



The Quiet Child

John Burley

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From the award-winning author of *The Absence of Mercy*, comes a gripping and darkly psychological novel about family, suspicion, and the price we are willing to pay to protect those we love the most.

It's the summer of 1954, and the residents of Cottonwood, California, are dying. At the center of it all is six-year-old Danny McCray, a strange and silent child the townspeople regard with fear and superstition, and who appears to bring illness and ruin to those around him. Even his own mother is plagued by a disease that is slowly consuming her.

Sheriff Jim Kent, increasingly aware of the whispers and rumors surrounding the boy, has watched the people of his town suffer—and he worries someone might take drastic action to protect their loved ones. Then a stranger arrives, and Danny and his ten-year-old brother, Sean, go missing. In the search that follows, everyone is a suspect, and the consequences of finding the two brothers may be worse than not finding them at all.

The Quiet Child Details

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From Reader Review *The Quiet Child* for online ebook

LJ says

First Sentence: Michael McCray squinted into the low-hanging sun as he swung the liberty blue Mercury four-door into the Century Grocery parking lot off Gas Point Road.

Danny and Sen McCray are 6- and 10-years-old respectively when they go to the market with their father, Michael. There have always been rumors about Danny, who doesn't talk, being the cause of sickness in the town and to his own mother. When a man steals McCray's car, with the boys inside, Sheriff Jim Kent ignores those who say the town may be better off with Danny and sets off to help find him

What a wonderfully deceptive story. There is an oppressive spirit to both the characters and—"Outside, the sun rose further in the sky, but despite the windows and open doorway, little of the light seemed to penetrate the dim interior. To Jim's eye, there was no architectural reason for why this should be so, only that this was what he'd come to recognize as a waiting house: a homestead turned inward, sheltering its occupants from crisis or illness, attempting to protect them until the worse of it passed."

One doesn't realize how much technology has impacted even police work until faced with trying to trace a call in the 1950s. Burley makes even that information interesting.

Jim Kent, the retired plumber turned town sheriff, is such a good character with his determination to find the missing children. One wouldn't mind seeing him again.

"The Quiet Child" is a story of to what superstition and desperation can lead. It is a disturbing but very good read.

THE QUIET CHILD (Psy Thriller-Michael McCray-Cottonwood, CA-1954) – VG

Burley, John – Standalone

William Morrow, 2017

Cindy says

I loved this book! When I finished it my hands were cold and clammy and my brain abuzz thinking about the ending! The residents of Cottonwood are suspicious and leery of Danny, a mute 6 year boy. People are dying or becoming ill and all fingers point to this little boy. Even Danny's mother is ill and his father showing signs of tremors. Then because of one wrong decision Danny and his older brother go missing. The search that follows is intense and keeps building till the very end. I'm definitely recommending this book that I won from Goodreads. It's a mix of Koontz/John Hart/King. Found me another new author! 4.5 stars

Karen says

Wow! A pretty dark plot and I certainly didn't see what was coming at the end! Quite an excellent psychological thriller!

Kari says

I have really enjoyed the other book that I have read by this author. So, I went into this book with high expectations. I ended up being drawn right into the story right away. I actually read this entire book on my three hour flight last week. It's kind of hard to talk about this book without giving away spoilers, so I'm not going to try. There are a few surprises and the book definitely took a turn that I wasn't expecting.

I had to sit on it for a few days to really digest the story and the ending. To be honest, I'm still not sure how I feel. And maybe that is what the book was supposed to do...be one that will stick with me for a long time. I liked it and I didn't at the same time. I was kind of disturbed by some of the events in the story. But at the same time, I had to applaud one decision that Michael made because in the end it had a positive result, but for a huge price.

I'm definitely recommending this story. It's well written and I loved the setting. Give it a try and see what you think.

Tracey says

Ever watch those old episodes of Alfred Hitchcock Presents? This is like those...but a book.

