



## Stolen Away

*Max Allan Collins*

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A \$50,000 ransom. No police involvement, or else.

These were the demands. And this was the crime . . .

A man sneaks into the Lindbergh family home and snatches up twenty-month-old baby Charles, Jr. and disappears. So begins the kidnapping that shakes the nation. . . . Two months of torment shared with reporters and police, socialites and psychics, crooks and cranks. . . .

Enter detective Nathan Heller, handpicked by Colonel Lindbergh himself to work on the case. His search for truth takes him from a train station in Chicago to death row in the New Jersey state prison and finally, to a secluded farmhouse in Michigan. It's a twisted trail of deception, betrayal, and danger that ends in the most explosive act of violence Heller has ever seen. . . .

## **Stolen Away Details**

Date : Published September 13th 2011 by Thomas & Mercer (first published May 1991)

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Author : Max Allan Collins

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Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Crime, Detective

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## From Reader Review Stolen Away for online ebook

### **HBalikov says**

Well, this is a pleasant shift. Collins starts off with P.I. Nate Heller actually showing his detective chops. We find some real sleuthing and reasoning before and after Nate gets a recommendation from Eliot Ness to help out the Lindberghs.

Just a reminder: Time Magazine lists the kidnapping of the Lindbergh's baby as the top crime of the 20th Century. <http://content.time.com/time/specials...>

In the depths of the Depression, 1932, Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh awoke to find their only child, Charles Jr., missing. Several ransoms were paid with no results. Clandestine meetings with various people, claiming to have contact with the "kidnappers", were held. "Evidence" was manufactured by criminals, cops and reporters. Two years of investigation went on, with millions of dollars spent by enforcement agencies including police in NY, NJ, IL, the FBI, the Treasury Department, before Bruno Richard Hauptmann was incarcerated.

This may be Max Allan Collins' most ambitious effort. I am trying to avoid spoilers while giving you a clear idea about what this mystery thriller/historical novel is all about. It is obvious without reading Collins' credits that he assembled an extensive research team that reviewed as much of the historical record as is possible before the writing began.

Among the issues still in dispute are:

Was Hauptmann the real killer?

If so, did he act alone?

If not, was he even involved with the murderer?

Was organized crime involved?

Did Lindbergh override police and frustrate the search for his child?

Did Lucky Lindy perjure himself at the Hauptmann trial?

What were the "real" motives behind the kidnapping?

Was the body in evidence really that of Charles, Jr.?

Sorry, if I made you nod off with this list. The reason why I bestow 5 stars on this book is because Collins has written a pot-boiler whose action rarely pauses while tackling these issues and giving the reader a sense of the chaos that permeated the attempts to recover this baby for his parents. You know that Heller has to fail at this, because history says that the Lindberghs moved on and Hauptmann was executed. But, this yarn is compelling and, even if you don't know Nate Heller from his other Collins' adventures, you can read this and soak up much of the times and troubles of the 1930s.

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### **Richard Block says**

#### Tall Tale

The Lindbergh kidnapping, Heller style, is one long, complex and Byzantine tale. It has more than one twist too many for my taste, and lacks the dynamism (its over 600 pages) genre thrillers usually take to spill the

beans.

Heller himself is still a great character, the twists at the end work very well, but after a great take off, it becomes stuck in an interminable second act. For the uninitiated, MAC writes noir historical fiction taking real events and inserting his half Jewish, half Irish detective in the middle. It usually has a hot love interest - MAC likes his sex - but this one has a pretty flabby female writhing in the middle of things, and if she wasn't really in the tale, he would have had to invent someone else.

Charles Lindbergh comes off as an odd fish, but he is swimming in a pretty densely populated shark pond in this story. Heller is great at the end, but throughout the 620 pages, even he gets bored. The writing is sharp as ever, but the plot is something that could give you a really bad headache.

This is the 5th instalment, easily the longest, and by no means the best of the Heller series. Like the fool I am, I read the whole thing, and almost wished I put it down halfway.

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### **Irenic says**

Found this in the Kindle store and ordered a sample. Then I absolutely had to know what happens next and ordered the book. Nate is a Chicago police officer in the early 1930's, who thinks a suspicious looking woman with baby might be the kidnapped Charles Lindbergh Jr. and kidnapper. Al Capone, currently serving time in a Cook County jail has offered his services in finding the child.

This alone would catch my interest. The story is narrated by Nate, who's voice is very 30's-era, hard-bitten detective, and he's such a hoot. Everyone knows the history of the Lindbergh kidnapping, but this fictionalized history really makes you wonder if what we've always taken for granted as truth really was true. Whatever the case, this was quite a romp, and I can't wait to read more from this author.

