



## Hamelin's Child

*D.J. Bennett , Debbie Bennett*

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## **Hamelin's Child** D.J. Bennett , Debbie Bennett

Michael Redford died on his seventeenth birthday – the night Eddie picked him up off the street, shot him full of heroin and assaulted him.

Now he's Mikey and he works for Joss. With streaked blond hair and a cute smile, he sleeps by day and services clients at night. Sometimes he remembers his old life, but with what he's become now, he knows there is no return to his comfortable middle-class background.

Then he makes a friend in Lee. A child of the streets, Lee demands more from friendship than Mikey is prepared to give. But the police are closing in on them now and Mikey's not sure anymore who he really is – streetwise Mikey or plain Michael Redford.

Hamelin's Child was long-listed in the UK Crime Writers' Association Debut Dagger Award. A thriller set in the seedy world of London's drug rings, this book contains strong scenes and adult material.

(approx 85,000 word novel)

## **Hamelin's Child Details**

Date : Published February 2011 by Amazon Digital Services

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Author : D.J. Bennett , Debbie Bennett

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## From Reader Review Hamelin's Child for online ebook

### Eve says

It's very well written, but I just didn't end up liking it that much.

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### Book Addict Shaun says

I was browsing Amazon when I came across this book. The author very kindly sent me a review copy and I couldn't wait to start it. With some glowing reviews on Amazon I started it with a bit of trepidation at what to expect. Debbie Bennett has written one hell of a story here, one that will pull at your heartstrings and have you experiencing every emotion possible as you read. At times the story becomes so difficult you almost want to put the book down, but it is just too gripping to do that.

Michael is approached in a bar by a stranger when his girlfriend is occupied with another man, the stranger spikes Michael's drink, taking him back to a flat in the East End where he is kept prisoner, raped, shot full of heroin and sold for sex. We see Michael, or Mikey, go from a normal teenager to a drug addict, so dependent on the drug he will do anything for it. Debbie has captured the mind of the male teenager incredibly well. We really get inside Mikey's head, and start to understand his thought processes. At times he is confused and angry, coming across sometimes like an adult yet retaining that childlike vulnerability that teenagers still have. Sharing the house with a boy named Lee, Mikey wants to escape, but it isn't long before his drug addiction prevents him from doing so. His friendship with Lee starts to develop further, leaving him even more confused and angry at the things he is thinking and feeling. You do want Mikey to escape and find freedom but at the same time know that there won't be much of a story if that happens. Lee has an adult voice despite being younger than Mikey, and this isn't due to an author fault but the fact that Lee has had to grow up very fast.

Debbie writes with such knowledge about the subject of drugs and the world Mikey finds himself in that it adds a greater feeling of authenticity to the novel. Scarily so at times which left me wondering just how she knows this world so well. A look at her biography says she worked in law enforcement for 25 years. Perhaps that's where it comes from but the book feeling so real draws more emotion from you as a reader, parts of the book were read by me with a lump in my throat, my heart thumping in my chest. In the background we have Mikey's sister Kate looking for him, the only one in her family that doesn't think he ran away, she thinks there's more to it. These parts of the book I didn't enjoy as much, and found myself wanting to get back to Mikey's part of the story. Events halfway through though change drastically, meaning I was hooked on the book and simply unable to put it down.

What was all the more horrifying for me is how real this story felt. Walking around London, or indeed any major city in the UK you very rarely take notice of the people around you. In a club especially, or on the street outside, a man walking with a younger man and taking him down a side alley might not draw much attention. It's scary but it is also true to life. In London now there are people living the life that Michael unwittingly found himself in, and there are men preying on the vulnerable. It's a very human story, with very realistic characters not just in Mikey and Lee but in the people keeping them prisoner. Eddie, who kidnaps Mikey, and Joss, the owner of the flat the boys are prisoner in are as evil as they come. Very rarely have I felt hatred for a fictional character more than I did for these two men. It's a very thought provoking book. Mikey makes a number of choices throughout the book that aren't perhaps the ones you think he should but it makes sense because of the person he has been forced to become. It's impossible to say how you would react in this situation and you really agonise along with Mikey as he struggles to make sense of things.

