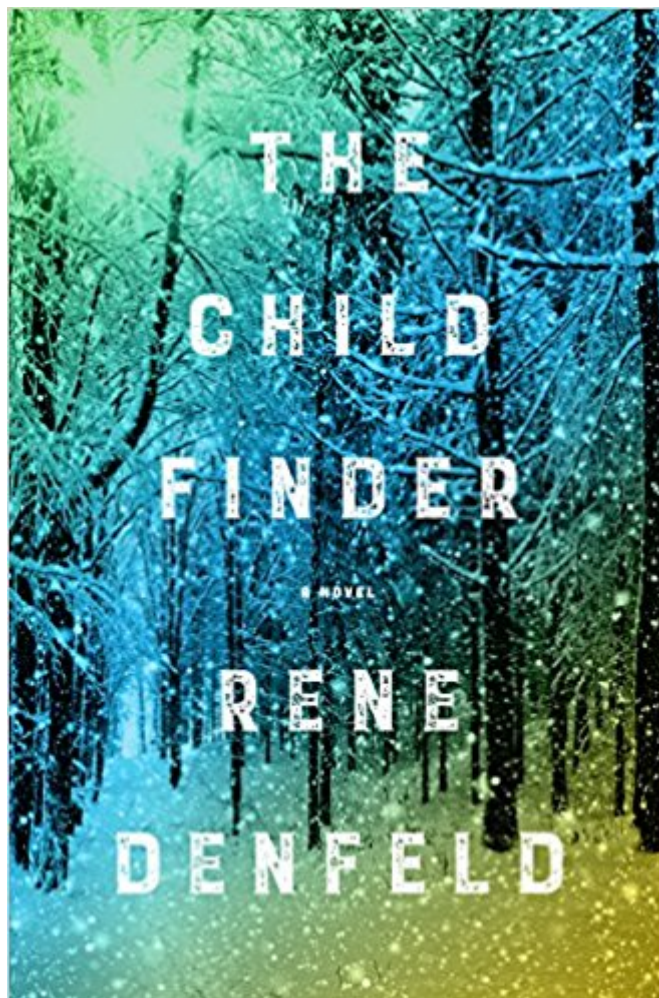


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The Child Finder: A Novel



Synopsis

A haunting, richly atmospheric, and deeply suspenseful novel from the acclaimed author of *The Enchanted* about an investigator who must use her unique insights to find a missing little girl. "Where are you, Madison Culver? Flying with the angels, a silver speck on a wing? Are you dreaming, buried under snow? Or is it possible you are still alive?" Three years ago, Madison Culver disappeared when her family was choosing a Christmas tree in Oregon's Skookum National Forest. She would be eight-years-old now if she has survived. Desperate to find their beloved daughter, certain someone took her, the Culvers turn to Naomi, a private investigator with an uncanny talent for locating the lost and missing. Known to the police and a select group of parents as "the Child Finder," Naomi is their last hope. Naomi's methodical search takes her deep into the icy, mysterious forest in the Pacific Northwest, and into her own fragmented past. She understands children like Madison because once upon a time, she was a lost girl, too. As Naomi relentlessly pursues and slowly uncovers the truth behind Madison's disappearance, shards of a dark dream pierce the defenses that have protected her, reminding her of a terrible loss she feels but cannot remember. If she finds Madison, will Naomi ultimately unlock the secrets of her own life? Told in the alternating voices of Naomi and a deeply imaginative child, *The Child Finder* is a breathtaking, exquisitely rendered literary page-turner about redemption, the line between reality and memories and dreams, and the human capacity to survive.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Intense.... Innovative... Heartbreaking, surprising.... The conclusion will leave readers

breathless. • (Publishers Weekly) • A darkly luminous story of resilience and the deeply human instinct for survival, for love. Blending the magical thinking of childhood, of fairy tales, dreams, memories and nightmares, *The Child Finder* is a terrifying and ultimately uplifting novel that demands to be consumed and then once inside you "lingers" • (A.M. Homes, author of *May We Be Forgiven*) • Rene Denfeld has a gift for shining bright light in dark places. *The Child Finder* is a gorgeous, haunting gem of a novel. Raw and real yet wrapped in a fairy tale, as lovely and as chilling as the snow. • (Erin Morgenstern, New York Times bestselling author of *The Night Circus*)

• This is something I know: No matter how far you have run, no matter how long you have been lost, it is never too late to be found. • Three years ago, Madison Culver disappeared when her family was choosing a Christmas tree in Oregon's Skookum National Forest. She would be eight years old now "if she has survived. Desperate to find their beloved daughter, the Culvers turn to Naomi, a private investigator with an uncanny talent for locating the lost and missing. Known to the police and a select group of parents as "the child finder," Naomi is the Culvers' last hope. Naomi's methodical search takes her deep into the icy, mysterious forest in the Pacific Northwest, and into her own fragmented past. She understands children like Madison because once upon a time, she, too, was a lost girl. As Naomi relentlessly pursues and slowly uncovers the truth behind Madison's disappearance, shards of a dark dream pierce the defenses that have protected her, reminding her of a terrible loss she feels but cannot remember. If she finds Madison, will Naomi ultimately unlock the secrets of her own life? Told in the alternating voices of Naomi and a deeply imaginative child, *The Child Finder* is a breathtaking, deeply atmospheric, and exquisitely rendered literary page-turner.

