie and Scott try everything, but they end up unraveling their pasts in a desperate search for any clues as to who might have done it.

Gussin, also the author of *Shadow of Death*, *Twisted Justice*, and *The Test*, is an excellent writer, clearly at ease with her material, and very good at making her readers squirm. She has a deft touch for detail. In *And Then There Was One*, Jackie, the remaining triplet, overhears her mother talking on the phone. Katie says, Jackie is an individual, deep down, she resents being a triplet. That's why the girls split up at the movies to see Jackie wanting her own way. The confrontation that follows is heart-breaking. Layers that Gussin has woven into *And Then There Was One*. At its heart, this novel isn't just about fear and abduction; it's about the million pieces of a family, and the emotional glue that holds them together. Occasionally a bit heavy-handed, the diversity of characters shows that there are many faces to the mask. Every member plays a part in a family's loss.

And Then There Was One is a gripping mystery that will find a toehold in even the most jaded reader. Blending elements of social inequality, race, family politics, and the past the Monroe family's latest is sure to set pulses racing all the way to the thrilling conclusion.

CLAIRE RUDY FOSTER (September 10, 2010)

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