



An American Family (#1)

Jackson Paul Baer

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Isaac Childs has the perfect life—until that life comes crashing down when his wife Ramie vanishes.

Isaac learns that his wife's disappearance is the ninth in a string of similar cases. In the wake of this news, he struggles to cope, to be a good father to his daughter and college-bound son, and to reclaim something of an ordinary life even as he conceals his troubled past.

After the FBI makes an arrest, and his wife is presumed dead, Isaac begins to move on. Yet will his secrets catch up with him? Has he conquered his vices for good? And what of the FBI's theory that the case isn't completely resolved, after all?

Evolved Publishing presents the first book in the "An American Family" series, contemporary suspense thrillers that explore one family's trials and tragedies.

An American Family (#1) Details

Date : Published October 1st 2018 by Evolved Publishing

ISBN : 9781622530267

Author : Jackson Paul Baer

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Genre : Thriller, Suspense, Mystery, Crime, Contemporary

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From Reader Review An American Family (#1) for online ebook

Alicia says

“An American Family” (#1) by Jackson Baer

I did not know what to expect from this novel or the author. I had never read his previous work, but I was taken by the description of the book and figured I would give it a go.

I liked the characters. They are all so flawed and yet still have qualities about each of them the reader could relate to. The storyline was interesting, although it seems to jump around a lot as versus letting the situations really play out both to strengthen the novel and the characters.

I have one issue with “An American Family,” that continually stood out: the dialogue. It was stilted and very elementary. I felt that writing the novel and telling the story with little pieces of dialogue here and there to back up feelings or situations would have played better in this work. The author had great characters and storylines, but taking a different POV and truly sinking his teeth into the trauma and the issues around it, moving forward and truly bring the novel to life is not only possible by this author, but truly needed for this work.

Rating: 3.4

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** I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this novel. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Jenna says

I listened to the audiobook version of this book.

The author did a great job establishing the characters and the character relationships. Not only do they seem like real people, but they struggle with the same 'demons' that a great many people struggle with such as infidelity, temptation, addiction, abuse, and more. At the same time, these characters also experience some of the genuinely best parts of life such as following their dreams, love, new beginnings, success, etc. One of the best aspects of this book is the author's ability to weave in this element of honesty of the reality real people encounter in their daily lives.

This isn't your typical abduction story. This isn't the typical 'person is abducted and then killed' or 'person is abducted but is saved and everyone lives happily ever after', it is so much more. However, there are periods throughout the book where I would start to forget that this was supposed to be a 'contemporary suspense thriller'. These periods are still intriguing, but the details do start to seem irrelevant to the overall story if you don't know that there is a 2nd book. Since there is a 2nd book, there is some stage setting going on that will likely make more sense later on and character interaction that will likely come to fruition. One very important question we are left to consider: what would you do if you were Isaac?

I think the narrator really did a great job with this performance, on a general level. He was consistent, clear, and he differentiated the character voices very well. I think he could have exaggerated some emotions

throughout the performance to add an extra layer of intensity to the story. As a narrator, he did great; however, I'm not wholly convinced that his actual voice was the best voice choice for this particular story. Regardless, he absolutely must narrate the next book. There is nothing worse than a narrator change in the midst of a series.

Excellent writing and great narration. Anxiously awaiting book 2!

I received a review copy at my request and have voluntarily left this unbiased review.

Paula Genereau says

I absolutely loved this book. It was amazing and very well written.

Jennifer (bunnyreads) says

I don't know why I like these stories about missing persons and the fear and heartache that goes with coping with this sort of tragedy. Nine time out of ten if I go out of my normal reading genres, I choose something like this book. This one was a bit different I was expecting more of a thriller type of story like *Gone Girl* (movie- I haven't read the book) but this was very drama and character heavy. Like I could imagine the writers of *This is Us* doing if they went the missing persons route.

This story follows Isaac and his family, trying to cope after his wife of nineteen years, Ramie, goes out for a run and never comes home. Their story is told with occasional interludes with the FBI as they work to solve the case and try and find Ramie.

