



## Missing Max

*Karen Young*

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## **Missing Max Karen Young**

When baby Max is kidnapped during Mardi Gras, Jane and Kyle Madison's life falls apart. What their daughter, Melanie, does next is unthinkable.

Max vanished into thin air while in the care of his teenage sister, Melanie. Six months later, the family is a shadow of its former self: Melanie blames herself and is acting out and rebellious; Jane is obsessed with finding Max; and Kyle, a lawyer, struggles to cope with his own grief—and a persistent suspicion that one of his cases is connected to Max's disappearance.

With her family in turmoil and her marriage on the rocks, Jane thinks things can't get any worse. Then when an affair and an unexpected pregnancy threaten to tear the Madisons' lives apart, an anonymous caller leads to a break in the case. Can a second kidnapping bring their family back together?

## **Missing Max Details**

Date : Published June 15th 2010 by Howard Books

ISBN : 9781416587491

Author : Karen Young

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Fiction, Suspense, Christian Fiction, Mystery

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## From Reader Review Missing Max for online ebook

### Kristina says

It's Mardi Gras in New Orleans and anything can happen. Sixteen year-old Melanie was supposed to have a "date" with her dad to go watch the parade, but when her dad decides to work instead, her mom, Jane steps in and takes both Melanie and her six month old brother, Max to the parade. Jane leaves Max with Melanie while she steps off to grab some food and as she is standing in line she receives a phone call. Max is missing.

As one can only imagine, Max's abduction not only shakes the Madison family, begins to pull it apart at the seams. Melanie begins acting out and Kyle, Jane's husband and Max's father becomes distant. Jane focuses all her spare energy on helping find lost children and in doing so, falls behind at both work and home. Jane refuses to give up hope that they will find Max alive and her hope is only emboldened as someone begins to stalk Jane. Eventually Jane begins to think that one of her cases could be connected to Max's disappearance. As time progresses and her stalker gets more and more bold, Jane is forced to face the question, "Did she bring this upon Max?"

Missing Max covers an all too familiar plot--child abduction. Even so, I think Karen Young has put a whole new spin on this topic. I also think that no matter how many times a story is written on the basis of child abduction, the author will continue to garner readers because children are a topic to which most women can easily relate. Karen Young takes this topic and infuses it with suspense and unexpected twists. I never saw Melanie's actions coming and when I found out what exactly she had done, I was shocked, but Young's writing made it entirely believable and plausible. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it to any of my readers!

A copy of this title was provided for review purposes by Glass Road PR. Thank you.

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### Paul Pessolano says

Yes, this is a romance novel. Yes, I did read it. Yes, I did love it.

"Missing Max" fits more in the category of fiction/literature or mystery/thriller.

Janed and Kyle Madison are lawyers and have a young son, Max, and daughter, Melanie. Jane, Melanie, Max, and some friends go to Mardi Gras. Melanie is left in charge of Max and when she is distracted Max is kidnapped.

The Madison home is torn apart with each person blaming themselves for Max's disappearance. Melanie takes it the hardest and feels the only way to right the situation is to become pregnant and give the baby to Jane and Kyle as a replacement for the lost Max. Of course, this only makes things worse. We now have a pregnant sixteen year old, and Kyle has left the bedroom to live in a spare room and divorce may be on the horizon. This makes matters worse for Melanie because now she believes that her pregnancy will be for nothing. She becomes surly and has a hard time getting along with Jane.

Kyle and Jane have gone through their files looking for someone in their past that may have a grudge against them and who may have taken Max to spite them.

Things become downright scary when Jane starts receiving phone calls about Max, and the family receives a diabolical package in the mail that leads them to believe that Max is alive but probably in grave danger.

The situation comes to a head when Melanie is kidnapped and Kyle and Jane begin a race to save both of their children. They must locate where the children are being held while a violent summer storm has caused flooding and downed trees.

A wonderful story that will keep the reader totally engrossed in the Madison's lives until the very end. A story that shows how fragile our lives can be, but also how the human heart and soul can oversome adversity, and how one can become stronger through love, affection, and understanding.

