



## The Baby Merchant

*Kit Reed*

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The baby business is booming. Billions of dollars are spent each year on strollers, cribs, and clothing, not to mention assisted reproduction and adoption. With fertility rates dropping precipitously in the US and babies becoming ever more valuable as a combination of status symbol and perfect accessory, there's clearly a developing market for someone like Tom Starbird. Tom is The Baby Merchant --though he'd never think of himself in such terms. In his mind, Tom creates perfect families by matching famous couples with prime--but neglected--newborns. Tom's a master of surveillance and secret "pickups". His small staff is extremely well-paid, especially the doctor who implants the government-required tracking chip into each infant's developing skull.

Sasha Egan is a talented artist feeling trapped by an accidental pregnancy. Determined to place her child with a loving family, Sasha is jolted by the arrival, at her chosen home for unwed mothers, of the unborn baby's father. Behind Gary's insincere protestations of love, Sasha detects the hand of her powerful, wealthy grandmother. Nearly nine months pregnant, Sasha disappears, going to ground at a seedy motel.

Jake Zorn is a crusading TV journalist who has broken some of the biggest scandals of the day. His life is perfect--except that he and his rainmaker attorney wife, Maury, cannot have children. They've tried everything; repeated miscarriages drove Maury to a terrible act that makes adoption agencies turn them away.

Tom Starbird is Jake's last chance, but it's too late--Tom wants out of the baby business. Jake Zorn knows more than a few hard truths about Tom Starbird, and he's not afraid to expose them to the nation.

Desperate to find a baby for the Zorns, Tom Starbird settles on Sasha Egan as the perfect supplier.

Soon Sasha's baby will be born. And many lives will be forever altered.

## **The Baby Merchant Details**

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Author : Kit Reed

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## From Reader Review The Baby Merchant for online ebook

### Agathafrye says

So, this was good! I like the premise behind this book: it's the future, the US has outlawed adoptions from other countries, babies are now a hot commodity. The main character relieves overburdened mothers of their unwanted babies (read: steals), and then rehomes them in rich homes who want a baby desperately and don't care how they get them. It was an interesting story. I found the ending slightly unsatisfactory, but I have a tendency to do that. Anyhow, good. Not great, but highly satisfactory.

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### Sandra "Jeanz" says

#### MY REVIEW

For some reason I had thought that this book was more dystopian and perhaps along the lines of Bumped by Megan McCafferty, having said that it was a really good read. I enjoyed this book even though it wasn't exactly what I was expecting.

Kit Reed writes so well and describes things so well that you can, for example, imagine the surroundings of the Del Mar motel. The book has quite complex relationships in it. The relationship between Tom and Daria. That even though Tom feels Daria never wanted him, he still feels that he has to protect her from the nastiness of a Jake Zorn exposé.

I liked the indecision of Sasha Egan, initially she wants nothing to do with her baby, she cannot wait for the time to come when she can hand the child over and relinquish all responsibility for it. Yet when her precious baby goes missing she is like a tigress who has been separated from her baby cub.

The changes that baby merchant Tom Starbird goes through is also amazing. He starts off thinking of the babies as a "product" the babies mother is just the person he need to distract long enough to steal her baby away. Tom provides a "service" for those that can afford it. Tom chooses babies he thinks are unwanted and "removes" them from that home and places them with a couple who desperately want a baby but have run out of "normal channel options" to have one. Tom does target those mothers whom in his opinion do not want the responsibility and do not wish to be encumbered by a child. Tom tries to not become emotionally involved too. He doesn't usually handle the "product" himself he has staff to do that. The whole case with Jake Zorn is however different from the very beginning as Tom has actually decided to retire from his "job", Tom has even paid off his former employees. Then Jake Zorn comes along and blackmails him into one last job.

I suppose in a way you have to feel sorry for Jake Zorn, as in his own way he is only trying to make his wife Maury's dream of having a baby come true. Its the way he goes about enlisting Tom that is the bad thing. I did enjoy the mystery, suspense and intrigue of this book. Where Tom hints to us at his upbringing, then later in the book we learn what his mother Daria did to make Tom feel this way.

The ending is left for you to finish in your imagination as to what happens to Tom. We are given a set of "clues" or "glimpses" into the fact that Sasha will be fine in the end.