More often than not you finish a book and move on to the next one. However when a story affects you as much as this one - I found myself thinking about the characters when I wasn't reading the book - it is incredibly hard to just finish it and move on. Because of how real it felt, the character of Mikey is so vivid in my mind that you almost want to reach out and help him, I am still thinking about it even now. It's hard to recommend a book like this, does it have a particular audience? I think not. I think if people look beyond the blurb, rather than being put off I'd urge people to pick it up. It makes you grateful for your own life. It would make a parent hug their child extra tight at night and make all of us more wary of those around us when we are out and about. You only need to read the news to know stories similar to Mikey's kidnapping appear far too often.

Never once is the book predictable. You have an idea of what's going to happen and then Debbie takes you on a completely different path. The ending knocked me for six, I was speechless, sitting staring at the book long after finishing it. It's a heartbreaking ending, but one that demands you read the sequel, which is just what an author sets out to achieve. I have a review TBR which scares me, yet this book was so good I just don't think I can wait very long to continue the story. If this was a film or a TV show, the ending is so dramatic that there would be an audible silence around the room as the credits rolled. It stunned me and left me speechless and if I'm honest a bit upset. This definitely isn't a book to miss, and those that might perhaps be put off by the subject matter should totally look beyond that, and give this book a chance.

Thanks to Debbie Bennett for the review copy.

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### **Andrew Harvey says**

Good book, good story but not for everyone to read, about the scum who destroy kids and their families lives, and this is going on in all big city's, in the book a bit too much information about the sex but other than that a very good story.

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### **Charmed says**

I did not like this novel at all. there were some very unsympathetic characters in this story and i'm not even talking about all the men who drugged and raped the protagonist. there are two ways to review a book, based on personal feelings and quality of writing, very different things that unfortunately in this story align perfectly. I like dark stories; when i'm in the mood the darker the better this story though dark missed the mark completely. This story could have been good with its elements of: how do you go on living when horrible things have happened, how it changes a person and how the people around you react. The fact is that how the author dealt with those specific themes( or i should say how she didn't) is the biggest reason why i wanted to scream at this book in anger and skipped pages with complete apathy alternately. there are two story lines with two separate pov, the seventeen year old who gets kidnapped and forced into prostitution and the sister who is left behind dealing with the police and trying to find him. Frankly the second one with the sister could have been scrapped all together and improved the story considerably, apart from the fact that the whole underlying tone of that story line is 'there are fates worse than death' which i find personally abhorant, the characters themselves were two dimensional and their behavior unrealistic and unbelievable. Not to mention all the cops and social workers and psychiatrists who quickly wonder in and out of the story with no idea what they are doing and have strange inhibitions about talking about things its their job to be able to talk about and talk about well. There are ways of furthering a plot that do not involve making all your characters stupid and incompetent. Of course this assumes I am reading the characters the way the author intended them to be read which might be giving her too much credit, it could just be that she doesn't actually

know the job descriptions or capabilities of any of the jobs inhabited by her characters and all this can be blamed on the fact that so many authors just skip that whole research part that usually comes before you try to write about something you have no personal experience of. Leaving how badly written it was and going back to why I personally despised the content, I had a running subtext in my head through most of the sisters' pov that went a little something like this. Sister 'Oh my brothers missing poor me I have to be around my parents and I still haven't decided about my wedding dress and... Oh look at the hunky cop who's supposed to be looking for my kid brother' Hunky cop 'you know if we find your brother he might be really screwed up if you know what I mean hint hint and you know mess up your life so if you want I can just concentrate on my other cases and we can just assume he is dead which he probably will be soon anyway and hey do you want to go back to my place it's kind of a thing I do sleeping with women involved in my cases.'