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### **Jennifer says**

From My Blog...[return][return]Missing Max by Karen Young is a story of heartbreakin loss and a family torn apart by a kidnapping . Melanie wants to attend the Mardi Gras festivities but her father Kyle, a high-powered attorney, decides he needs to work that night. Feeling sorry for her stepdaughter, Jane bundles up 6-month-old Max to take Melanie to view the Mardi Gras parade. While downtown Jane goes off to buy snacks leaving 16-year-old Melanie in charge of Max. Unfortunately for all concerned, Max is abducted while Melanie's back is turned to chat with friends. Later Max's pram and one bootie are recovered. While the initial outline is by no means new, Young does a stellar job at showing the reader how the abduction of Max affects the entire Madison family and how guilt and blame can lead to extremely destructive behaviours.

Missing Max has the added twist of mysterious late night phone calls where all one hears is a baby crying in the distance. I was drawn into the story from the beginning and while some aspects were predictable, such as the family falling apart, the story goes above and beyond the predictable and turns into a delicious suspense novel with enough plot twists to keep the reader guessing. Missing Max is an excellent story about love, loss, and the healing powers of forgiveness. I would recommend Missing Max to anyone looking for a good, faced paced read.

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### **Deborah Boutwell says**

"But after looking at Max's photo, a whisper of fear had sneaked in to remind her of what could happen to Melanie."

Kyle & Jane Madison, Kyle's daughter, Melanie.....all caught in the aftermath of the kidnapping of Max...only 6 months old....why did God allow it?

Kyle was becoming a ghost and Melanie was morphing into a stranger and their home was a shadow of what it once was. Jane must prove to her employers that she hasn't completely put her life on hold and get back to her regular routine in the law office and at home. Just when she starts to buckle down and focus on what she can do, Kyle moves into the guest bedroom, Melanie turns up pregnant and someone is trying to run Jane off the road and terrorize her.

"Why is this happening to me? I mean, if there is a God, why is he heaping so much trouble on me? Is there some message I'm supposed to get out of having my baby kidnapped? Am I supposed to somehow find a lesson in all this? Doesn't seem like a very loving God to me."

The one word I would use to sum up this book...drama. If it could happen, it will, most of the time all in the same day. This is a "who-done-it" story that I never did figure out until the end.

Missing Max is exactly what this story is about. Everyone is missing Max and not dealing with it very well. Jane devotes so much time to a child search agency that she neglects her family. Kyle refuses to deal with his emotions and dives into work. Melanie decides that since it was her fault Max was taken (while she was supposed to be watching him) that she will get pregnant and give her parents a child to replace him. In the background are the only godly influences, their neighbors the O'Brians, Christine (Jane's best friend and her son Daniel, the father of Melanie's child) and let's not forget Sam, the officer in charge of Max's kidnapping. He's handsome, single, and attracted to Jane.

This was an emotional read. In the midst of telling the Madison's story, it also tells the sad story of child abuse and neglect. Jane and Kyle are constantly being called into the station or hospital to identify a child that has been found. It's heartbreak to realize that those stories are far from fiction.

Then there is the doctor that does illegal adoptions and has more demand than babies...could one of those babies be Max? Since both Jane and Kyle are lawyers, could one of their clients or connections to their client be out for revenge?

As Karen Young states in her acknowledgement page, this was a hard story to write....it was also a hard story to read. There was no spots of laughter, no joy...it was sad, bringing me to tears many times....maybe because it was so near the truth. When we are hurting, we normally pull away from the very ones that we need to be getting closer to. Tragedy can sometimes bring more tragedy in a family. There were moments of "too much stuff is happening at once to this family", but isn't that just like real life?

I felt that the faith aspect of the story was weak even to the point of the only godly characters were stumbling in their faith when met with adverse situations. But I kept reading because it held my attention. I wanted to know who took Max and why....would Jane and Kyle get their act together as a couple and as parents...and poor Melanie...16 and hormonal!

I felt it was a good, basic suspense novel that kept me reading to the end. I walked away from the book with my eyes a little more open on the aspect of child adductions and recovery and what the family goes through.

