



Little Boy Lost

J.D. Trafford

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In a city divided and broken, this revelation will set it on fire...

Attorney Justin Glass's practice, housed in a shabby office on the north side of Saint Louis, isn't doing so well that he can afford to work for free. But when eight-year-old Tanisha Walker offers him a jar full of change to find her missing brother, he doesn't have the heart to turn her away.

Justin had hoped to find the boy alive and well. But all that was found of Devon Walker was his brutally murdered body—and the bodies of twelve other African American teenagers, all discarded like trash in a mass grave. Each had been reported missing. And none had been investigated.

As simmering racial tensions explode into violence, Justin finds himself caught in the tide. And as he gives voice to the discontent plaguing the city's forgotten and ignored, he vows to search for the killer who preys upon them.

Little Boy Lost Details

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From Reader Review Little Boy Lost for online ebook

Dee Arr says

“Little Boy Lost” was a great idea for a story, though it would be hard to place it under the thriller label. I felt the book properly belonged in the legal/mystery genre. As such, author J. D. Trafford has presented an excellent tale, injecting it with enough procedural items to keep it interesting without overloading the reader.

The main character, Justin, has a lot on his plate. He runs a struggling law practice, is a widower, has a daughter who is having problems with other children at her school, and he is dissatisfied with the justice system. He also has family pressures and still thinks about the demons that tried to possess him after his wife passed away. The author has successfully introduced a complex character who many people will probably be able to identify with.

The story had me hooked, and I was waiting to see who was abducting all the missing children. Unfortunately, the ending was not satisfactory. Anytime an author is going to brand a character as a killer, I want to see reasonable justification for why the killer did what he did...that didn't happen with this story, and a book that could have been powerful flatlined at the end. I hesitate to say more without injecting spoilers.

As previously stated, I believe the author has talent and his writing style is smooth and effective. The only issues I had with the book was that the “thriller” label did not describe the thinly veiled discussions on racism and class warfare. At times, it appears that this was the agenda and a story was written around it. Mr. Trafford can certainly write on whatever side topic he chooses. I purposely try to stay away from political books because no matter what side of the political aisle the author sits on, the presentation usually is heavily slanted. If one is going to address a volatile issue such as racism, it serves no purpose to only stand on one side of the issue. Only calm examination of the problem from all sides will enable solutions to the challenges to emerge. I removed no stars for the author’s choice to write about the issue as he did, just as I don’t remove stars for vulgarities (which there are near the beginning, though they virtually disappear after a few appearances). I do inform readers what is present in the book and allow them to make their own choices on what they prefer to read.

Overall, a good effort by J. D. Trafford. The writing is excellent, and though I was dissatisfied with the ending, the procedural aspects were interesting and the plot throughout most of the book moved at a decent pace. Four stars.

Siobhan says

Book blurbs are extremely difficult to write. They need to pull the reader in without giving away too much of the story. They make or break books. Whilst the blurb for Little Boy Lost pulls you in, I feel as though it does not do the book real justice. Little Boy Lost is so much more than the blurb had me expecting, it is much more than a riveting legal thriller. It is a story of a community in pain, of a legal system that does not work. It is a highly emotive read based around a timely and important issue. Those labelling this book as a simple thriller are overlooking so many of the important elements of this story. There are crime thriller elements, legal thriller elements, but there is also so much more. Family matters, community matters, life

issues, and so many other elements of life.

The bulk of the story is set up around the missing teenagers, but in many ways this is just a backdrop to a much deeper story. Missing teenager stories happen often in the thriller genre, I will admit to having read many in the past, but none has ever read like this one. Whilst we're constantly wondering what has happened, we deal with so much more in this story than simply dealing with the missing teenagers. We get an insight into the life of our main character, into the world of law, into his family life, and into the issues faced by the community. It is a multifaceted story in so many ways. Each individual storyline – the crime, the family issues, the coming of age elements of one of the characters, the political choices, and the current events that make you stop and think – would have worked perfectly fine as a standalone novel. In fact, multiple individual books could have been made from this one story. It almost makes it sound as though this book is attempting too much, as though it's one of those strange combinations of too many genres, yet such is not the case. Each individual element is interwoven into the story in a wonderful fashion. Every element plays a part. Everything that happens is important. We're pulled into all of the different facets of the story.