The Child Finder of this book's title is the name of a lady who is quite talented in finding children who have been abducted or are otherwise missing. *The Child Finder* has everything one might want in a thriller - and more. This "more" may excite or repel the average thriller reader. While *The Child Finder* has an excellent plot with many twists and turns and all its characters (its villain included) are well drawn, realistic and believable and it has all the excitement as expected as it approaches its end. BUT *The Child Finder* is also a beautiful novel written for adults. At times, for me, her prose approached poetry and the book's realism was so profound that I wondered if elements were autobiographical. Anyone who can appreciate the combination of a fine piece of modern fiction to the thriller format will love this book and remember it long after it's read. It is definitely not run of the mill escapist fiction. While it at times makes exciting reading, this novel relates multiple tragedies so real

as to sorrow the soul.

Three points of view share in the telling of this remarkable novel by Rene Denfeld. The book opens through the eyes of Naomi, a woman who searches for missing children. The second perspective is through the 8-year-old eyes of Madison, a child who disappeared three years previously, and whose parents hope Naomi can find. Ironically, the third eye, and most heartbreaking vision, belongs to the abductor, a Frankenstein-type figure. The revolving voices "which spin closer and closer together as the circles of intimacy intersect and tighten - keep this story moving forward even as it fleshes out the back story of the main characters and supporting cast. This is a tightly crafted yet expansively written work that explores the themes of identity and belonging and asks what happens when one's sense of self is violently violated. Another darker theme - of being hunted - permeates each of the main characters' lives, an idea Denfeld explored in a poetic style in her previous fiction, *The Enchanted*. The unflinching but vulnerable Naomi keeps these heavy themes from trapping the story. Although she is a wounded soul with a traumatic past, love from a patient foster mom restored Naomi's sense of humanity and good in the world. A fragile warmth guides her actions and gives this book a hopeful versus haunted feel. We feel safe with her leading the way, and we follow her child-finding quest page after page until the tragic end. This is a stunning story that reminds us that "it is never too late to be found."

The Child Finder is a truly unique mystery that was hard to put down. The author did an excellent job of not only creating an eerie, haunting atmosphere, but also of sustaining it throughout a story that managed to pack so much into its relatively few pages. This is an incredibly suspenseful read that is also beautifully written. It introduces the reader to one of the most compelling investigators in recent memory. Naomi Cottle is an investigator who specializes in finding children. Her own tragic story unfolds for the reader as she searches for a missing child in the frozen mountains of Oregon. One story feeds into the other, giving both characters an unexpected depth and giving the story a driving sense of urgency for both characters. Be forewarned that there are parts of this story that are very hard to read. Young Madison has fallen victim to a pedophile and the author puts the reader right in her head as she copes with her prolonged abuse and tries to understand the world she finds herself in. It's heartbreaking and brutal. It's also a testament to the strength to be found in children and the power of imagination. Some of the author's most powerful writing happens when Madison struggles to understand her abuser. It's creepy and horrible and will leave you stunned and wishing you hadn't read it but glad you did because it speaks to the human spirit and leaves you feeling

hopeful for all the lost children that are yet to be found.

a woman with an impressive track record of finding missing children is hired to locate a child that disappeared in an Oregon forest. Madison was four at the time she wandered away. Law enforcement presumes she succumbed to the elements but her spirit is eternal. Naomi, the investigator, herself was taken as a child. Her memories are murky, mainly culled from troubling dreams. Her obsession to her vocation has isolated her. She has few friends and keeps in sporadic touch with her foster mother and brother. But her sense of purpose fuels her relentless pursuit for missing children. But is it too late to save Madison? If so is it too late for Naomi too. Although I wanted to know the resolution, the dream like atmosphere of this book kept me detached from the characters. Madison is the most dynamic of the characters, disassociating from the horror by relying on a fairy tale character. The writing ranges from lyrical to overdone. Combined with the almost static atmosphere it tends to romanticize a very ugly topic. While this book is unquestionably about child abuse, there is no explicit activity depicted. Naomi is a cold character and the romantic subplot was unnecessary and inauthentic. Similarly, the storyline about a missing baby from an economically stressed situation was unnecessary. The author provides a more nuanced portrayal of the offender but her contention that it is better for a child to attach to the abuser than to be neglected is disturbing. The Stockholm syndrome is a survival mechanism and no one can fault a child (or anyone else) for doing what is necessary to live. The ending is good but the book suffers from a style that keeps readers at arms length. 3.5 stars

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