The story covers a large amount of time giving us a good picture of their lives during Ramie's absence. It also makes it very hard to talk about without spoilers because so much of this is tied up in the characters. Isaac and his family just seem to get back on their feet again after one thing, and then are knocked down again. It does keep you reading and interested in knowing what's going to happen, and it is consistently paced throughout. However, at times it did feel that it moved too quickly from one event to the next, just barely giving us time for it to sink in and I kept thinking Ok, this is what it's been working up to and we are going to explore this, only for it to move on again.

The characters are complex, and we see them with all of their faults bared. I appreciated that, and that there was a nice balance of diverse characters. None of them were the easiest people to like though and the narrative that this is told in gives it a dissociative voice to it all, which didn't help to endear me to any of them or their problems.

Which is too bad because watching this family struggle while trying to find their footing again could have hit me with a lot more impact than it did with this combination of pov and the quick-paced style.

Overall this was a very digestible read, and waiting to see if Isaac's past transgressions catch up with him and when, had me breezing through fairly quickly. It also ends on somewhat of a turning point, I hesitate to call it a cliffie because it still feels like this portion of their lives is complete but there are definitely several

big points left unexplored.

This was a hard one to rate because there were things I really liked, things I didn't, and things I personally wanted explored more. Which just puts this story into that battle-ground between technically decent and personal enjoyment, and those are always the hardest to rate. I ended up settling in the middle with a 3.5.

If you like family drama stories with characters that are flawed and struggling to be good people then it'll probably hit all the spots for you.

A special thanks to the author Jackson Paul Baer for generously supplying a copy in exchange for a review.

Scarolet Ellis says

An American Family: A Gripping Contemporary Suspense Thriller by Jackson Baer is a wonderful story to read. This story has everything from suspenseful, crime, heartbreak, laughter to romance threw the whole story. I loved reading this story and I highly recommend this story for all who love suspens thiller stories.

I received a free copy of this book via Booksprout and am voluntarily leaving a review.

Trey Stone says

Isaac, father of two-Carter and Olivia-has his whole life turned upside down when his wife Ramie disappears one night. The FBI conclude that the case is pretty clear: she was taken by a serial killer and they'll probably never find her body. The rest of the family find it hard to adjust, as Isaac turns to drinking and his teenage children turn to other vices, all of them trying to keep the little of family they have left, together.

This is my third Baer book, and yet again, Baer writes with elegance and momentum. This book his quite fast paced to begin with, and then dials it down - way down. I could argue that the book is slow, that there isn't much plot there in the middle. But that's where Baer's writing shines, in the small details, the delicate nuances. The family that is left between the three people, the livest they try to cling to. It's captivating.

The ending both surprised me and was exactly as I thought - I won't spoil it but I'll say there is a sequel to this book. I kind of wish that more of the mystery and the dark and gritty of it all (with the disappearance and serial killer) will be dealt with in the next book, because I didn't feel like it was focused enough upon in this one. But once again, that's not what it's about. It's not about those who were taken away, it's about those remained.

Not my favorite Baer book, but I'm still a fan. He writes with passion, and it shows.

Krista Nelson says

An American Family is an addictively harrowing novel, beautifully written, entailing mystery, crime, suspense, vivid description, heartbreak, love, as well as many emotional highs and lows. It starts off quickly with an intense tragedy, and takes the reader through a thrilling tale.

The author provides dynamic character description, adding quirks (such as the dog has one eye, the attractive frugality of the main character, Isaac Childs, hobbies...) and flaws (such as addiction, lying, deep-seeded feelings for the wrong reasons, unhealthy habits...) to every last one of them. This helps the reader feel more connected with the characters. It also reminds one that good people make mistakes, and it's important to move forward and learn from those mishaps, daily.

The plot is riddled with easy, functional-transitioning between storylines, enticing suspense, heartbreaking, tragic events, the ability to rise above rock-bottom, and the realistic reactions/behaviors from characters, as opposed to the typical god-like complex main characters tend to have, especially in the fiction genre. There are no loose-ends, and its ending provides a promising foundation for the second book in the series, Life After Death.

I loved reading this book, to say the least. I'm enamored by the writing, the creativity, the depth of the characters, how the story all comes together in the end, and the roller coaster of emotions evoked from each page.