If I'm being completely honest, I was somewhat tentative at the start of the story. I love high impact thrillers. The kind of story where there is action on every pages. Where your heart is pumping double time throughout the read, the adrenaline pumping. Whilst there was curiosity throughout, this story was much lighter than my usual thriller reads. The pace is slower as there are so many multiple elements to the story, many that are not directly related to the crime aspect I was so interested in seeing come together. However, it didn't take long before I was thoroughly gripped by the story. The different elements suck you into the story in a large variety of ways. You become invested in every element of the story. The characters, the community, and the events all wrap around your heart, leaving you addicted to the story and unable to put it down. It quickly becomes a single sitting read, one you do not want to put down.

Even when you work out where certain elements of the story are heading – for example, I worked out who was behind the crime well before the reveal – you cannot put the book down. There are so many aspects of the story gripping you tight that you cannot stop reading. You'll work out one aspects, only to be left curious about how another part of the story will play out. You want to know how everything comes together; you want to see the story reach the point where things will be moving forward in a more normal manner, in a way that does not leave you questioning whether or not there is good to be found in the future.

Without a doubt, this is an extremely relevant read. There is so much going on in the world, and this story makes you stop and think about so many different elements. As I said, those labelling it as a mere thriller really aren't selling the book in the way it needs to be sold. It's a true powerhouse of a novel, on that touches upon so many aspects of society.

Juliana Philippa says

Bottom Line, Up Top. Great book; didn't want to put it down once I got into it (which didn't take long), and I look forward to checking out Trafford's other books. While centered around a murder mystery, the book is really about so much more than that: family dynamics, personal struggles of the main character, race relations, and the U.S. judicial system. Engaging, entertaining, informative, and surprisingly humorous; definitely recommend!

We are, whether by nature or nurture, episodic. We find a problem and then we fix it. We want there to be a beginning and an end. ... We are in a constant relationship with one another, a series of communications sent and received through word and action. An unrelenting feedback

loop that either gets louder or softer, but never goes away. ... The fires may have stopped. ... But the tension wasn't gone. The relationship wasn't over. Post-racial America did not emerge. The long history of violence and control continues to be unresolved. It only waits for another moment in the future to remind us of our sins, even as we all do our best to just live our lives.

My Review. Really great read, glad I got it as my Kindle First book. I like legal thrillers, though I don't read that many, and given the topic that it centers around and the current climate in the US, I thought it was very timely and would be that much more interesting right now. It started a little slowly, but I quickly got it and while I had meant to pace myself and get some other things done last night, I ended up having to read until the end and only after I finished the book could I get to the rest of my work.

Initially, I wasn't sure how to feel about our narrator, Justin Glass. He's likable and is in a tough point in life, so you feel for him, but there came a point where his passivity, inaction, and indecisiveness really started to grate on my nerves. Luckily, almost right when I was at the breaking point with him, Justin starts to turn things around and come back to life. His situation really is heartbreaking, so it's not like I don't understand why he was acting the way he was. I'm not spoiling anything by saying that he's a widower and is still deeply mourning the loss of his wife to cancer; he really struggled after that and battled depression, and is only just starting to bounce back. This aspect of the book was written very well and very sympathetically (I say this as both a regular reader and as a mental health advocate and speaker).

The mystery itself was interesting. I wasn't sure how it would play out; he's a lawyer, so what role was Trafford going to have him play in all this? It makes sense though and isn't a stretch. Although the murders are at the center of the entire story, there's a lot more going on and this is by no means mainly a thriller. **I would say that there are a few different themes / plotlines that are going on and that all get equal weight and focus (not listed in any particular order):**

1. The Glass Family Dynamics. Justin Glass comes from a prominent political family; his dad was a leader in the Civil Rights movement and is a long-serving Missouri Congressman, and his brother has been working in politics as well. There's pressure for him to join the family business and there's some conflict surrounding that. There's also the family dynamics in that his mother is white and his father is black; his maternal grandfather, a former Judge, lives with them, so there is the generational and race relational aspect internally.