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### **Christy Lockstein says**

Missing Max by Karen Young is the story of every mother's worst nightmare. While watching the parade at Mardi Gras, Jane Madison asked stepdaughter, sixteen-year-old Melanie, to watch Max, her six-month-old son, for just a few moments. The boy disappeared while Mellie was talking to some of her friends. Police eventually find his stroller with only one shoe left behind. Seven months later, the family is falling apart in the wake of Max's disappearance. Jane has been spending all of her time at a missing child center, leaving husband Kyle and Melanie feeling abandoned and angry. When Jane starts receiving strange phone calls with a baby crying in the background, she at first dismisses them as crank calls, but she is soon being stalked by someone deranged who just may know what happened to Max. Young has crafted a taut and frightening story. When I first started reading the book, I only intended to read a few pages before bed, but the next thing I knew it was 2 am. I just couldn't put it down. Young takes care for the reader to empathize with all of the major characters and includes a faith element without shoving it down the reader's throat. It's a haunting

story that will linger with readers.

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### **Peggy says**

AWESOME A must read for every parent.

What one family goes through when a child goes missing none of us truly understand.

This family goes through so much but manages to pull it together and stay strong beyond anyone but they do and not without their share of pain and heartache either.

I am so very glad I read this book it was not only great and hard to put down it was well worth reading.

So next time you hear of a child missing stop say a little prayer for the child and their family because the family is having it very hard.

A must read for anyone very touching.

I will not spoil this book by saying what they go through but will say give it a read well worth it.

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### **Cindy says**

Jane and Kyle Madison are both successful lawyers. Busy, too busy often. It is Mardi Gras and Kyle promised to take Melanie their sixteen year old daughter, but finds himself tied up at the office, so Jane agrees to take Melanie, even though baby Max is fussy and teething. Her best friend and neighbor Christine joins them. While gone to buy food for the teens, someone snatches Max. A nightmare that most parents pray never happens to them begins.

The kidnapping of Max, stretches the Madison family to the point of breaking. Melanie is defiant, rude and hateful to Jane, Kyle blames Jane and Jane is blaming herself and perhaps subconsciously blaming Melanie. This family is on the verge of breaking apart. A stalker, who keeps trying to get to Jane brings Kyle and Jane together, but will they ever find baby Max?

This book is an attention grabber, it was hard to put it down, even though I was nodding off from exhaustion, I still wanted to read on and see what would happen. I loved the writing style and this author is very good at word pictures and helping you to see the absolute despair this family faced. I really don't have the space or the words to truly describe how much I loved this book!! 319 pages US \$14.99 5 stars!!!

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This book was provided for review purposes only, no payment of any type was received for this review.

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### **Pam says**

Could not get past the first 50 pages. After that I looked up reviews and skimmed sections as well as the ending chapter. The first few pages were OK but they didn't get any better and I was pretty sure I was going to be wasting my time but I hate to quit so tried to keep going but it just wasn't working for me. I hate no

finishing but time is getting short and I can no longer spend time reading something that I wasn't enjoying very much.

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### **Laura says**

Title: MISSING MAX

Author: Karen Young

Publisher: Howard Books

June 2010

ISBN: 978-1-4165-8749-1

Genre: Inspirational/women's fiction

Jane didn't really want to take her sixteen year old step-daughter, Melanie, to the parade, but her husband, Kyle, had to work, so she had to bundle up her six-month-old son, Max, and take him along too. When Melanie got hungry, Jane left Max in Melanie's care and went to order food. But before she even received her food someone kidnapped Max while Melanie's attention was distracted.

Now Melanie, Jane, and Kyle are struggling to adjust to the Max size hole in their lives. Melanie is no longer happy, but withdrawn and angry. Kyle and Jane are having marital problems. Jane can't focus on her job and is volunteering too many hours at the missing children's center.

Lead after lead goes no where, and weeks go by with no word. Is there any hope that Max will ever be found, alive?

MISSING MAX is the first book I've read by award winning author, Karen Young, but it certainly won't be the last. When I read the backcover copy of this book I didn't think it would sound much like a book I would be too interested in, but I was pleasantly surprised.

The story telling pretty much gripped me from page one, and kept my attention all the way through the book. Parts of it might be construed as a bit contrived, but they don't stand out too much in the reading—only in the thinking back after you finished turning the last page.

The characters are realistically developed, though sometimes I wanted to shake Melanie and Kyle for their actions. And I have to say that I love Daniel, the boy "next door." He is a sweetheart. Don't miss MISSING MAX. \$14.99. 320 pages.

