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Missing You on Netflix disappoints despite a good plot



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Harlan Coben is a man who writes mysteries, and his plots revolve around murders with meandering twists and turns that weave such a cobweb of catastrophes that they turn into confounded confusion. I am used to neater thrillers—having grown up with Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* and *The Five Find-Outers*, later graduating to Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*, Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason and Agatha Christie's Miss Marple and Poirot.

Now, as one writer, Nick Hilton, describes the latest *Netflix* series, *Missing You*, based on a Coben novel, it is “an adaptation full of characters who talk like they are encountering human life for the first time.” Indeed.

Hilton continues, and very interestingly, “According to legend, Alexander the Great, on his conquest across Asia, encountered an oxcart in the Phrygian city of Gordium. The oxcart was tethered by a knot of such staggering intricacy that the locals had vowed to swear fealty to anyone who could unravel it. Twist after twist had forged the knot, and only the greatest of minds could unpick it. The Gordian knot, though, was nothing compared to the mass of tangles created some 2,356 years later by American author Harlan Coben, whose latest messy thriller, *Missing You*, has arrived on *Netflix*”.

The five-episode series draws us into the world of gloom and crime, though punctuated with a sweet romance between two Africans. Kat

Thompson (Rosalind Eleazar) plays a cop with a tragic past; her father, Clint (Lenny Henry), also a cop and celebrated, was murdered. When she gets the news of her father's killer, Monte (Marc Warren), languishing in jail, dying, she tries to meet him to find out why he committed that ghastly murder.

Kat also has another dark event in her life. Her former fiancé, Josh (Ashley Walters), who had vanished without a trace, posts a notice on a dating site 11 years later. Kat wants to find him, and much of the series relies on taking us step by step with her as she tries to unravel the mystery in the face of stiff opposition from her boss, Sergeant Stagger (Richard Armitage). He quips that her efforts, even if they bear fruit, are not going to bring her father back.

These adaptations from Coben's stories may be big business for the streaming giant, but I find them clumsily scripted and half-heartedly edited. Admittedly, some of the performances are first class, like they are here. Both Eleazar and Walters are compelling, though I found the chemistry between the two problematic. The spark was missing between two people who are so much in love. And Armitage often appears wooden and listless, and, to top it all, the clumsiness of the work pulls it further down.

I think Coben's adaptations need much better scripts and far greater execution deftness.

The writer is a senior movie critic and author