He believed that my father, a young man he assumed was a member of the Black Panthers, had taken his perfect little white girl and transformed her into a leftist campus radical. The truth was exactly the opposite. It had been my mother who had lured my father to protest meetings and marches. She was the radical. My dad just wanted to go on a date.

“When we were little, you talked about it all the time.” Lincoln put his hands on his hips. “You and me, just a darker shade of JFK and Bobby.”

I shook my head. “That was a long time ago.”

My father took a deep breath, and then he walked toward the door. As he went into the hall, he turned around. “I fought the battle over segregated lunch counters and the right to vote, but this is different.” He pointed at me, lying injured in bed, my face swollen and cut. “The Whites Only signs have been taken down, but they’re still there. This is your fight now.”

2. Justin's Personal Struggles. As mentioned previously, he's a widower (I don't think we're told how recent; I was looking for some indication and it doesn't really say, but I think it's maybe a couple of years?) and has an 11-year-old daughter, Sammy. Monica, his late wife, was the love of his life and he had a really

tough time after she died; it led to a lot of the other pieces of his life falling apart too and he's trying to come back from that, as well as be the father that Sammy needs him to be.

I knew I was on the edge. Things were going well, but it was now getting too complicated, and when it got complicated, things inevitably fell apart for me. Depression is like that. I was smart enough to know when I was about to be kicked down. I just didn't know what was going to do it, and I certainly didn't know it was going to happen the moment that I walked in the door.

Most men my age were either single by choice or divorced. I wondered whether a widowed man who still loved his deceased wife could ever really find love again, whether there were parts that would never be available because of the loss.

3. Race Relations (in St. Louis). In *Little Boy Lost*, the focus is specifically between the police / justice system / government and the community that it serves, as opposed to being inter-communal. Not surprising, since that's at the forefront right now, but just wanted to call it out. St. Louis is the backdrop for all this and in Trafford's bio it notes that he lived there, so while unfortunately we're seeing this across the country and there are many commonalities among them all, I do get the sense that it's personalized to St. Louis specifically. He clearly has knowledge of the city, its history and makeup, etc., and it adds a nice richness that I appreciated; don't know much about the area, so I found that aspect very interesting.

Saint Louis had always had an identity crisis. It was the intersection of North and South, East and West. The tension had always been below the surface, but now it was out in the open.

"This is one of the biggest cemeteries in the country," the pastor continued. "Eighty-seven thousand people are buried here. All races. All classes. All religions. Rich. Poor." He paused. "It is truly sad that this is the most diverse neighborhood in Saint Louis. Truly sad that the most diverse neighborhood in our city is one for the dead and not the living. "We have much work to do." Reverend Battle looked at me. "You have work to do."

4. The American Justice System. Trafford is a lawyer, and that's clear from the intricacies and details he goes into. I'm a huge fan of "Law & Order" and police procedurals, but there isn't the opportunity for subtlety and nuance in a TV format as there is in literature. Don't want to stress that too much though, because a lot of the information is given straight-forwardly to the reader and there's not much subtlety at all in what Trafford is highlighting as the clear failures and successes of the legal system, since it's Justin kind of speaking directly to the reader. Very interesting though and in some ways, the fact that there doesn't *need* to be subtlety, because some of these things just so obviously don't make sense, is a message in and of itself.

The system lurches forward. I could argue that some of them are actually innocent, which may be true, but the law factory doesn't work like that. It isn't about guilt or innocence. The system is about keeping things moving. It grinds a person down—innocent or guilty—until he or she submits.

