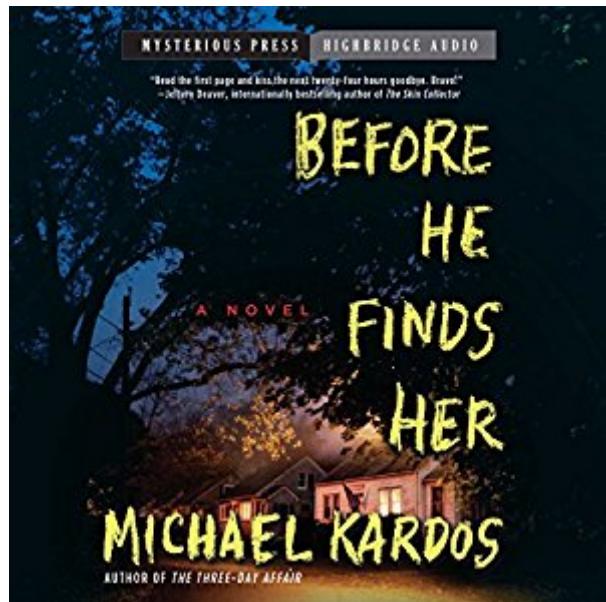


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Before He Finds Her



Synopsis

Everyone in the quiet Jersey Shore town of Silver Bay knows the story: on a Sunday evening in September 1991, Ramsey Miller threw a blowout block party, then murdered his beautiful wife and three-year-old daughter. But everyone is wrong. The daughter got away. Now she is nearly eighteen and tired of living in secrecy. Under the name Melanie Denison, she has spent the last fifteen years in small-town West Virginia as part of the Witness Protection Program. She has never been allowed to travel, go to a school dance, or even have internet at home. Precautions must be taken at every turn, because Ramsey Miller was never caught and might still be looking for his daughter. Yet despite strict house rules, Melanie has entered into a relationship with a young teacher at the local high school and is now ten weeks pregnant. She doesn't want her child to live in hiding as she has had to. Defying her guardians and taking matters into her own hands, Melanie returns to Silver Bay in hopes of doing what the authorities have failed to do: find her father before he finds her. Weaving in Ramsey's story in the three days leading up to the brutal crime, *Before He Finds Her* is a stirring novel about love and faith and fear-and how the most important things can become terribly distorted when we cling to them too fiercely.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 10 hours and 30 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HighBridge, a division of Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: February 3, 2015

Language: English

ASIN: B00QL8XHNM

Best Sellers Rank: #105 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Mysteries & Thrillers > Suspense
#1039 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature #1196 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Suspense

Customer Reviews

A little more than two years ago, I read Michael Kardos' stellar debut novel, "The Three Day Affair." Considerably impressed with the impressive writing and wonderful story line, I vowed to read all of the books Kardos would write in the future and added his name to a growing collection of authors whose works I look forward to, periodically checking to see if he had released anything new. Thus,

when I learned that his second novel was due for a release I quickly put it on hold at my local library and looked forward to it. "Before He Finds Her" wound up becoming one of my favorite books I have read this year. Although 2015 is still in its relative infancy, I am a voracious reader and have read seven other books, so my vociferous endorsement of this novel attests to its quality. The story follows Melanie Denison, almost eighteen years old. Over a decade and a half ago, her mother was brutally murdered and her father mysteriously disappeared, leading authorities and others in the small town of Silver Bay to presume he was responsible. Melanie, missing and also presumed dead, has been living several hours away in secrecy with an uncle and aunt who became her foster parents after she was assigned to them by US Marshals. Frustrated and tired of living in such discreet conditions (and also, ten weeks pregnant with her boyfriend's child) Melanie returns to Silver Bay in hopes of finding her father. Michael Kardos did an exceptional job with this book. The plot unfolded delicately but with a considerable degree of mounting suspense, and this does not read like a second novel. Frankly, it reads like yet another book from a collection of many written by a seasoned veteran.

An elderly reporter, nearing death, blogs about the unsolved murder that has obsessed him -- unsolved in the sense that Ramsey Miller, who killed his wife and fled with his daughter, has never been apprehended. Of Ramsey's guilt and the daughter's death, the reporter is certain. Melanie hates the isolation that defines her life, but living in witness protection means no internet, no travel, and no real friends. Melanie lives with her aunt and uncle and is, of course, hiding from Ramsey. Early chapters of *Before He Finds Her* alternate between the past and present. The chapters in the past follow Ramsey, who believes he is just awakening to the beauty of life but is actually awakening to madness, embodied in his belief in an impending apocalypse he attributes to the "orbital axis." Ramsey's childhood is depicted more realistically and sympathetically than most thrillers manage. As the novel moves forward, Melanie, being young and foolish, decides she needs to find Ramsey before he finds her. Michael Kardos never quite sold me on that motivation. In any event, to further her quest, Melanie meets with the blogger. Her investigation proceeds in an unexpected direction. More than that I will not say. Most of the first half of *Before He Finds Her* reads more like a human interest story than a suspense novel. I would not say that the second half is more suspenseful but it reads more like a thriller. None of the surprising revelations are particularly surprising, which is the novel's greatest weakness. While I was reading the first half, I found it difficult to suspend disbelief in certain aspects of the story that just didn't seem plausible. To my relief, Kardos deals with those in the second half. That cemented my interest.

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