I've read two other books by Mr. Baer; The Earth Bleeds Red and The Lights Will Never Fade. Both are full of the same magical mystery, but stand strong with their own alluring plots. These plots entail crime, chilling discoveries, amazing writing, love, hate, and closure. I highly recommend reading everything this author has written, and I can't wait to get started on Life After Death.

allieereads says

How I would describe this story is a complex nature of the human experience. The beauty of Jackson Baer's writing, and by that I mean his character development, his world building and everything in between, is that he is unafraid to write what it means to be in reality. There is an incredible humanness to the characters, in that they are definitely not perfect and they have flaws like actual real people do. One of my pet peeves in fiction, and especially young adult fiction though current YA is moving away from this trend thank god, is writing characters who are literally two-dimensional robots. Those characters where you can't emotionally connect with, who are written as though they are so absolutely perfect and their 'problems' are ridiculously non-issues? Well, An American Family is nothing like that, which just showcases the talent that Jackson Baer has in being able to craft such a real narrative with real-life characters.

In terms of the actual storyline, An American Family is very much driven by its characters. It explores the aftermath of Ramie's (Isaac's wife) disappearance on Isaac, his daughter and his son whereby, their layers are peeled one by one and you are confronted with raw characters who know of their shortcomings. Not only was the family dynamics compelling, but the actual FBI case was fantastically written. To be quite honest, that was the main aspect of the novel that intrigued me. The thriller and suspenseful nature of the case overall was written with such panache that I could not stop reading. I was on the edge of my seat.

Although, I must also admit that the only reason why I have rated this novel a 4 out of 5 stars is the result of two reasons. For one, I was reading *An American Family* whilst I was attempting to finish my second last assignment of the semester, so I was stressed and anxious which then resulted in me slightly losing interest in the novel about halfway through. This was rectified though - I just needed to breathe, have a cup of tea and read in the sunlight, it was wonderful. The second thing I noticed, however, was that at times the dialogue between the characters seemed forced and did not quite flow like a conversation. It was not an overwhelming issue though, and the actual writing of the narrative was incredibly articulate and the emotionality of the story was powerful.

An American Family is the first novel in Jackson Baer's new two-part series of the same name, and is out now! I would recommend this as a read, especially if suspenseful thrillers with raw and incredibly real characters, this would be the book for you.

Until next time, bookish friends! Happy reading!

Allie

Jessica says

All my reviews can be found at: <http://jessicasreadingroom.com>

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This review will post on my site on 12/19

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3.5 stars rounded up to 4 for Goodreads

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*An American Family* is a character driven novel with a family of imperfect people. Each character has issues, the main focus is Isaac. It was hard to like and feel for him. This family went through something terrible that no one should experience but Isaac's faults just kept coming.

The novel is far from perfect: the writing comes off as juvenile and could have been written better. For example, in the first chapter there were constant mentions of the crime shows that Isaac and Ramie watch and enjoy. I found myself wondering what I got myself into... and then something unexpected happened: I became invested in the story! I am from Georgia as is Baer, so I think part of what drew me in to the novel was hearing about locations I know: Whitlock in Marietta, The Chicken and the Egg (I have not eaten there yet, but know about it). I kept wondering if 'The Big Chicken' was going to make an 'appearance' in the novel. (It doesn't but that would have been awesome!).

I wanted to know how each family member was going to cope and move on from their loss. Many of the twists were predictable, except for that final twist. There is a second book called *Life After Death* which you will want to start once you finish *An American Family*. I am listening to it now and should have it done quickly with the review posted soon.

Special thanks to the author for sending me an audio copy to listen to and review via Love Books Group Tours.

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## **FNM says**

Thank you to the author for providing me with a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

I went into this book expecting a missing person mystery type of book, which it is, what I wasn't expecting was it to be so character driven. The story follows Issac Childs and his two children, Carter and Olivia, as they deal with the disappearance and presumed murder of their mother Ramie.

