



## The Child's Secret

*Amanda Brooke*

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## **The Child's Secret** Amanda Brooke

A little girl is missing. Her parents are hiding something. Who will pay the price?

When eight-year-old Jasmine Peterson goes missing, the police want to know everything.

What is local park ranger, Sam McIntyre, running away from and why did he go out of his way to befriend a young girl?

Why can't Jasmine's mother and father stand to be in the same room as each other?

With every passing minute, an unstoppable chain of events hurtles towards a tragic conclusion.

Everyone has secrets. The question is: who will pay the price?

## **The Child's Secret Details**

Date : Published January 14th 2016 by Harper

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Author : Amanda Brooke

Format : Kindle Edition 448 pages

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## **From Reader Review The Child's Secret for online ebook**

### **Julie Boon says**

This is the first novel I have read by Amanda Brooke and I was drawn in from the very first page!

Jasmine is a little girl who lives with her Mum Laura and her Dad Finn. She goes on a school trip to a park where there is a very old tree that the Park Ranger Sam says has magic powers and if you write a note and put it near the tree, it can grant wishes!

Poor Jasmine is desperate for her Dad to get a job as being out of work is making him very unhappy and abusive, therefore her Mum is also sad and home life is far from idyllic. So when she finds out that the "Wishing Tree" can grant wishes, what harm can it do?

Sam is a Park Ranger and loves teaching the local school children about nature and especially telling stories about the Wishing Tree.

When Jasmine goes missing the police question Sam as they seem to think he was involved. I loved how the chapters went from the present (when Sam was questioned) and then back to before and up to Jasmine's disappearance.

Everyone is a suspect, including Sam's girlfriend Anna and his landlady Selina, who has more to her past than even Sam knows about!

There was a good mix of characters in the book. Jasmine was a sweet, good natured little girl who just wanted her Dad to love her. Her Mum Laura seemed quite weak at first, but I loved it when she came in to her own when Jasmine disappeared. Anna wasn't all she seemed and it was great to see these characters changing throughout the story. I think my favourite character was landlady Selina. She was always loyal and looking out for Sam and only wanted the best for him.

I loved this book as it keeps you guessing right up until the very last page (and I mean the very last page!!) about what happens to Sam.

I definitely want to read more from this author as I was thoroughly engrossed in this book.

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### **Shelagh Rice says**

I enjoyed this book and I wish I could give it 3.5 stars. It deals with very serious issues but without being graphic. It is well written and flows well and explores the relationships between people with issues and secrets. I didn't fully connect with the characters and I don't know why, I can't put my finger on it but they remained elusive and I therefore did not believe or care enough for them.

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### **Bookread2day says**

review by [www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com](http://www.ireadnovels.wordpress.com)

In my view *The Child's Secret* by Amanda Brooke is a real must buy, must read. Every page is filled with powerful scenes going on, that makes you grip the book and not let go. I loved all of the story and was so pleased with the ending. I also have *The Missing Husband* by Amanda Brooke to read. Sam McIntyre is a broken man his daughter died and he left his wife to go to Liverpool to escape emotional ties. A warrant card is produced to question Sam over missing eight-year Jasmine Peterson. Sam had become heavily involved in the family of the Petersons lives, far more than he ever intended. With Jasmine missing and her parents are hiding something, who will pay the price? I don't want to give too much away. Please read *The Child's Secret*. The novel is totally unputdownable. Amanda Brooke has become on my favourite authors that I shall follow very closely from now on.

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### **quizqueen says**

I was sent this book to review. It had some interesting facets to the storyline but the leading male character really annoyed me because he was so indecisive and his girl friend's whining and pushiness was obnoxious. It had just about enough to encourage me to finish the book although the ending was a forgone conclusion. This book didn't convince me that this is an author I will particular follow in the future.

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### **Ana says**

Originally posted on This Chick Reads

*\*Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review\**

Last year I had the opportunity to read Amanda Brooke's *'The Missing Husband'* which I absolutely enjoyed and as it was my first AB book I've made a promise to myself to watch out for her next books. I was over the moon when I saw a proof of *'The Child's Secret'* in my mailbox and my hands were itching to make a start because I had a strong feeling Amanda's once again created a complex and layered story with memorable characters. My intuition was right, I devoured this book in a day and spend the next couple of days thinking about all the topics (very sensitive ones) this book covers.

*'The Child's Secret'* opens with scene where we find out little Jasmine is missing and Sam McIntyre, a local park ranger whom Jasmine met when she visited the park with her class, is questioned about his involvement i the disappearing. Going back in time, to the day when they met in front of the Allerton Oak and following their strange friendship, we find out more about Jasmine and Sam and their little secrets. As you read on, you start suspecting and assuming wh might be responsible for Jasmine's missing, but there are big chances you might be wrong. At least, that's what happened to me. But, through Jasmine and Sam's story we also get to meet her mother and father, a bit of a dysfunctional family with secrets of their own. It was hard reading what Jasmine's mother went through every day, sacrificing for her daughter's happiness and future. I've read many books where women were abused by a member of the family, but there's something about the way Amanda describes it that made me almost feel it on my skin. I felt anger, pain, pity, heartbreak... all at once and the thought how lucky I am not to have experienced such a thing never escaped my mind.