So did I enjoy this book? Yes Would I recommend it? Yes Do I think there will be a book 2? No as the majority of loose ends are tightly wrapped up, and Kit says she doesn't do series in the Interview she did with me. Will I read more books by Kit Reed? Oh, Yes!

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### **Petra Eggs says**

This story of a baby shortage set in the near future had some interesting characterisations. The main character of the story was portrayed as an enigmatic man of style, cool to the nth degree, had been so disturbed by his dysfunctional childhood that he kidnapped babies and sold them to the most deserving of the highest bidders and felt he did good in the world. In truth, of course, he was a most despicable felon and killer. The other main character was far too heavy-handed too often to be realistic. What he did was ok, but that he kept on saying it in cheap-thrillerese was cringe-making. The moral issues were lightly touched on, but not dealt with substantially which was a shame as the author made some interesting points. Nevertheless, it was a good story, well-told, but the unsatisfying ending reduced a four-star book (with a five-star cover) to three stars. A good beach or plane read.

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### **Gayla Champenois says**

Wow! I just stumbled on to this book by accident.

I read this book from start to finish in one sitting. The story line drew me in and held on to me. Having infertility issues myself and running through all of the emotions that go along with so desperately wanting to have a baby I can totally relate to this story line. Wanting something so badly that you can't think of anything else and the desperation and guilt you feel when your body won't do what you are born to do - pro-create.

Totally plausible story line. Me and my "big brother" fears - Microchipped babies, the government tainting the water supply of low income communities to slow down and stop their pro-creation and career driven upper crust that have put their fertility on hold to become the best that they can be at their chosen profession only to realize that the thing that they now want more than anything else is beyond their grasp.

Thought provoking - a book club must.

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### **Angela says**

This isn't a bad book, but I had a hard time identifying with any of the characters. Of course, I don't have any kids of my own, or any desire for any, so that's quite possibly a factor of how I work, rather than a lack in the writing.

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### **Rebekkila says**

An interesting story about a future where women have fertility issues and babies are hard to come by. Babies are stolen so often that they are chipped within three months of birth. The story insinuates that chipped babies are given some advantages such as better jobs and schools when they grow up. There are also some sinister implications because you can never be off the grid while chipped. Happily the story didn't get into that and the whole conspiracy thing. This was the story of Tom, a baby merchant who steals unchipped babies from those he considers to be bad parents and sells them to infertile couples for a very high price. He is very selective about the parents, they must be young, affluent, and stable in every way.

The story is also about Sasha, an unwed pregnant woman who plans on giving up her baby at birth. and finally an older infertile couple who have been rejected by adoption agencies. He is a Mike Wallace style television reporter and she is a lawyer.

The concept was interesting, but at times the story dragged.

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### **J-J lover of books says**