... And I was just about to wrap-up and realized that I hadn't even listed the mystery as one of the main themes. Honestly, I think that's because as I said before, while it's at the center of the story and is the vehicle through which everything is happening, there are all these other things going on as well (those listed above) and in many ways, the story is mostly about these other things. Want to be sure not to leave out the fact that the book was also **really surprisingly funny!** There were a couple instances where I did literally laugh out loud, and the secondary characters were a great addition; Emma was a real pill, total boss lady, and I liked her and her cousins, brothers Hermes and Nikolas.

“I think you’re overqualified for this job,” I said.

“True.” Emma thought for a moment. “My boobs fooled you.” She shrugged. “Not the first man to underestimate me.”

I nodded, admitting that the tight, short skirts and the big hair were, for lack of a better description, distracting. “I think you also deserve a raise.”

“You’re right, again.” Emma smiled. “Twice in one morning. Not bad.”

Finally, can't end without writing something about the mystery itself, but is a definite spoiler, so DO NOT CLICK if you haven't read the book; I don't include any names, but still: skip! (view spoiler)

Basics. Fictional story. Set in modern-day St. Louis, Missouri. Main character is black widowed father and lawyer; he comes from an interracial family, with a white mother and a black father. There is not very much gore or violence (really light compared to most serial killer murder books).

Extra Quote.

“Things could turn violent.” Schmitty put words to what Chief Wilson had implied.

“You guys don’t get it.” I looked back over the crime scene. “Things have already turned violent.” I looked at them, thinking about laying on the ground with blood in my mouth as a white police officer cracked my ribs with his boot. Being cooperative and respectful didn’t make me safe. It didn’t change the color of my skin. “Things have been violent for years—not just this, but everything.” I started to walk away, then stopped and turned back to them. “But you’re right. When this breaks open, it’s not just young black kids who are going to get hurt.”

Nancy says

Disappointed

Was hoping this Kindle First pick would be worth it. It wasn't. Didn't like the white author writing in first person as a Black man. Didn't feel authentic. Didn't care for the story. The ending didn't even mention the little girl who enlisted his services in the first place.

PinkAmy loves 💕 books📖, cats😻 and naps🛏 says

2.5 stars

Widowed father and down-and-out attorney Justin Glass takes on a case to find a missing boy, which turns into the latest of a serial killer's crimes. Because the victims are teen black boys with juvenile records, most were considered runaways or fleeing police. The families trust Justin, so he becomes involved in the investigation with surprising suspects.

Justin is a great character with a complex background and family. I enjoyed his relationship with daughter Samantha, as well as with his politically connected grandparents, father and brother.

I wouldn't characterize LITTLE BOY LOST as a thriller because I never felt an ounce of tension. I stayed mildly interested in the first half of the book, mainly because of Sammy and Justin's new paralegal Ella, who whipped his law practice into shape. I didn't feel connected to the murders or invested in the families the way I had hoped.

Before reading LITTLE BOY LOST I had only seen Saint in St. Louis abbreviated. I was distracted by Saint Louis written without abbreviations. Every time I saw Saint I was distracted from the plot. I'm sure the editors would have changed to St. if that more used spelling since it's obviously the fill word. I bet other anal readers would also be.

Tulay says

Powerful thriller.

This engrossing story was Kindle First selection of July. When it's published next month make sure take time and read it.

Story is about juvenile young African-American missing boys. And attorney Justin Glass, he's just barely living and working after the death of his wife. All the characters and family dynamics well written. His daughter Samantha, his parents to Bosnia secretary Emma. Little politics and some courtroom drama. Ending was truly shocking. Amazon should make this to a movie.

Zoeytron says

St. Louis, Missouri. Someone is killing and burying the bodies of black teenage boys in a common grave. Someone has a mission. No one seems to care. Granted, these kids were bad eggs, already known to the police for their "recreational violence", and well on their way to worse crimes. When the mass graves come to light, tension mounts in the city. The late summer heat feeds the unrest that festers just below the boiling point. Law enforcement, politicians, and lawyers work with and against each other, at crossed purposes more often than not. In the meantime, the killer is still out there.

It was hard for me to get past the cloyingly sappy title, I can't see that it fits the story at all.