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### **Jim Thomas says**

Perhaps 3 1/2 points or stars. Seemed a bit long and slow at times but Collins can write with intensity when needed and if the rest of the novel had been the equal of the last part, it might be worth 4 1/2 stars. The denouement is terrific!

Also this was my 1st Heller book and what's fascinating and unendingly interesting is how he sets his stories in past history of true crime cases. So the hero gets to immerse himself in some of the most famous of all cases, this one being the Lindbergh baby case. He does serious research and most characters are the real people who were there. Using artistic license in the best and most creative way, he allows you to revisit these cases and I was not disappointed at how things "really happened" according to the author.

Was the kidnapping an inside job? Was Bruno Hauptman guilty or framed. Could it have been another man or a group effort? I'm not finished with Nathan Heller, a most unusual private eye.

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### **Dave says**

In 1932, Charles Lindbergh was the nation's hero and the kidnapping of his infant son was considered the

crime of the century with every detective and lawman worth his salt checking in on the case and every cheat and conman trying to hone in on the reward money. There are even those who today think the whole thing was an elaborate hoax or publicity stunt. It is hard to imagine today, but, like the 1990's OJ case, everyone in the country knew the names of all the players in the Lindbergh case and followed it daily in the news.

My large print hardcover copy of Stolen Away weighs in at 516 pages including the author's afterword. Apparently other editions have other assorted page lengths. In any event, it is not the longest novel ever written. War and Peace is longer. Atlas Shrugged is longer. We can debate whether it was necessary for Collins to publish something of this length, but it was better than having him chop it up into two or three connected novels as many authors today are wont to do.

Nathan Heller is Collins' fictional creation and has "lived" throughout the twentieth century, interacting with major players and major cases, starting with the Frank Nitti/Chicago Outfit books and heading into Monroe's death (Bye Bye Baby) and the Kennedy Assassination (Ask Not). This is the fifth book in the series and they can each be read as standalone novels.

Here, Heller is still a Chicago police officer and doesn't enter private practice (with the A1 Detective Agency) until later in the book. A few days into the Lindbergh kidnapping, Heller, working a pickpocket detail at a train station, spots a buxom blonde wheeling an infant through the station. Heller figures the blonde isn't the kid's mother and that it is Lindy jr. himself that she is escorting. Acting on his hunch, Heller foils a kidnapping, leaving a few hoods six feet under in the process. The only catch is that the kidnapping he stumbled on isn't Lindbergh's, but it gives Heller headlines and a reputation and the next thing he knows Eliot Ness has grabbed him and they offer to interview Capone in prison, Capone who offers to shake the toddler out from the underworld in return for reducing his sentence to time served.

The story goes on from there with Heller's reputation preceding him and Lindbergh himself requesting his assistance. The story focuses on the shipshod investigation and the failures of the local New Jersey police to preserve footprints or fingerprints. There are more world famous detectives gathered at the Lindbergh estate than one could imagine and each of them thinks his agency should be in charge.

Amidst this bumbling, amateurish investigation, Heller is tasked with chasing down ridiculous leads, including engaging several psychics, including a sexy woman psychic, who looked like a whore and looked like a Madonna, in a desperate attempt to get some information. The story has Lindbergh and others who sought to aid him, including the richest woman in D.C. who has the Hope Diamond on her dog's collar, paying off conmen and grifters left and right.

Who knows who is legitimate and who is perpetrating a hoax? The story shows the chaos in the Lindbergh house and how Lindbergh cut off avenues of legitimate investigation and pursued ridiculous theories put forward by fortune hunters and other scoundrels.

It is a well written and well researched book and is based largely in history, not fiction, although of course there was no Nate Heller there (or was there?). It is a great read, but set aside a goodsized chunk of time for this one. Collins filled this book with so much detail and information that it is longer by far than most other Heller novels.

For someone like myself who did not know much about the Lindbergh fiasco, it was amazing to read the book and then read the true history and find out how much of the book is based on history, including all the puzzling questions about the Hauptman trial and the allegations of mob involvement. Heller's involvement in the mystery certainly brought it to life for me. His annoyance with others involved

rings true as well as his cynicism about the psychics and other kooks who claimed to have leads on the place the baby was being held. Also ringing true are Heller's dalliances with the sexy psychic and Evalyn McLean, who had money pouring out of her pores and who had a husky voice, "two parts sex, one part chain-smoking" and a ""Gibson Girl figure." These are real people with complications, not simply cartoon cutouts.