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### **Ruth says**

Missing Max: A Novel was a fun easy read with a little suspense. However, I think reading it requires a heavy suspension of disbelief. In other words, I found the basic plot highly unlikely to occur. I always enjoy reading novels set in and around my home in New Orleans, but Missing Max: A Novel could have used a pre-publishing read-through by someone from New Orleans. The precipitating event for the whole book was a kidnapping that took place on Mardi Gras Day. The dad, an attorney, was at his office on Poydras Street while his wife and kids were in the French Quarter watching a parade lumber down Bourbon Street. If dad

was an attorney who had an office on Poydras Street, he likely had a reserved parking space in the building, and that's where the family car was parked. After going upstairs to use the facilities (only building tenants with potty passes allowed in) the whole family would have walked to St. Charles to see the parade. No one in Dad's office would have been working on Mardi Gras; if Dad really needed to work, he would have stayed home. One reason they would have caught the parade on St. Charles is because Mardi Gras parades aren't allowed in the French Quarter, except for a couple of very small parades well before Fat Tuesday. Anyone with any sense at all knows that you don't take kids or teens to the French Quarter on Mardi Gras--that's adult territory. Families belong on St. Charles and indecent exposure there will get you arrested, not beads. The kidnapped baby's stroller was found at the Riverwalk--which is a mall that is locked up tight on Mardi Gras.

Missing Max: A Novel is the story of what happens to the parents and sister of a baby who is kidnapped. As often happens in such situations, each is dealing with his or her own grief, and each is also dealing with guilt--Dad was at the office rather than with the teen, so Mom had to take her to the parade; Mom was getting snacks when the kidnapping occurred--she had left the baby with the teen and her (Mom's) best friend, who responded to an emergency. The teen was flirting with some boys on the float and when she turned her head back, the stroller was missing. As also happens in such situations, the family members pull away from each other in their grief. It is Christian fiction though only mildly so. At the beginning of the book, Jane, the mom, just doesn't have time for religion or church. Her friend encourages her to go to church but she'd rather relax on Sunday morning. When baby Max is lost, she is angry at God; then towards the end she realizes that God is there for her, and she decides to start going to church--but like much of the book, it just doesn't ring true, or maybe it is more accurate to say that it seemed more like she was accepting a way to spend time with a friend than like she had really acquired faith--kind of like she finally agreed to go with her friend to get her nails done on Sat. morning. The religion in the book wasn't preachy, but it really didn't seem to have anything to do with the story. There is a real pro-life moment .

As I said before, it is a fun read, I really figured out pretty quickly that it would have a happy ending; the tone just wasn't dark enough for any other conclusion. In a lot of ways I could identify with Jane's "keep busy so you don't have to deal with the pain" way of handling things. I found the teen daughter's solution far-fetched--or at least the reasoning behind it was far-fetched. Still, the plot moved and kept me engaged and besides a few eyerolls when the author talked about New Orleans, I did enjoy the read.

Grade: B-

Thanks to Rebeca at Glass Roads for the complimentary review copy of this book.

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### **Jan Crow says**

MISSING MAX

By Karen Young

PAL Review by Jan Crow

Jane and Kyle Madison are riding high. They have a six-month old son Max, a sixteen year old daughter Melanie. Both Jane and Kyle have successful law careers. Things couldn't be better on that beautiful sunny day when Jane, Melanie, Max went to Mardi Gras. In a matter of moments their lives quickly spiral downward as Max, is kidnapped. All that is left is a tiny shoe and an empty stroller. The next six months become a nightmare as the family turns on each other, each trying in their own way to find Max and bring him back to the fold. Jane turns to Child Search, an agency searching for missing children such as Max. Kyle

begins his own search unbeknownst to Jane. Even Melanie tries by making a major change in her life. No one can predict the destruction as each tries to heal. But a chance sighting sets Jane on the right path to finding Max....but will they get there in time.

Karen Young has always promised a good story and this book does not veer from that vow. I was immediately pulled in, heart and mind as I quickly turned the pages. Emotions ran higher and higher with each trail that was a wrong turn. The war waged between mother and daughter had me hurting inside. And each step towards the healing of the family had me cheering.

This is Karen Young's finest yet!

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### **Cafelilybookreviews says**

Although Jane Madison isn't a huge fan of Mardi Gras Day, she reluctantly agrees to chauffeur her teenage daughter to the event when her husband Kyle gets stuck at work and can't keep his promise to take her. Having her best friend Christine with her makes the day a little more bearable, especially since she has extra help with her six month old son, Max.

