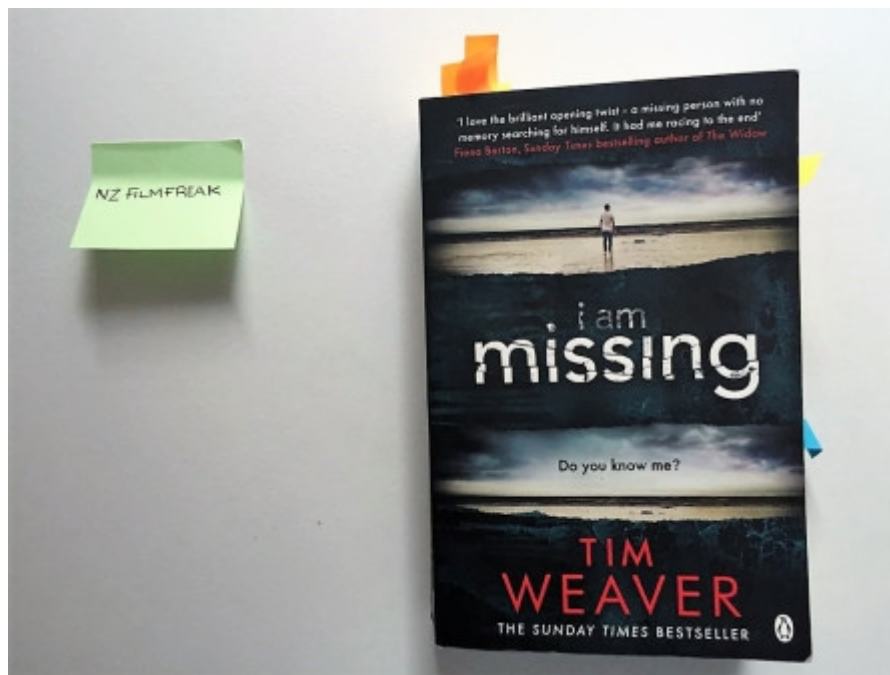




Writer: Tim Weaver

Genre: Crime thriller

Released: 2017

Blurb: *When a young man wakes up bruised, beaten and with no memory of who he is or where he came from, the press immediately dub him 'The Lost Man'. Ten months later, Richard Kite – if that is even his real name – remains as desperate as ever. Despite appeals and the efforts of the police, no one knows this man. Kite's last hope may be private investigator David Raker – a seasoned locator of missing people. But Raker has more questions than answers.*

Who is Richard Kite?

Why does no one know him?

And what links him to the body of a woman found beside a London railway line two years ago?

—
*I have tried my best **not** to include any spoilers in this review*

Within five days of reading it whenever I could steal an hour or two, I finished *I Am Missing*. I breathed a massive sigh of relief; I had been carrying a heavy burden over the last five days. I lived and breathed this story, and I felt as though I had experienced this mystery first-hand. Needless to say, I'm feeling emotionally exhausted now (in a good way).

As the story is written in first-person (rather effectively too), I felt like I was walking in the protagonist David Raker's shoes. After Raker meets the man without any memory, 'Richard Kite', I felt like I had reached a dead-end along with Raker – despite only being five chapters in. It's a missing person's case where the missing person is standing right in front of him... Where on earth do you start to figure out who he is and where he's come from?

"I started to wonder for the first time whether taking this case may have been a mistake." -Investigator David Raker, chapter 5

Believe me, Raker, I was too. I was scratching my head thinking, 'how the hell are we going to get to the bottom of where this Richard Kite fellow has come from?'. I felt genuinely anxious and concerned, my eyes drifted away from the book as I bit my lip worriedly, trying to think what to do...

Before reminding myself that I am, in fact, not a private investigator called David Raker, and I am merely sitting on a couch reading a fictional book.

Idiot.

This book does suck you right in, though. I had no awareness of my surroundings when I was reading *I Am Missing*. An hour became three, and at the end of every chapter phrases such as ‘no way’, ‘shut-up’, ‘holy Jesus Christ’, ‘get out of town’, ‘he did not just do that...’ were muttered as I sat in shock and suspense.