Told from different POVs, *'The Child's Secret'* is one of these beautiful, thought provoking reads perfect for

book clubs as it raises so much discussion about family, abuse, past mistakes and consequences which will probably follow in the future. It's also a book with characters so well portrayed and memorable, you'll feel like being in the same room with them.

I did try to predict the ending and who's responsible for Jasmine's disappearance, but I was proved wrong. This is definitely a good thing, and I wouldn't change a single thing about it. However, what was troubling a bit was the slower pace at the beginning which for some readers can be a problem, but a fair warning, read on and you won't be sorry. Though it seems there's too little action at the beginning, remember this is a women's fiction with psychological thriller/mystery elements where characters and human nature are far more important than million things happening at once. You're given loads of information to build a picture of Sam and Jasmine's relationship in your head, to really get to know them and their motives for the following events.

I already said I wouldn't change a thing about the ending, however what I would add or what would have made this book even more intriguing (in my opinion) is more shocking revelations. I expected a very big BANG, some jaw dropping moment that would spice the plot a bit, but even without it, it's definitely a great book that I'm happy I've read and which once again proves Amanda's writing skills that keep you glued to the pages. I already can't wait for Amanda's next novel, I'm getting slightly addicted to her writing. Note to myself: get to her previous books, you know you're missing out on a lot.

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### **Rose Stephenson says**

fantastic read

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### **Chanel Lindsay says**

I have very mixed views on this book. The first half of the book was incredibly slow and dragged on so much. I found myself only able to read a few chapters at a time before I got bored and gave up. I did start to enjoy the story a bit more once I was halfway in, and although I found it rather predictable by the end, I did enjoy the story.

Overall the story was decent but it didn't hold my interest very long to begin with.

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### **Shona Booky Ramblings of a Neurotic Mom says**

This isn't my first novel written by Brooke, and I do actively seek them out. With this book, I didn't even read the blurb, I saw that it was written by Amanda Brooke and I immediately wanted to read it. Her previous books have been beautifully written poignant stories that are infused with such emotion that the reader is also filled with such emotion, that it just leaks out of your eyes. And this one was no different.

This story begins with Jasmine missing and the police turning up to question Sam. But the story unfolds in two parts... the day of her disappearance, and the events following the day Sam first met Jasmine. Throughout the book we learn more about Sam, about Jasmine and her family, and we learn that people are keeping secrets... secrets that lead to the events of Jasmine's disappearance. I will admit that on more than one occasion I was sure I knew where this was going and who was responsible and I'll admit that I was

wrong every time.

This is the kind of book, that when you are finished, makes you want to reach out to the children in your life and pull them a little closer, hug them a little tighter and remind them of how much you love them.

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### **Gillian says**

#### **3 stars as feeling generous.**

Good book, ending a bit prolonged. Engaged up to a point but lost Interest as soon as the outcome was apparent.

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### **Crazy\_smiler says**

BOOOOOOO!!!!

Perhaps I'm being too harsh but for me this was the kind of sappy, eye rolling, when will it be over book.

I disliked the people too much. Not all. I liked Selena and Laura most. But Sam drove me NUTS!!!! Heck I hated him. He just irritated me. He was also incredibly selfish.

Things just felt too stereotypical. Too Hollywood. The ending part where it should have been awwwww was like hooo boy. Well I knew it was coming but when?

The much too convenient of similarities with the cars was more something in a cartoon in my opinion.

I'm sad to say that I feel the author was trying too hard to make this a book that will give you feels but it's something that may have worked on my 12 yr old self. But not my adult self.

I was disappointed thinking this book was going to really draw me in with mystery. But nope! Nada! The secrets I had much higher expectations for. Though what it was was still bad I just must be too jaded and seen too much.

Her skipping along after moments ago was extremely down and depressed. I doubt that.

I almost quit the book but was far enough in I punched it to the end.

P.S. I think the book should have been called "The Wishing Tree". The name used is too generic and mainstream. I think this title would have been much better suited. Also there should have been cranes on the cover. Again my opinion.

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### **Kelly Wignall says**

This was another 'couldn't put down' book. I have noticed in a few reviews people complaining about certain

characters - I thought they all played their parts very well. I absolutely adore Sam and didn't doubt him from the off. Lots of unexpected things happened but I thought he was an amazing person, just struggling to deal with his own demons. Towards the end I was worried I wouldn't get that happy ending that I'd hoped for but I was wrong - I got it! So satisfied with the ending. So happy. Such a beautiful read :-)

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## **Sarah Donaldson says**

The Child's Secret is a truly heartbreaking and stomach churning page turner of a book. I was unable to put it down. Dealing with so many difficult and sensitive issues such as alcoholism, the death and disappearance of a child, mental and physical abuse and the grief of a parent - each one is handled with the utmost sensitivity and tact, whilst refusing to shy away from their ugly truth.

