



## Child Sting

**John Edward Gill**

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*Gill offers a fast-paced, intense novel with a ripped-from-the-headlines subject.*

John Edward Gill's *Child Sting* is the high-intensity story of a father seeking his daughter after a family kidnapping, a chase made more urgent by the child's critical illness.

A Long Island college history professor, Jack Morris's world collapses when his wife, Evelyn, packs her bags and leaves, taking their daughter, Kim. *Child Sting* focuses on the aftermath of the fractious divorce and subsequent court cases. Eventually, Jack is awarded custody of Kim, but Evelyn flees with the girl. Jack takes a leave of absence and pursues her. It is critical that he find Kim since her systemic lupus erythematosus could be fatal if left untreated. But Evelyn doesn't believe the diagnosis.

It's a solid setup for a potentially exciting, tense, and emotionally moving novel. In a narrative heavy on dialogue, Gill's characters prove hard to pin down. Jack—once “a cheerful man ... regular features, light hair, blue eyes, a hint of mischief about him”—is generally a sympathetic figure, but some of his actions go beyond ethical behavior. Chalk that up to a father's desperation. But many of the other characters are shape-shifters—both with Jack or against Jack, liars or FBI agents, private investigators or criminals—appearing at random to send the story careening in new directions. Also, Evelyn's desire for divorce is amorphous. She wants to pursue a graduate degree, but if that's the reason for divorce, it's never clear why she complicates that quest by taking Kim.

Descriptions are adequate, and the narrative sequence is logical. Jack trails Evelyn around the United States, and the author offers an interesting segment set in Baja California, an intriguing location for any thriller. In his quest to find his daughter, Jack allies himself with George “Poppa” Dallas, leader of Fathers American Movement for Equality (FAME), which is right out of the headlines. The author makes good use of other aspects of modern life, including national security issues, cults, and vigilante types who wrap themselves in the flag.

There also are misspellings, misuse of punctuation, and poor phrasing. *Child Sting* has been developed from an exciting premise by an author with great passion for his subject, but it's a book that would have profited from the touch of an editor.

Nevertheless, for those drawn to the subject, Gill offers a fast-paced, intense novel, one with a ripped-from-the-headlines subject.

GARY PRESLEY (October 19, 2015)

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