This book was particularly poignant for me because it is partly based in the Dorset/Devon area, which is where I live! I love reading about stories based so close to home.

Style of writing

Being a massive fan of Agatha Christie’s murder-mysteries, I knew I would enjoy Tim Weaver’s crime-thriller from the first page. But it was Weaver’s style of writing that hooked me in before the story itself did; it’s the author’s ability to write an exciting story in an easy-to-read fashion. Perhaps it’s his journalistic background that has influenced his style.

Don’t get me wrong: that is not a reflection of simple or amateur writing by any means. Rather an enviable skill of creating complex and exciting scenes without confusing or losing the reader along the way.

I loved how short the chapters were; it’s such a sense of accomplishment. (This 516-page novel is divided into 81 chapters, which is an average of 6.4 pages per chapter.) But what’s genius about it, is how there is a cliffhanger at the end of every chapter! I really struggled to keep my heart rate down, particularly the few chapters about the ‘The Monster’.

It was about a hundred feet away, on the fringes of the torchlight... Whatever it was, it was following them, crouched slightly, the arch of its back, its arms, visible above the apex of the grass... –The Monster

I read this part on the train, and I can’t imagine what my expression looked like when the guard interrupted my engrossed reading to check my ticket.

The only passages in his book that I found jarring were a few bits of dialogue from a young character called Beth. Maybe Weaver isn’t too familiar with how young teenage girls talk to each other? I would have swapped a few words, and written the dialogue a bit differently. But perhaps that’s simply because I was a teenage girl once. Nevertheless, it didn’t detriment the story in any way.

How I wish I could write a well-articulated story. I kept thinking about Kristen Wiig’s character in [Walter Mitty](#) who spoke about how to write a mystery book:

“Connect the clues, and then scatter them so they seem unrelated” – Cheryl, [The Secret Life of Walter Mitty](#)

Although, in my attempts at writing a novel, it certainly isn’t as easy as Cheryl makes it seem!

Characters

Although there was no character in particular I could strongly identify with or whom I looked forward to reading about, the characters certainly all had a strong sense of identity. Perhaps I didn’t resonate with the characters as much as I have with other books because I tend to read books about a female character’s internal, emotional struggle rather than external, environmental problems that Raker experienced in this book.

I did, however, enjoy that the protagonist was not a cold-hearted killing machine, which I’ve found tends to be the case in crime and action books. The emotions of this character surprised me, as he endured remorse, regret and a reflection of what his conscience would be battling with afterward. I liked that about him the most; he’s a forward-thinking empathetic person.

“I pushed the guilt down, burying it with all the grief I’d tried to suppress over the years, the regrets, the fear...” –Raker, chapter 62

There were mini summaries at the end of most chapters, whereby Raker would go over all the notes he had just taken and all the remaining questions yet to be answered, which was massively helpful for the reader.

I also liked how, even in a situation of panic and where a decision had to be made quickly, Weaver would write out the decision-making process of the protagonist. Surprisingly, this didn’t take away from the urgency of the situation either – it heightened the intensity of anything.

“A moment of hesitation halted me, gluing me to the carpet. Take it, and he’d know for sure that someone had broken in. Don’t, and I might never know the truth. In a split second, I thought about the consequences of taking it – stealing it...” –David Raker’s decision-making, chapter 31

Overall

In Weaver’s story, I was absolutely taken into another world where I studied what every character said and did. I wasn’t just reading, I felt like I was actively taking part in solving the mystery. As cheesy and lame as that sounds... I just mean that my suspension of disbelief never wavered.

I Am Missing is a tense read, but I strongly recommend it. I know it’s a cliché, but you seriously won’t be able to put it down. I read it on the train, over dinner, on the toilet, in the bath, at work while pretending to listen to angry customers over the phone, before breakfast... Seriously. At the end of every chapter, your stomach will drop and you’ll be fighting nervous sweats.

There aren’t any lulls or ‘fluffy’ chapters, just a lot of mystery and questions that ever so slowly get answered – but probably not with the answers you’d expect.

Jodie’s rating: 8/10

PS. Note to publisher: On page 248, 11 lines from the bottom, there is an error where the word ‘were’ has been repeated. ‘*So what were they were doing together?*’ #hireme #wannabeproofreader