So yeah this book definitely wasn't for me and part of that was the writing which was contradictory and unabsorbing and not well thought out with unsympathetic and unrealistic characters and a lot of it was the themes of being broken beyond repair and helplessness in the face of tragedy. Not to mention how much I hated the ending but I won't get into that in case anyone wants to read it still, which isn't completely far fetched I have been sold on books from bad reviews before.

OK, I came back and looked at this review again. OMG the snark. Wow am I mean or what. For a couple of minutes I debated just deleting the whole thing or writing a retraction of some of the harsher comments because I know how that kind of criticism can sting. On further reflection though I'm leaving it as is, it was a genuine response and the author has enough positive feedback to counter it. The biggest thing for me when I get negative feedback is, sure it hurts at first but I'd rather get it and be able to improve than have no one say anything at all because they were afraid to hurt my feelings.

It sounds like I'm trying to justify my snark now, so I'll just leave it with 'I was mean, I had a moment of "OMG good girls aren't mean!" and then the moment passed (pheww).'

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### **Nicole\* Nicole\* says**

At first I wasn't sure if I would be able to read it because of the subject matter, but I am glad that I did. It touches on horrors that people tend to shy away from since it is easier to think these things don't happen. I will at some point read the next book in this series.

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### **Colin Ward says**

This is a great thriller that never shies from giving the dark and gritty reality of a horrible world. Fantastic characterisation and a careful balance of perspectives keep you engaged throughout. Little nuances of subplot help to push the story, without getting in the way. One of those stories that plummets a lead character further and further into the depths, you can't stop reading as you simply need to know what is happening. And yet, top marks for Bennett - she holds nothing back from the imagination, but never lets the book slip into the gratuitous. This book is not for the faint-hearted or easily offended...but it should be. What happens in this book happens on our streets every day. It is either extremely well researched, or comes from a wealth of expertise and professional knowledge. I will definitely be following up with the next books.

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## Emma Sea says

Just like an episode of *The Bill*, in book form. Excellently written, fairly bleak.

**Not** an m/m romance.

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## E.L. Farris says

DJ Bennett's novel, *Hamelin's Child*, is a well-written, dark, brilliant story about heroin, kidnapping, (forced) child prostitution and the sheer strength of the human spirit. While this might sound like a handful, the story is told gracefully and as gently as possible, in my opinion, to maintain authenticity without unduly jarring or triggering the reader.

I found the main character, Michael, likable and sympathetic. I rooted for him the whole way through, and admired his guts and his dogged refusal to surrender his humanity to the inhumane treatments he suffered at the hands of his kidnappers. I also enjoyed the characterization of his unfailing, or should I say unflagging big sister Kate.

Bennett is an amazing writer. She manages to write a character-driven page-turner that I found almost impossible to put down during the wee hours of the night. This is more than a cautionary tale. It's a damn good story, and I'll be enthusiastically looking out for more of her work.

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## Teresa Rivera says

### Hamelin's Child

I cried...So much... Pain, anger, angst, regrets, unsure of the future, wanting go back in time--All part of the healing process. Great Read!

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## Rosemary O'Malley says

I'm rounding up because the riveting parts of this book were RIV-ET-ING.

The main problem I had was that the parts with the sister were just in the wrong book. They didn't have the same feel as the rest of the story. There were well written and would have been fantastic in a different setting, but this showcase was not the place.

Still, I thought it was pretty damned good.

ETA 11/10/12 to correct my lousy typing.

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## **lynn says**

### **Brilliant writing at its best**

I choose this rating because its not my normal authors, and definitely not my type of book. However, I have fallen in love with this writer, the story took me on the journey along with Michael, regardless how harrowing it was in detailed. Makes me feel so lucky!!

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## **Jack says**

A disturbing and well observed thriller about a teenage boy who is kidnapped.

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## **Tony Parsons says**

Chiswick, England. Eddie introduced himself to Michael "Mikey" Redford (17) in the bar. Michael was wasted.

