



Hidden Things

Doyce Testerman

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A phone call from a soon-to-be-deceased ex-boyfriend launches a young woman on a bizarre road trip to a dark supernatural world hidden beneath America's heartland in this remarkably imaginative debut novel from an electrifying new voice in contemporary fantasy. With *Hidden Things*, author Doyce Testerman immediately takes his place alongside Neil Gaiman, Kim Harrison, and Melissa Marr by viewing modern-day America through a glass darkly and transforming our mundane world into a place where unseen monsters and paranormal beings have long inhabited the shadows. Among the *Hidden Things* in Testerman's exceptional first novel are goblins, dragons, a road-weary clown, and creatures that have never been categorized, joining a smart, tough, courageous female protagonist on a wild cross-country thrill ride that readers will never forget.

Hidden Things Details

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From Reader Review Hidden Things for online ebook

Marlene says

This debut contemporary fantasy by Testerman is a slice of mythmaking and myth-breaking with a dash of urban fantasy and horror. Calliope Jenkins runs a tiny private investigations firm with her best friend and ex-lover Josh White. When Josh is killed in the middle of a bizarre case, he leaves her a message from beyond the grave, "beware the hidden places." Those hidden places include pockets of weird creatures in the midst of the city, strange borderlands back in the midwest they both left behind, and in their own past.

Calliope embarks on an adventure into myth. Her guide appears to be a homeless man who knows more than he should. But Vikous is hiding his nature as a mythical being. And as he guides her on her journey, Calliope finds there is more magic hidden than this technological age could have ever believed.

VERDICT: This debut is reminiscent of Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* and/or Simon R. Green's *Nightside*, only with a female protagonist and a much less satisfactory conclusion. Too many important plot points are left unexplained. Not recommended.

Ariadne says

I'm still not sure what to say about this book. It felt like *American Gods* swirled together with early Anita Blake. Spunky female detective gets tangled up in supernatural weirdness. I liked our protagonist though. While she fit the urban fantasy heroine roll, she felt human. A strong woman, who makes mistakes but isn't stupid. I particularly enjoyed it when she would do those things we wish characters would do more often (ie. mace the creepy guy following you around rather than talk to him). While I liked the ideas and the protagonist this book was still missing something for me though. Perhaps it was that it felt like it wandered for too long in the middle, then rushed at the end to come together very neatly. That said I would recommend it. Also: Doyce Testerman is a super cool guy.

Sue says

I really wanted to like this book, especially given the enthusiastic cover blurbs by some of my favorite authors. The premise is interesting and I like urban fantasy in many of its iterations. Unfortunately, for me this book didn't gel until literally the last 20 pages or so. For most of the book, I felt as if I couldn't sink into the story. The main character was a bit too strident and angry, to the point where conversational exchanges were simply blurts of partially finished sentences, with the other characters getting the gist of the exchange while I was left wanting. Relationships went from hostile to friendly with too little explanation; character motivations felt unclear (and yes, I understand this was to maintain the mystery of the plot, but it was just TOO mysterious for me). In general, while reading this book I felt as if I were standing on a grating looking down into the story, able to see everything but not able to interact with anything. Finally, with the last 20 pages or so, the characters and plot allowed me to get down into the story and really enjoy the ending.

This is not a bad book, it's well-written and there were no jarring moments when I felt expelled from the story, it just wasn't a good read for me. It's possible I missed something vital that would have allowed me to more fully participate in the reading experience. I will definitely consider reading Mr. Testerman's next

novel, but I'll approach it with both hope and caution. The potential is there, it just wasn't met, for me, this time around.

Wayne Palmer says

Sometimes I read a book by jumping in and out of it as I feel the urge. For other special books I become absorbed by the characters and world that they reside in and I am compelled to see what is around the next bend. This is one of those stories. It weaves normality and oddity into a unique blend that requires your imagination to pry loose an understanding rather than laying it out on a plate. I so love it when this is done well and this book is an excellent example of this.

If your feet are firmly rooted in your own reality then this book is not for you. However if your imagination needs feeding then I recommend this as a good read and to devour it as quickly as possible as I have done and, like any other glutton, then looking around for another like it.

Meera says

I don't write book reviews, so I don't know what you should expect in reading this.

It is only fair to say that I read an early, early draft of this, and in some ways, because of the "draft" nature, the story-as-published has lost a bit of its magic. In a draft you can evoke things that a final needs explained, answer questions that should not have been asked, and time and memory fades to make what came before perhaps a little more poignant, more mysterious. The magician has gained in skill and you see the strings and levers. There is a mixed blessing in that.