The story itself is fairly fast moving and as I mentioned it is a very character driven novel, focusing more on the characters reactions, feelings, and struggles than a full out focus on the murder/mystery story which is going on. To be honest this made it a more enjoyable read for me as I do prefer more character focus. Each character has their own 'secrets' or struggles they need to work through, as they all struggle with their grief.

This is definitely a book that will keep you wanting to read more as there is more than one twist or turn involved to keep you engaged. Some parts were actually way more creepy and sinister than I was anticipating which was great as well. The ending left on a great cliffhanger and really made me excited to read the next book. (In fact, that's exactly what I did as soon as I finished haha). I think I would have preferred some of the issues that each character was facing to have been a bit more focused on and with a clearer resolution as the book did move quite fast at times. However, it was a great and compelling read.

Rating: 4/5

Would I read again: Yes

Would I Recommend: Yes

Would I read another book from this author: Yes

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## **Alison says**

5 Excellent and Compelling Stars!!!

I was given this book in tun for an honest review.

Isaac Childs has it all, the perfect life, the perfect wife, or does he? When his wife disappears, Isaac finds his life turned upside down. When opportunity arises, he chooses to move on; life is unpredictable, will Isaac's past catch up with him, and destroy everything?

This is the first book of Jackson Baer's I have read; I was not disappointed with this story or Jackson's writing. He has an excellent writing style that draws you in and has you hooked from early on. Isaac and his family intrigued me, it's clear there is a lot to them as individuals and as a family.

This isn't your typical crime story, this is about a man and his family who are dealt a seriously heart-breaking shock, one that changes their lives for ever and changes who they are. In some ways we see Isaac



grow and in others we see the constant turmoil he lives with regarding his past choices and mistakes. Isaac's children are also intriguing and complex characters, they both have their own struggles and secrets, which has intensified since the disappearance of their mother.

I loved that this story also gave us the view from the FBI as they investigated the disappearance of Isaac's wife, they too, were intriguing and interesting characters.

Although to a degree I felt I knew where this story was going towards the end of this first book, in some ways it still came as a surprise, and I'm looking forward to continuing their story with book #2.

Crime, Mystery, Suspense, Romance, Saga, this story has it all! Jackson Baer has written an excellent and compelling story.

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### **Shelleymae O'Donnell says**

Well thought out and written mystery that wouldn't be a mystery without the twists and turns that kept coming! I also liked that the author considered what happens when someone is presumed dead.. and how life can go on.

The characters are well formed and the family dynamics realistic. You can relate.

There is also the proverbial wrench thrown in the mix and, also, urrrrrr. a cliffhanger... so here I go to #2.

If you like a series then here you go...

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### **Tanya says**

His wife is missing and he struggles to cope with keeping his children going and his life. He is hiding secrets. His wife is decorated dead. Now what will he do? See what his secret is and if his wife is really dead

I received a free copy of this book via Booksprout and am voluntarily leaving a review.

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### **C.K. Phillips says**

An American Family could be any happy family in the U.S. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. One bad event can change a family's whole existence and this happens to Ramie when she goes out one evening for her run. For the next two years, we follow Isaac as he struggles to overcome his grief and get on with his life. He creates a new life with his family only to see it explode when a shocking development concerning Ramie's disappearance emerges. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

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### **Jena Henry says**

Crime and suspense thrillers are not my usual "go-to" genre. The author asked me to review his book, and I

was intrigued by the title and the cover, so why not try something a bit darker than my usual reads?

The suspense begins on the first page of this book. Isaac Childs is waiting for his wife to come home. Many of us have endured this type of situation- peeking out the window, checking the clock, texting, as one's mind churns from "Where is she...why couldn't she let me know...should I call the police...?"

We also meet Isaac's two children and we find out more about this family's life, which seems to be "picture-perfect." However, chapter by chapter, this illusion is eroded as we see that father, son, daughter and even the missing mother all have secrets and problems. In addition to the family situation, we get to see the FBI in action.

This story has good bones with an intriguing plot and damaged but compelling characters. However, this is not fine literature. This book presents "just the facts". If you like gritty realism, and some surprising twists, then you will find this be a quick and interesting read.

Thanks to the author for a review copy. This is my honest review.

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