On the upside, the plot line is timely, and the book is very readable. I liked the protagonist, his daughter, and his paralegal is a definite keeper.

Mandy White says

This is a great book. Justin Glass comes from a well known family in St Louis but all he wants to do is help people. When he is offered pennies by a young girl to find her brother how could he say no. This book deals with racism and bullying with a very likeable character. Thank you Netgalley and Thomas and Mercer for an advance copy of this book to read and review

Mark Melrose says

Some spoilers...

but I'm trying to save you four hours of your life by not reading this book. I should have stopped after the first paragraph when the little girl hires the protagonist as her lawyer with some change in a pickle jar... Supposedly devastated by the recent death of his wife, our hero somehow manages to help the police, fight racial injustice, and bring down the killer. The serial killer is supposedly killing off a dozen black teenage boys because he wants to save the system money from their recidivism....seriously, that's the premise. I finished the book because I'm considering writing a novel based upon an attorney (since that's what I do for a day job). Ultimately, reading this tiresome book will hopefully help me avoid the same silliness.

James says

Choosing not to bring down the overall rating, I gave the book 4 stars. I might better place it at 3.5. I enjoyed the book. It filled a need to read a legal thriller that wasn't too taxing on the brain. And that's a good thing. It's well written, moves fast, and easy going. Again, it fit my need perfectly for a book to take me away. Of note, I wonder if the dialogue is the best. I don't subscribe to the idea that a non-"anything" could write dialogue for another ethnic group. Here, unless I'm wrong, a non-African-American writes the dialogue for African-Americans. While I hope that our forms of speech become more combined, I currently hold to the idea that even African-Americans in more prominent positions in our society still have a different form of speech. That might be the only "criticism" that I might have of this book.

Sierra the Nerdgirl says

So this is going to be a very quick review because I don't have too much to say about this book. This book is marketed as a book about racial unrest surrounding the murders of 12 black boys, and while the does happen, it's about like maybe 1/4 of the book, if that. I felt like the book could have done so much more on the topic of violence against black people, especially black children, and the unrest in our country. As a black girl in America, this is a subject that is very personal to me. I appreciate the prejudices shown in the book and how it highlighted how messed up our system is, but I felt like it didn't do a good enough job. Most of the book followed the main character, Justin, and his everyday life and dealing being a better father for his daughter, which is fine and all, but that's not what the book was marketed as.

Don't get me wrong, I thought the book was alright. Reading about Justin as a lawyer and all of the politics reminded me a lot of watching my dad as a lawyer growing up and the days when he would take me and my brothers to his law office or court when no one else could watch us. But something about the book didn't feel authentic enough. The author of the book is a white male who is trying to write as a black male. I appreciate that this story is being told, no matter who is telling it, but I feel like we could have gotten a better story if it was from an OWN voice, or at least a PoC who can identify better with the main character. The author no matter how much research he has done can never identify with the struggles an actual PoC has gone through.

Jess says

Though I've had Amazon Prime for a couple of years now, this is the first Kindle First book I've read. I didn't even know about the program until this month! I'm excited to see what new books it will bring.

I chose this one because I rarely read straight-up crime books, but when I do read them, I tend to really enjoy them. I'm a big fan of Thomas Harris and Tess Gerritsen--authors who write smart page-turner mysteries with troubled detectives and big twists. I was hoping for a similar read with this book, but it fell a bit short of my expectations.

It's a pretty quick read. The best parts of the stories involve down-on-his-luck lawyer Justin Glass' personal relationships with his daughter Sammy, his parents and grandfather ("The Judge"), his political-minded brother, the Bosnian immigrant coffeehouse owners who help him with his cases, and his on-again off-again high-profile fling. He's a generally likable character to read about and I felt he was a pretty well-developed main character for such a short book.