3 no 7 says

“The Quiet Child” by John Burley is a book filled with non-stop suspense, mystery, suspicion, and surprises. It is difficult to write a review without spoilers because every event is tied to another. In the summer of 1954, the residents of the small town of Cottonwood in California are shaken by the blatant daylight kidnapping of two children; the family car was stolen with Danny and Sean McCray inside. The search for the boys is complicated because the younger boy, Danny, is a “quiet child” and does not speak.

A dark cloud hangs over the residents of Cottonwood as they struggle with a multitude of concerns, the kidnapping of course, but also the economy, the quality of life in the small town, and the health and well-being of friends and family. Things are much more complicated than they seem on the surface, and that ambiguity is the gripping part of the story.

Burley has constructed a story so compelling and so full of twists, turns, and startling revelations that it is difficult to describe more of the plot without giving away critical details. Just be advised that each page contains a tiny kink, a compelling question, or an unanticipated turn. The plot is unpredictable and compelling, and every action has a dark side and an unexpected consequence. Burke drops the details slowly, bit by bit, throughout the narrative. Just when things seem to be coming together, here comes another complication. No one is truthful, and not everything is as it appears.

“The Quiet Child” is as compelling as it is deceptive; nothing is as it seems. Tension, anticipation, and suspense drag readers into the story. I could not put it down; I was stunned on every page. And yes, it ends with a HUGE bombshell. I heard John Burley speak about “The Quiet Child” at The Book Carnival in Orange, Ca. He is an interesting speaker, and his book is unforgettable.

?Karen says

Dang, this is one strange and unique book. Being a Hitchcock fan, I couldn't help but be reminded of his shows broadcast back in the 1960s. This book takes place in the 50s. It is about a family that has had its share of bad luck and illnesses, and a town that shares in it all. A father leaves his mute son in the car while he and the older son run into the store for something. The car is stolen with the boy inside, but not until the older son manages his way into the passenger seat to save the day and gets himself kidnapped as well. From there it just gets weirder and sadder. At times I couldn't believe what I was reading (what kind of mind comes up with this stuff?); other times I felt a pervasive sadness around all the people and just wanted to hug them (most of them anyway). I need to see what else this author has done.

Elaine says

The Quiet Child reminded me of that old *Twilight Zone* episode where a local boy in the community can wreak havoc with his psychic powers so everyone in the town pretends to be happy and jolly except the child in question is a mute six year old and does not seek to cause harm intentionally.

It is the tale of two kidnapped young brothers, the animosity and fear of a narrow minded community and the lengths to which a father and husband will go to protect his family, at the cost of innocent lives.

Danny is a mute six year old. And is the unlikely cause of chronic illness and death in the small community of Cottonwood, California. His mother is suffering from ALS, his aunt is a breast cancer survivor, and now his father is falling ill. When he and his oldest brother Sean are kidnapped in an attempted carjacking go wrong, the local sheriff, detectives and the boys' father are hot on their tail but little did they know that the kidnapping is not what it seems.

The book asks *"How far will you go to save your family and the people you love? How far will prejudice and fear push you to do the most imaginable and still be able to live with yourself?"*

There are a few twists you don't see coming (that poor detective) and others you may guess like I did (the true cause of the town and family's misfortune) but I enjoyed the story; it was honest, sad but heartfelt and is not so much a supernatural story but one about family, love and the heartbreak that comes with loss and the most brutal of sacrifices.

Becky says

Cottonwood, California is a small town. The kind of town too small for its own police force, where the sheriff and the firemen are volunteer. The kind of town where everyone knows everyone's name and everyone's stories.

Kate McCray has always called Cottonwood home, even before she was a McCray. So of course everyone knows Kate and her husband, Michael. And when Kate becomes sick, everyone sympathizes. But Kate and Michael have two sons, Sean and Danny. And Danny doesn't speak. Not only that, but ever since Danny was born, people in Cottonwood have been getting sick. And small town gossip says it's something to do with Danny. So when Danny and Sean are kidnapped, some people think maybe it's for the best that Danny is gone.