Based on six main characters (Sam, Anna, Laura, Finn, Jasmine and Selina) the novel begins at the disappearance of Jasmine, the daughter of Laura and Finn. Old and wise far beyond her 8 years, Jasmine is a deeply caring and sensitive child. With a love of dogs being a guiding light to her through traumatic childhood, set amongst barely hidden abuse despite the enormous efforts of her mother to shield her from it, the harsh words of her father cut deep and have her longing for a life that is far from the worry of an alcoholic father. The loneliness, worry and fear she carries with her makes for difficult reading at times.

The opening character is that of Sam, a park ranger and horticulturist, deeply haunted by a past that gradually reveals itself throughout the book. A divorcee his character is incredibly guarded for self preservation. Determined to care for no-one to save the pain and heartache he has already felt in his life, he becomes entangled in a web of his own making due to a child's wish and his need to provide hope where he has none. A tortured soul, he is at all times throughout the book, a gentle protector.

As the novel progresses, we meet Anna, Jasmine's naive school teacher, eager for love and to be loved enthralled by Sam and determined to be the one to open him up and save him from whatever demons he is determined to keep hidden. Well meaning, but gullible, her later dalliance makes her seem careless and foolhardy especially in matters of the heart.

Selina, Sam's elderly landlord is a wise, mother figure to Sam, seeing his world and that around him through experienced eyes. Determined to make sure that no-one follows her well trodden path, she meddles in a loving way to ensure that doesn't happen, despite Sam's best efforts to stop her.

Finn, Laura's husband is the villain of the story. Down on his luck, and often downing alcohol, his addiction leads to a downward spiral he feels unable to free himself from, even when he knows it is too late. Unable to maintain a job, he blames his wife for his own inadequacies - possibly in a bid to propel himself into a position of power when feeling so powerless to be the man society expects him to be - the provider. So far into the spiral is he, that his paranoia completely takes over until he takes a dangerous turn for Laura and Jasmine.

Whilst the main plot of the story is based around the wishes of a little girl placed inside the Allerton Oak, a real oak tree found in Calderwood Park in Liverpool and her the disappearance, each characters own story and demons play an integral part in weaving the book to its gripping conclusion. Tackling alcoholism and abuse incredibly well, it leaves the reader totally able to empathise with the down-trodden Laura as drink after drink is consumed and she becomes target for the inadequacies of her husband. Desperate to protect her family and bravely covering up the abuse, she unwittingly creates the very situation that Jasmine seeks to

hide from.

Sam's heartbreak at the loss of his daughter to a road traffic accident make for truly heart crushing reading. Described well and with a sensitivity not often seen, Amanda Brooke details the thoughts and emotions that are ever -creeping up on the man who seeks so desperately to keep them at bay. At times I had to stop reading to wipe away tears as description of his little girl growing up through toddlers years to high school pre-teen hit home so keenly. It is, indeed, every parents worst nightmare.

Whilst somewhat insignificant at the start of the book, Selina finds herself playing out her wishes and demons from a time when she were Laura, in the present and opening up only to Sam, in who she sees a kindred spirit, we learn the truth about her solitary existence as the book plays out.

Incredibly well written and thought out, sensitive, gritty and hard-hitting, the book was written during an incredibly emotional time for the author who was losing a dear friend and whom she has dedicated the book to the memory of.

I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a gripping and, at times, difficult, read. Eye-opening and un-put-downable, the ending is one that will have you eager to turn pages.

5/5

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### **Debra says**

For a more detailed review, check out my review below:

Debra's Book Cafe

Debs :-)

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### **Steph says**

What was so disappointing about this book were the characters. It was a good plot and could have been fantastic and a real page turner if the characters had been at least a tiny bit engaging or interesting but they just weren't. Not one of them.

From the get go you knew what Sam was hiding, maybe not the full details but it wasn't any great mystery and he was just too dull and boring.

I absolutely hated Anna, for her to say it's always her bad taste in the wrong men is a joke as she's verging on a fully fledged bunny boiler. Together a few months and she's dropping hints about being put in his car insurance and getting a key for his house, she was such a pain in the ass!

Laura and Finn were boring and even Jasmine was a rather dull child, Selena was nothing special neither.

For me it's the characters that make or break a book and I felt like giving up once but I persevered tho I



couldn't finish the last part because I was utterly bored by then and I just didn't care what became of any of them.

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### **Louise Mullins says**

I read this book in six hours!

This is a very well written book with lots of suspense. A missing daughter, a distraught mother, a husband and father whose hiding something and a suspicious park ranger who involves himself in the families lives too much. Who knows what happened to Jasmine, and what secret is she hiding?

Brilliantly executed.

My only disappointment is that I felt it was a little too long, and the story dragged in places. The momentum kicked off in the end though and I raced through the pages to discover the tragic conclusion.

I'd recommend this book to anyone who enjoys light crime novels or mysteries.

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