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### **David Highton says**

The fifth in the Nate Heller series, this jumps right back to 1932 when Nate is still in the Chicago police. The Heller books are very well researched and cleverly insert him into major events - in this case the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby and the follow up over the next 4 years. A very long book, with many twists and turns, which like the real case, never arrives at a solid conclusion

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### **Marley says**

I've read several books on the Lindbergh kidnapping and thought I was conversant in it (though I've obviously forgotten quite a bit over the years). Although *Stolen Away* is historical mystery, Max Allan Collins put it all together, and makes more sense of it than did the cops and the feds 70=years ago. Whatever really went down, Lindbergh was surely at fault for the botched investigation. Much research went into the book as per the "I Owe Them One" at the close. (And no, I don't think either he or his BIL killed Charley.) I came away, as I have in other books with the feeling that Haumptman was a totally innocent at best, a patsy at worse. Sound familiar. Did the baby survive? Maybe. This is one of several books, too, where Evalyn McLean shows up in fictive form and I'd love to know more about her (outside of wiki). This is the first Nathan Heller book I've read and intend to follow the series through.

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### **Willem van den Oever says**

Not a single Nathan Heller-book has started off as strong as "*Stolen Away*" does.

Opening with Heller doing some actual police work, the reader is brought along for the chase of a woman hastily carrying around a baby boy in downtown Chicago. This being 1932 and half of the world being obsessed with the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's baby, Nathan is confident he might actually solve the case as he tracks woman and child through the windy city. It makes for a heart stopping, nerve wrecking passage; and I immediately had high hopes Max Allen Collins had the Heller-series back at the level of brilliance which the first book of the series, "*True Detective*", showed so promisingly.

In the end, the baby Heller trails turns out *not* to be Lindbergh Jr. But his efforts are rewarded nonetheless when Heller is asked to join the actual Lindbergh-investigation after recommendations by Elliot Ness himself.

Shortly after arriving at the scene in New Jersey, Heller discovers an absolute mess. Biggest cause for this turns out to be Charles Lindbergh himself, being obsessed with leading the investigation in order to be fully responsible for the safe return of his son. This however, also leads to an utterly unorganized police force, the press destroying every chance at handling the case discretely and with several underworld figures crawling their way into the scene. With the crucial start of the investigation so horribly screwed up, Heller will have a hell of a time to sort out what went on during that faithful night at the mansion when the boy was stolen away. If he's able to sort it out at all.

There's an obsessive tone to the entire investigation, and Heller more than once confesses this case might just make him go mad. Author Max Allen Collins' experience must've been the same. But the massive amount of research Collins (and co.) has done in order to write this novel, shows through in the finished product. The lavish amount of detail, characters and – frankly – number of pages make for a plot in which every possible angle to this twisted, byzantine case is examined. In order to make that work, the reader needs to be as interested in the case as its writer is, though. And that might be asking a bit much.

True, there is a lot of story to cover, which in Heller/Collins' case spans almost 60 years. But the way it's set up, demands the reader to either keep notes or have him/her read the book in one sitting, if you want to keep track of all the people (or in this case, Colonels) mentioned in this story. There are no recaps, so attention is required all the way through. Which is irritating at times, since not all people brought on stage turn out to be essential to the plot. In that case, "*Stolen Away*" might be well over a hundred pages too long.

Yet during its best moments, "*Stolen Away*" is the greatest Heller-book ever written. Even though it occasional cracks under its own weight, that doesn't make the book any less impressive or gripping as a whole. People interested in true crime, and the Lindbergh-kidnapping in particular, will be greatly entertained by this work.

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### **Lynette Lark says**

The bottom line is that Charles Augustus Lindbergh was a control freak who insisted that he be in charge of the search for his kidnapped son which resulted in bringing in the Keystone Kops, gangsters, a rich heiress, a creepy professor, the IRS, Edgar Cayce, fortune tellers, contrived evidence, the NJ governor, crooked lawyers and a jaded judge. Bruno Richard Hauptmann was framed!

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### **Darcey Tomasino says**

#### **Fascinating series**

I really like this series, as I am a fan of well-researched historical fiction. This particular novel is jam-packed with characters and events, almost overwhelmingly so. However, that just adds to the intrigue of the Lindbergh case, which was convoluted and complex. As is true of several of Collins' novels, there is so much information that I believe many authors would have made this into two books. I'm glad he didn't. I feel like I get to know the characters better. I feel invested while reading and satisfied when I finish one because nothing is left unsaid.

I am confused as to why this is #5 in the series, as the events occur before the events of novel #4. My best guess is that the author wanted to keep the mob characters together.

My only complaint about the series is the gratuitous and copious sex scenes that do nothing to advance the plot.

Overall, I highly recommend this novel and the series as a whole. Keller is quirky and clever, and Collins brings history to life.