In spite of all of that, Sheriff Jim Kent is determined to find the boys. Even when almost a week has gone by without any clue as to their whereabouts, he isn't ready to give up. It's not until Michael takes off on his own, though, that Jim gets his first big lead.

The Quiet Child makes for a great latest from Burley.

First, there are the twists I've come to expect from one of his books. And yes, there are twists here. And even though I had them figured, it actually didn't make the book any less gripping.

Second, there's the setting. Not only is this set in a tiny town where everyone knows everyone, it's set in the 1950s. Which makes tracking down two missing boys a different sort of animal than today. And I really appreciated the attention to detail in that regard. There's a piece where Kent and the two detectives assigned to the case end up having to trace a phone call that really brings this home for the reader.

Finally, though, this is a story about family. It's about how far you'd go to protect the people you love. Michael is our predominant narrator here and he's struggling. He's struggling as a father and as a husband. His wife is dying, his youngest son doesn't speak, and he knows all too well what the townspeople say about the boy. As the story builds, it becomes clear just why people have attached this superstition to the boy who, by all accounts (and by the pieces we get from his POV), is a good kid. And yet, as the reader you have to wonder if there's merit to the belief that he could be causing the town so much pain. And why.

Not that Burley gives us a why in the end. Which is ok too, because it means this is one that sticks with you!

Deb says

I am going to try to review *The Quiet Child* as vaguely as possible, because it is a book that could easily be spoiled with too many details and if you like dark and twisty thrillers, you will want to go into it not knowing too much about it. It's set in 1954 Cottonwood, California--interesting to me because Cottonwood is a real town and I lived in nearby Redding as a child--so the town and landscape felt familiar--even if I lived there in the 1970s. Cottonwood is a small town where everyone knows each other, or about each other, which has not been easy on the McCray family as most of the town believes that their six-year-old son, Danny, is the cause of illness and other maladies in the town and he is regarded with suspicion. This isn't easy on his parents--his mother is suffering and weakening from her own illness and his father, Michael, a local high school teacher is trying to cope. While Michael is getting ice cream from the store with Danny and Sean (Danny's 10-year-old brother), a stranger drives off with Michael's car and the boys. Local plumber and part-time Cottonwood Sheriff Jim Kent, along with two Shasta County Sheriff's detectives vow to bring them home--despite the rumors and negative feelings of the town about Danny.

I like the historical aspects of police work in the 1950s--it definitely doesn't make crime solving easy, not having the technology we have today. The author keeps the perspective bouncing around several different

characters and keeps the chapters short, building the tension steadily and making the pages fly by. There were several twists and although I had parts figured out, there were some things I did not see coming--which I always enjoy. The book is unsettling--after all it is missing children and it seems that besides their mother and the sheriff, not a lot of people seem to really want Danny back in town--which is something that made me stop and think a bit. The story and its ending have some ambiguity--but it works in this case. This is my first book from John Burley (it's his third), but with storytelling like this, I am sure it won't be my last.

You can see my full review and a recipe inspired by my reading on my blog post here:
<http://kahakaikitchen.blogspot.com/20...>

Note: A review copy of "The Quiet Child" was provided to me by the author and the publisher, Harper Collins, via TLC Book Tours. I was not compensated for this review and as always, my thoughts and opinions are my own.

Cathy Ryan says

Set in 1950s California, the McCray family live in the small town of Cottonwood. Kate McCray was born and bred there and when she married Michael McCray that's where they set up home. Their two boys, Sean and Danny, ten and six respectively, complete their family. Michael adores his wife and boys but things aren't going well. Danny has never spoken or made a sound, although he's perfectly healthy. Kate is sick, with her condition worsening. Michael is beginning to be afflicted by tremors. The residents of the town see Danny as a threat, somehow causing the deaths and illnesses within the community. They're fearful, superstitious of someone different, regardless of the fact he is just a child, who they see as impaired, even cursed.

Then Sean and Danny are snatched from the parking area of the market where Michael had taken them to get ice cream, and driven away in the family's stolen car.