Let me start by saying this, This book would make a great film.

~~~~~MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS~~~~~

Right onto my review

I did give this book a hard time, yes in places it was slow. There was a chapter that i didn't understand why it was there, it didn't seem to add anything to the book. But, that said, i did enjoy the book.

It took me a while to warm to the characters, i did eventually like them. Daria Starbird, not sure i like her now, she still seems self absorbed,

Tom Starbird, believe or not, i like him. Yes what he did was wrong, but you can do the wrong thing for the right reasons.

Sasha Egan, to start with i didn't like her, she seemed cold, yet once she went on the run, she changed, she had to protect herself & her baby. The moment she fell in love with him, it touched my heart.

I hated Gary, for the word go, he wasn't interesting in Sasha or the baby, he was motivated by money & greed only.

Zorn i don't know what to say about him, yes he is ruthless, he has a mean streak, but..... he did love his wife, her happiness was important to him.

Maury, she was slightly pitiful, her desire to have a baby had take over her every moment.

Anyway, Tom had decided to quit the business, that is till Zorn showed up. Tom had no choice but to take the job. Zorn had something to hold over Tom, something Tom never wanted anyone to know.

So yes i enjoyed the book, it had an excitement underneath. I am glad i read it. I wish i'd read it earlier. I would of like to of known what happened to Tom, in a way i had hoped he & Sasha would get together, i felt a connection there. How could he be punished for crimes that wasn't reported? There is a few unanswered questions, like, what happened to Daria, to Maury, to Zorn? Did Sasha make a go at being Jimmy's mum?

did she become an artist?

Would i read a second book? YES i would. Would i read another book by Kit Reed? YES i would.

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### **Bookmarks Magazine says**

Kit Reed, author of *Thinner Than Thou* and other novels, has written an SF satire and psychological thriller that provokes larger questions about money, status, happiness, parenting, and even technology (newborns receive microchips in their heads). Instead of idealizing the parent-child relationship, Reed shows a refreshing array of emotions that asks what it really means to raise and care for another human being. The Robin Hood-esque character of Tom Starbird captivated all critics; when he disappears from the narrative, the story slows a bit. Overall, however, *Baby Merchant* is fast-paced thriller filled with interesting characterizations and situations that hit close to home. Just ignore the spoiler on the book flap.

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

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### **Jamie says**

weird, this guy is stealing babies and selling them to parents who can't conceive....

it was ok. i didn't finish it. i think it was due at the library before i left for vaca or something. but i'm not heartbroken that i didn't finish it, so that says something.

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### **Rachel "Rai29" says**

I thoroughly enjoyed The Baby Merchant. Whilst both Tom Starbird and Sasha Egan were either unwillingly or unknowingly involved in Jake Zorn's search for a baby, they had starkly contrasting opinions and lives, which made reading from each of their perspectives fascinating. My favourite character was Sasha, because despite being indecisive and inexperienced she remained determined to make sure her child would have the best care... whether that meant him being with her or with another family. I really like the cover of The Baby Merchant it depicts the story within perfectly! The baby in the case represents the business like manner with which Tom Starbird treated the babies that he rescued.

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### **Shelley says**

This wasn't as good of a book as I thought it was going to be. The synopsis on the back really draws you in, but the book is written weirdly and seems to drag on. It was one of those books I had to force myself to finish, just because I can't just stop reading a book. The topic was interesting, but not a great book.

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### **Natalie says**

The idea of a near-future black market in babies who haven't yet been microchipped by the authorities was intriguing -- but the societal questions were quickly set aside in favor of weak thrillerish plot and a heavy-handed moral at the end. Disappointing.

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### **Amanda says**

Kit Reed was an acquaintance of mine from a conference she's been attending for years. When I snagged *The Baby Merchant* a few years ago in the book room (signed copy!), I knew it would be great for teaching my college classes about communication, media, and ethics. This fall, I assigned the text to my ethics class, and it was generally well-received by the student. The core of the book is about pregnancy, babies, and families, and for students who are on the cusp on thinking about that next stage of life, it provides much for consideration. Few of the characters are likable, and it's hard to know who to root for. As soon as readers start to feel some sympathy for a character, they go and do something narcissistic or despicable and opinion quickly changes. There were so many great moments to mine for discussions about ethical issues. We talked at length about adoption services, CPS, infertility, motherhood, fatherhood, personal identity, surveillance, and on and on. The only drawback is the book is considered out of print (a local bookseller told me it looks like it's print on demand copies), so my campus bookstore couldn't order it. Luckily, there's an abundance of used copies and Ebooks available. With Kit's recent passing, I hope there's a renewed interest in her work and the wonderful, tangible worlds she built within her pieces. I highly recommend this book!

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### **Rachel says**

I found the beginning of this novel hard to read - the mom-to-be is confronted with many uncomfortable situations outside of her control, which was difficult for all involved because she's a control freak. It was prickly reading.

However, the author does delightful things in a mechanical sense. Characters are set up that you root for as well as characters that you can't stand, and then their wants/needs are juxtaposed so that no happy ending seems possible. The villain is wonderfully repugnant. It was squirmly and a joy to read all at the same time, but I had to keep reading in order to see if he was thwarted - by the unlikely hero. This was very well done.

I wasn't wowed by *Thinner Than Thou*, but *The Baby Merchant* was so good that I'll be trying more of Reed's work.

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### **Tammy Downing says**

A very engaging story about a man who grabs unwanted babies to sell to parents who can't have babies of their own. He gets blackmailed by a slimy journalist and pulls off one last baby grab. He has regrets and does what it takes to right his wrongs.