The actual mystery part was less interesting. If you were hoping the story went deeply into the case of this missing kid from the bad part of St. Louis, you'll be disappointed--the case was more background noise than anything. And even I, who am horrible at guessing whodunnit, could see that ending coming from a mile away. I actually was more invested in Justin's day-to-day life as a criminal defense lawyer who has to defend people the world has given up on. My favorite parts involved an exhausting trial for a man who everyone seems to know is 100% guilty of a petty misdemeanor but who will maintain his innocence no matter how much time or money is spent. I especially liked the character of Emma, Justin's Bosnian paralegal who is *way* overqualified for the job. I almost wish the book was about her instead!

This book deals heavily with race issues, and it's sometimes a little clunky. It's pretty apparent from early in the book that the author is white. That is not necessarily a bad thing. He's writing from different perspectives and getting into the minds of people unlike him, and there's nothing wrong with that (does the world really need another tortured white male detective or lawyer?). Justin Glass is a great black male character and he's written with depth and respect.

But some ideas surrounding race in the book were a little ham-fisted. We're told a lot of things instead of shown them, such as the injustice surrounding the missing black boys, the way Glass is often seen as a threat on the streets despite his job and general demeanor, and especially the rioting/mob scenes. I think if this book was written by a black author, those things would be woven into the story instead of told directly to the audience. I think Trafford needs to trust his readers a little more. I wish we upped the ante involving the rioting towards the end--speaking from modern experience, these situations can get so heated and intense, but it just sort of fizzled out in the book. I wished a little more attention was paid because it is such a current conflict.

This book could've been a little longer and included a little more detail on the supposed central case itself. Even reading the synopsis now feels weird, because the little girl wanting to hire Justin with her jar of coins is hardly even in the book. But I'd be willing to keep going if this turns into a series because I think Trafford writes decent characters and interpersonal relationships. All in all, not a bad read for a rainy day. Edges closer to three and a half stars than three.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Little Boy Lost is one of those books that right from the start felt right. I instantly liked and later came to love Justin Glass, his daughter and the rest of his family, well perhaps not so much his brother Lincoln who is, to be honest, a bit of a jerk now and then. I also love the story. I mean it starts off with Justin being hired by a little girl to find her brother and she is paying him through money from a cuss jar. Yeah, I know, I was sold right from the start.

This is the kind of book that is a true enjoyment from the beginning until the end, the case with the missing and then later found dead boy together with other dead boys are interesting, but I enjoyed as well everything that was going on around in Justin life, from his daughter getting bullied, to him getting a very assertive assistant that makes his working life much easier. The book deals with a lot of issues that plague our time, from racism to bullying. And, as Justin notice, a black man reporting a crime is most likely going to be treated as a suspect and it's awful to read about how violent the police are towards an unarmed man. That is one scene that is very disturbing because how many times haven't I read about a black man or a woman who is unarmed being killed in the US.

Now, the ending was not terribly surprising, but I liked it. It fitted the story. And, I would very much like to read more about Justin Glass and his family.

I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!

Judy Collins says

Review to follow.

Dan Schwent says

When a little girl walks into down and out St. Louis lawyer Justin Glass's office with a jar full of change, he has no choice but to take her case: find her missing brother. Unfortunately, the trail leads somewhere sinister...

Little Boy Lost is a legal thriller set in my back yard, St. Louis, Missouri. Trafford does a great job capturing the feel of St. Louis and there are a lot of details that give it additional authenticity. I loved that Justin won the Crown Candy Kitchen milkshake challenge in his youth.

Justin is a likeable but damaged lead, haunted by memories of his dead wife, caught in his father's and brother's political machinations. The case is fairly serpentine. Even though I knew the main suspect was a red herring, Trafford kept making me think he did it. Just who the hell is killing gang members anyway? I figured it out just a page or two before Justin did, almost when it was too late.

The side plots keep the book from becoming a formulaic thriller. Justin's relatives keep wanting to drag him into politics, his daughter is being bullied at school, and there are a few other things going on. Another thing

the book has going for it is a surprisingly deep supporting cast for the first book in what is probably going to be a series: Schmitty the cop, Emma, Justin's way too capable paralegal, and the Bosnians working a the coffee shop up the road, Hermes and Nikolai.

Little Boy Lost is a good first book in what promises to be a great series. Four out of five stars.