Sheriff Jim Kent coordinates with two detectives from the Shasta County Sheriff's department, partners Tony DeLuca and John Pierce. He, and they, are determined to do everything in their power to get the boys back. The investigation turns up little hard evidence over the following days, and then Michael takes off alone to find his sons.

The Quiet Child is a haunting and tense mystery, alternating between the boys' captivity and the desperation of the hunt to find them. The contrast between police investigations then and now is huge, you forget and take for granted just how much things have moved on. Back then even tracing a phone call required considerable time and effort. With lots of vivid imagery and detailing, the narrative moves along relentlessly with blindsiding twists.

My first book by John Burley and I enjoyed the writing style very much. The short chapters work well in building tension and suspense. Popular culture references, along with the derogatory attitude towards women in the workplace, the details and insight into the way the police worked, all place the story exactly in the era it's meant to be.

The story is told predominantly from Michael's point of view, but several other third person perspectives are introduced, giving a rounded picture and a good sense of the characters and their innermost thoughts. Basically, this is about family, tragedy and loss. And how far desperation might drive a person, however

misguided the reasoning or terrible the consequences. It took me a while to gather my thoughts when I'd finished listening to *The Quiet Child* and even now the story continues to resonate.

MacLeod Andrews gives an impressive performance, with voices perfectly matched to the characters.

Victoria says

An easy read that I got through pretty quickly. A bit slow in the middle but the last 1/3 is great! Starts off with a kidnapping that could so easily be like so many other missing children, traumatised parents, stories... and if it had been just that I would've switched off early doors. But there's quite a bit more to this one and worth getting right to the end.

I read someone else refer to a Hitchcock type TV story and I was transported back to *Tales of the Unexpected*.....

Ali K says

This was a great read. I received it as a giveaway. When reading the book sleeve I wasn't sure if it was a book that I would be able to get into but once I started reading I couldn't put it down.

Kiwi Begs2Differ \ says

Cottonwood, California, 1954. From the outside, the McCrays are a normal family, mum and dad, Michael, Kate and the two brothers Sean and Danny. Danny is the youngest and a quiet child, at six hasn't yet uttered a word, his big brother Sean, 10 y.o., is fiercely protective and watches out for him.

One fatal morning, while buying ice cream at a store, Michael realizes with horror that someone has stolen his car and abducted his two sons.

Immediately the police starts the search, the county detectives investigating the kidnapping learn of the local gossip surrounding the family: since the birth of Danny, the McCrays have suffered an suspicious number of illness and tragedies. Danny has a reputation for "poisoning" people near him, it seems that anyone who comes in contact with the younger child, gets sick or dies in a short time.

This is a well-written mystery novel about the complexities of family life where things are not as they seems. It held out my interest throughout. Watch out for a couple of big twists.

Donna says

In 1954 in the small town of Cottonwood, California, teacher Michael Mccray lives with his wife Kate and sons 6 year old Danny and 10 year old Sean. Kate is very ill and emaciated from a disease that is slowly stealing her life. Kate's sister had breast cancer and her husband committed suicide not long ago. Many of the townspeople have health issues and they seem to blame little Danny. He was born prematurely and has never spoken a single word and the townspeople think he is somehow infecting everyone around him.

Michael McCray takes his sons to pick up some ice cream at the local store. While he's in the store, a man steals his car with the boys inside. Volunteer Sheriff Jim Kent is determined to bring those boys home at whatever cost.

After just a few chapters, I had a number of questions. What was wrong with Kate? Are the townspeople dying due to some environmental issue? Why were the boys taken? Is this book going to end badly?

Wow, this was a compelling and emotional read. I could feel the love Michael had for Kate just seeping off the pages. I could also feel the determination and good heartedness coming from Sheriff Kent and the 2 detectives assigned to the case. I loved the way Sean was Danny's champion.

I felt such sadness at different times in the story. I certainly never anticipated the ending.

I will be looking for more books by this author.