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## **Todd Stockslager says**

Mystery novel based on the Lindbergh kidnapping case, populated with real-life characters like Eliot Ness and Al Capone, as well as the Lindberghs.

Charles Lindbergh does not fair well here, with his micro-mismanaging of the investigation and the New Jersey State Police come in for a fair share of abuse for their incompetence.

Collins' assertion is that the kidnapping was masterminded by Al Capone from prison to give him the chance to "solve" the crime and earn his way out of prison. But when it didn't work, two groups of extortionists, neither of whom was involved in the kidnapping or knew where the boy was, started negotiating the ransom! In the end, Bruno Hauptmann was wrongly accused, convicted, and executed for the crime (in an attempt, again masterminded by Capone, to bring the case to a close and draw attention away from the baby), when in fact the Lindbergh baby was adopted and raised by former mob parents on a farm in Michigan and then somewhere in the midwest, and still apparently alive at the time of the writing of the novel in 1991!

OK, so maybe it is mystery novel claptrap, but it appears to be fascinatingly plausible the way Collins tells it. And it passed my critical mass test with flying colors and bleary eyes: about half the way through the 593-book, I knew I would have to read it straight through to the end, which I did, finishing up about 1:45 am.

Just missed the What a classic! rating due to more PG-13 sex and R swearing than necessary.

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## **Amberjean says**

This was at least 200% longer than it should have been. The writing was painfully self-aware (it not being 1936, doing an unselfconscious Raymond Chandler might actually be physically impossible), the personal relationships were poorly handled, and the whole thing just didn't hang together very well. As I said, at a much shorter length, it might have been very entertaining, and it did have some wholesome midwestern charm, but overall, not so great.

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## **John says**

I first started reading this book in 1992, the year it was released. Half-way through, I came down with a nasty case of the flu. The book sat unread again, bookmark in place, for months. Over the next few years, I tried several times to finish it, but I had lost the narrative thread.

Twenty years later, I have started again from the beginning, and this time I have finally finished reading *Stolen Away*. It has aged well.

The Lindbergh kidnapping was a convoluted debacle, one of the all-time great shames of law enforcement. Collins, in this novel, dives head-first into this mess of history and comes up with a solution that's so crazy it just might make sense. There's no way in hell it could ever be verified, but what the hell, it's satisfying as a semi-solution to one of the Twentieth Century's great mystery. And along the way, Collins has crafted yet another excellent mystery novel, full of humor and thrills and characters (both real and fictional) that are full

of life.

The book drags a bit along the mid-way point, because PI Nate Heller seems to investigate too many meaningless leads, but every apparent dead end in the investigation comes to fruition in the novel's final quarter. It's a fantastic novel. Don't miss it, and don't take 20 years to read it like I did.

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### **Art says**

This book hit me like a speed bump as I raced through the Nathan Heller crime history series. I've invested some time getting to know Heller and the series and was looking forward to the continuing changes, development and growth that had taken place in the first four books. The series begins with the "Frank Nitti trilogy" and then moves into a much changed Heller and country post WWII. In the last book, Heller was a witness to the building of Las Vegas by organized crime. But now we drop back more than a decade (this book actually begins BEFORE the first book in the series). Nitti is back. And Heller has not yet been altered by his wartime experience. It seems that Collins wanted to tell the story of the Lindbergh kidnapping so badly that it was worth interrupting the series to go back in time to one of the country's most notorious crimes. It's like a prequel except the second half of the book occurs four years later. So I'm not even sure when I would read this book if I were trying to put the series in order. I found the Lindbergh content interesting and was exposed to a side of the kidnapping I hadn't previously encountered. But the book does nothing to advance Heller or the series, is a bit long-winded and overall hit me as disjointed and distracting.

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### **David Williams says**

Stolen Away is the fifth novel in the Nathan Heller series. In the opening pages of the story Detective Heller of the Chicago Police foils a kidnapping. He is then handpicked by Elliot Ness to go to New Jersey and help on the Lindbergh Kidnapping case. There is the belief that there may be a connection to the Chicago mob and Al Capone. Heller leaves for New Jersey and is pulled into the drama surrounding the most infamous kidnapping case of all time.

Collins is a great storyteller and he skillfully weaves his fictional character into the historical events. Before it is over Heller has dealt with psychics, including Edgar Cayce, mobsters, wealthy women, the New Jersey state police, IRS agents, and many others. I am unfamiliar with the details surrounding the Lindbergh case so I can't say how accurately he recreates the events. He certainly captures the period very well.

This is my first Nathan Heller book and also my first book by Max Allan Collins. After reading this book I noticed that there were several Kindle editions for less than \$5. I bought them right away.

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