Jenny (Michael's ex-GF) was trying to make him jealous by dancing with another guy.

Eddie & Mikey left they bar, caught a cab & were now at Eddie's place.

Joss shot Mikey up with heroin.

Edward Felsen (40+, gay) did other things to Mikey also.

Joss Harper (drug dealer) was calling all the shots in the household.

Lee Martin (street kid, drug addict, gay) shot him/Michael up.

Kate Redford (Michael's elder sister) Was a receptionist at the Well Woman clinic.

Colin (Kate's fiancé) after they got married wanted Kate to move to Carlisle where he had a job waiting for him.

Kate went to see DI Darwin "Derek" (35+) about Michael who had been missing for quite some time now.

Mikey was now going to work for Eddie selling Heroin on the streets.

Lee was also going to tag along.

DI Derek took Kate with him as they cruised the streets looking for Michael.

DI Steve Peters was involved in the missing persons case also.

Carl Phillips (drug dealer) name came up also.

What would DI Derek & DI Steve Peters uncover?

Warning: This book contains extreme violence, graphic adult content or expletive language &/or sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. It may be offensive to some readers.

I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review, only an honest one. All thoughts & opinions are entirely my own.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written crime book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set

of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great crime movie, or a mini TV series. To be continued. There is no doubt in my mind this is a very easy rating of 5 stars.

Thank you for the free Smashwords; ebookstage; PDF book  
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

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## **Ryan Bracha says**

Michael Redford meets Eddie in a nightclub on his seventeenth birthday, who spikes his drink and kidnaps him, pumping him full of heroin and raping him several times. Once he comes to, three weeks later, he is pimped out by Eddie and his cohort Joss in exchange for heroin fixes. His only ally is the more experienced yet younger boy Lee, who also lives in the flat that he is held hostage in. Throughout all of this, Michael's sister Kate tries to track down the brother that the rest of the world believes is dead.

I found myself pulled in two directions by Hamelin's Son. The story itself is great, the harrowing and no doubt realistic story of a teenager forced to grow up by the unfortunate and downright nasty circumstances which he finds himself in. The descriptive prose paints a pretty slick image of a world where grown men can prey on young men's vulnerability, and Bennett's experience in the world of law enforcement certainly shines through the darkness of the tale she tells.

My issue with it was that I honestly did not care whether Michael lived or died, or whether he would eventually be found by his sister. The characters were what let this story down, it could well have been a plank of balsa wood that was kidnapped and raped, and it would have stirred just the same emotions – none. The character of Kate was equally dull, and of all of the personal struggles she was having, attempting to organize (or call off) a wedding whilst at the same time trying to hold her regimented family together, I couldn't care less. Some of the dialogue felt occasionally clunky for this reader, and perhaps even a little unrealistic (I imagined most of it as if it were spoken by the cast of *Pride and Prejudice*, yet these people are supposed to be London rogues), and some of the decisions made were just slightly too convenient for the purpose of the story, but that's a minor gripe which didn't spoil my overall enjoyment.

In summary, this was a really good, descriptively dark and harrowing tale of addiction and sexuality, but the cardboard characters and some of the dialogue badly let it down for my taste. Heroin has been done better in the past (*Requiem For A Dream*, *Trainspotting*), and no doubt will be done better again in the future.

\*\*Originally reviewed for Books & Pals blog. May have received a review copy.\*\*

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## **Jenny Hilborne says**

Wow. Hamelin's Child is dark, raw, shocking, and a fascinating read. Tricked and drugged on his 17th birthday, Michael Redford wakes up and finds himself thrust into the worst kind of nightmare imaginable. Forced to go to extraordinary lengths to survive, I wondered all the way through the book if he ever would or could. The horrors he faces are horrors that could easily happen to any vulnerable kid in a moment of rebellion, weakness, whatever you might call it. Nothing about the story is predictable, certainly not the ending. I will certainly look out for more books by DJ Bennett.

