



## The Last Child: A Novel

By John Hart

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### The Last Child: A Novel By John Hart

#### Winner of the 2010 Edgar Award for Best Novel

John Hart's *New York Times* bestselling debut, *The King of Lies*, announced the arrival of a major talent. With *Down River*, he surpassed his earlier success, transcending the barrier between thriller and literature and winning the 2008 Edgar Award for best novel. Now, with *The Last Child*, he achieves his most significant work to date, an intricate, powerful story of loss, hope, and courage in the face of evil.

Thirteen year-old Johnny Merrimon had the perfect life: a warm home and loving parents; a twin sister, Alyssa, with whom he shared an irreplaceable bond. He knew nothing of loss, until the day Alyssa vanished from the side of a lonely street. Now, a year later, Johnny finds himself isolated and alone, failed by the people he'd been taught since birth to trust. No one else believes that Alyssa is still alive, but Johnny is certain that she is---confident in a way that he can never fully explain.

Determined to find his sister, Johnny risks everything to explore the dark side of his hometown. It is a desperate, terrifying search, but Johnny is not as alone as he might think. Detective Clyde Hunt has never stopped looking for Alyssa either, and he has a soft spot for Johnny. He watches over the boy and tries to keep him safe, but when Johnny uncovers a dangerous lead and vows to follow it, Hunt has no choice but to intervene.

Then a second child goes missing . . .

Undeterred by Hunt's threats or his mother's pleas, Johnny enlists the help of his last friend, and together they plunge into the wild, to a forgotten place with a history of violence that goes back more than a hundred years. There, they meet a giant of a man, an escaped convict on his own tragic quest. What they learn from him will shatter every notion Johnny had about the fate of his sister; it will lead them to another far place, to a truth that will test both boys to the limit.

Traveling the wilderness between innocence and hard wisdom, between hopelessness and faith, *The Last Child* leaves all categories behind and establishes John Hart as a writer of unique power.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A year after 12-year-old Alyssa Merrimon disappeared on her way home from the library in an unnamed rural North Carolina town, her twin brother, Johnny, continues to search the town, street by street, even visiting the homes of known sex offenders, in this chilling novel from Edgar-winner Hart (*Down River*). Det. Clyde Hunt, the lead cop on Alyssa's case, keeps a watchful eye on Johnny and his mother, who has deteriorated since Alyssa's abduction and her husband's departure soon afterward. When a second girl is snatched, Johnny is even more determined to find his sister, convinced that the perpetrator is the same person who took Alyssa. But what he unearths is more sinister than anyone imagined, sending shock waves through the community and putting Johnny's own life in danger. Despite a tendency to dip into melodrama, Hart spins an impressively layered tale of broken families and secrets that can kill. *175,000 first printing; author tour. (May)*

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Most critics sang the praises of Hart's third novel, a dark and violent edge-of-your-seat mystery that still manages to poignantly examine the ties between family and friends. Hart's ability to portray his characters as living, breathing individuals -- particularly Johnny, "an amalgam of Opie Taylor and Scout Finch with a hint of Huck Finn" (*Raleigh News & Observer*) -- and his acute assessment of human nature result in a horrifying, heartbreakin tale that steps up the suspense to agonizing levels. The sole voice of dissent, stalwart crime-reviewer Marilyn Stasio from the *New York Times Book Review*, faulted the writer's unoriginal characters and lackluster prose. But majority rules. Most readers will agree that *The Last Child* is "one of the best thrillers of the year" (*Providence Journal*).

From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* Not that we needed any further proof, after the superb *King of Lies* (2008) and *Down River* (2007), but Hart once again demonstrates that he is a remarkable storyteller. Somebody has abducted Johnny Merrimon's twin sister, Alyssa. Thirteen-year-old Johnny hasn't been able to let her go, and even now, a year later, he is still scouring his North Carolina town, looking in every dark place, in the belief that his sister may still be alive and close by. Keeping an eye on Johnny, while fighting his own personal demons, is Clyde Hunt, the police detective who's spent the last year working the case, even as his marriage and career have crumbled around him. When they discover the truth, they find that it's something darker and more frightening than either of them could have imagined. Hart once again produces a novel that is elegant, haunting, and memorable. His characters are given an emotional depth that genre characters seldom have, and the graceful, evocative prose lifts his stories right out of their genre and into the realm of capital-L literature. A must-read for every variety of fiction reader.

### Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Patricia Jones:**

The ability that you get from The Last Child: A Novel could be the more deep you searching the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Last Child: A Novel giving you buzz feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their

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**Eric Freeman:**

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**Linda Banks:**

Many people spending their period by playing outside together with friends, fun activity using family or just watching TV the entire day. You can have new activity to pay your whole day by reading a book. Ugh, do you think reading a book really can hard because you have to use the book everywhere? It fine you can have the e-book, bringing everywhere you want in your Smartphone. Like The Last Child: A Novel which is obtaining the e-book version. So , try out this book? Let's view.

**Brett Nash:**

Is it a person who having spare time after that spend it whole day by simply watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This The Last Child: A Novel can be the reply, oh how comes? It's a book you know. You are therefore out of date, spending your free time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these guides have than the others?

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