Tragedy strikes when Jane leaves to go buy some food and Christine attempts to help a woman who faints nearby. Max's teenage sister, Melanie, is distracted from tending her baby brother by some cute boys in the parade and when she turns around, Max is gone.

As the family tries to piece together what has happened, hours turn into days which turn into months and Max is still missing. The family slowly begins to implode and turn against each other, as each ones blames the other for what has happened. Jane and her husband Kyle are both very driven, highly ambitious attorneys who had begun to grow apart before Max was abducted, and this blow to their family threatens to break them up for good. As Jane, Kyle and Melanie all try to get a handle on their grief they end up isolating themselves from each other instead of using the tragedy to draw closer as a family unit.

Missing Max is a classic example of how grief, guilt and frustration over the loss of a child takes a heavy toll on families. This book is full of drama, suspense and action with lots of unexpected twists and turns in between.

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### **Mandy J. Hoffman says**

#### **MY REVIEW:**

There are not many suspense books that can keep me on the edge of my seat without freaking me out. This is one of the few that did just that.

I highly enjoyed the strong plot that twisted and turned just enough to make you keep guessing without becoming lost in a confusing tangle of characters. Both the storyline and the characters are easy to identify with as they deal with problems and emotions that many of us have either faced ourselves or through a friend. The thing I like the most about this book is that it is quality writing with an intriguing plot *and* a clean story line.

Though this is categorized as an adult fiction book, I would not mind my teen daughter reading it. Yes, there are some "scary" parts, but nothing that I feel that most of us (including teens) have not already thought about. Although, I would say it is best for ages 16 and above. The only weakness in my thoughts is the lack of clarity in the spiritual side of this book. While it addresses faith and it's place in our life, it was rather vague, leaving it up to the reader to apply it in whatever way they desired.

However, *Missing Max* will get your heart pounding and your mind running from the first page to the last page. There is never a dull moment or a lull in this book - I read every word (or listened to every word!). I really enjoyed the audio version and the superb narration. Karen Young has written a wonderful book for anyone who likes a good mystery without being scared silly. Be sure to add this book to your Summer reading list!

#### **BOOK OVERVIEW:**

When baby Max is kidnapped during Mardi Gras, Jane and Kyle Madison's life falls apart. What their daughter, Melanie, does next is unthinkable. Max vanished into thin air while in the care of his teenage sister, Melanie. Six months later, the family is a shadow of its former self: Melanie blames herself and is acting out and rebellious; Jane is obsessed with finding Max; and Kyle, a lawyer, struggles to cope with his own grief—and a persistent suspicion that one of his cases is connected to Max's disappearance. With her family in turmoil and her marriage on the rocks, Jane thinks things can't get any worse. Then when an affair and an unexpected pregnancy threaten to tear the Madisons' lives apart, an anonymous caller leads to a break in the case. Can a second kidnapping bring their family back together?

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This review copy was provided courtesy of Oasis Audio through their blogger review program.

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#### **Mindy Detweiler says**

I really liked this book. I can't imagine having my child kidnapped. What emotions must run through everyone, guilt, anger, resentment, blame. All of these hit this family full force. Baby Max is taken while Jane(the Mom) and Melanie (the teenage daughter) are at Mardi Gras. Much of the story takes place about 6 months later. Jane has thrown herself into the Child Search organization, neglecting her job and her family, Kyle (the father) has thrown himself into his job. Melanie in a desparate attempt to make up for the fact that Max was in her care when he was taken has come up with a plan to make everything better. And what about those phone calls from an unknown person mocking Jane. And who is following her? This story graps you and keeps hold of you till the end.

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## **Janet says**

This was my first book by Karen Young. I will admit the book drew me in rather quickly and held me for a long time. There were a few parts that I wonder - does it really happen like that?

But the characters made you love them and care about them and what to know what was next.

This is the story of a family - Jane, Kyle, Melanie and baby Max. Max is kidnapped while Jane, Melanie and some friends are sat Mardi Gras. All feel responsible for Max being gone and they all try to deal with it separately vs as a family.

There is no way to figure out who did it as that person is brought in fairly late in the book and almost as an afterthought in my opinion.

This book really is about family and how they are all dealing with life, there is a little Christian thrown in for good measure but not what I would call a Christian book.

I will not rush out and buy another by this author but if one shows up on the sale table I probably would pick it up.

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