That said, this is a book about, of all things, patience. The protagonist lost pieces of herself in the events that uprooted her from her past, in the places where patience grows at its steady but yes, plodding pace. It is about the choice of freedom, even when rules and expectations are always willing to bind you in their chains. It asks what your price tag is, because we all have them, but will you be surprised when you get the bill? It skips through the places between, just long enough to remind you that there are monsters hiding in the cracks.

The book has a gentility to it, never relying on thrusting the crude or grisly to challenge you. It is mannered, but it acknowledges the shadows. What changes lie along the bleak roads? What does truth hide, and what are the hidden truths? It doesn't break open these questions, but the story goads you to ask. Asking questions sets you on the path, and it offers you a place right back at the beginning: what Hidden Things will you find along the way?

William Bentrim says

Hidden Things by Doyce Testerman

Calliope Jenkins has a serious chip on her shoulder. She takes no crap, no how, no way from nobody. When her best friend and former lover "disappears" she is forced to ally herself with unlikely allies some of whom

may not exist.

This is either a psycho thriller or a fantasy horror or maybe both. Testerman does an excellent job in crafting the unlikeable character of Calliope Jenkins. Calliope makes a porcupine seem warm and cuddly. She does her best to keep anyone from getting close. Is she a wounded bird or a pterodactyl? She keeps company with a clown or is Viktor really a clown.

What things are hidden? Do we all have hidden things? Testerman develops both his characters and his story as psychodramas. There is a wealth of pondering as well as a good adventure in this book. I really liked Mahkah for reasons that will be self evident if you have followed any of my recommendations.

I highly recommend it.

I enjoyed the book.

Christopher Dickson says

I read this in a single sitting, staying up until 4am to do so. I was utterly absorbed in the book. The characters are rare, if not unique, and fit perfectly with the story. HIDDEN THINGS is a refreshing kick to urban fantasy. It is in a new setting, and doesn't have vampires, or even vampyres, which was a pleasant surprise considering they seem to be everywhere.

The story is engaging, seriously engaging. I read it for 8 straight hours, and then some more. Its dark, creepy and absolutely wonderful, a fairytale for the modern day. It made me happy and sad and angry at different points, often within the same chapter. Its about life, love, family and choices, the last most of all.

In short, HIDDEN THINGS is an amazing, engaging read absolutely worth buying. If you like urban fantasy or mystery novels, or even any fantasy at all, you'll like this.

Zach says

Hidden Things shows us that highway rest stops and roadside diners are every bit as rich in magic and mystery as the lands described by Tolkien or the alleys of Sam Spade's San Francisco.

This is a noir fantasy, a story about letting go, and a complex adventure that veers wildly between the deeply personal and the grandly universal. I'll recommend this book to my friends because they'll love it, and I'll recommend it to my enemies because it'll make them into better people.

I could go on and on about skid marks and motel keys, but what really stands out in Hidden Things is how well Testerman has mastered the craft of writing. There are very few books -- in any genre -- that accomplish the feat of using language in such a lyrical and conversational way. Reading Hidden Things, you're just as likely to be drawn in by the ordinary as the extraordinary, because Testerman gives each element the attention it deserves. The coffee Tom makes for Calliope is brought to life as vividly as the memory of the (maybe) late Joshua White, and even when you know that something isn't a vital clue to the central mystery, you want to know more about it. To me, that's the real magic of this book.

Fans of Neil Gaiman will find a lot to love here, but don't be tempted to think of this as another *Neverwhere*. Testerman makes his own world with his own voice, and both are fantastic.

Melissa Sodano says

I find this book difficult to assess, in truth, as it's not exactly a consistently three-star book. About half the book is a four-star book, while the other half is a two-star book; thus the three stars. It drew me in because from the beginning it reminded me of my favorite book, *American Gods*. Not in the mythology sense, but in the "strange people coming to find you when something has happened to an important person in your life" sense. While the book is fairly well-written, and the plot is quite intriguing, some critical aspects of the book remain, well, for lack of a better term, hidden things. Perhaps that is the point, however, I like my questions to be answered. There are flashbacks which in themselves are enlightening, yet they create more questions; sometimes those questions are answered, other times they are not. Overall, I liked the book, but there are many things I expected to find out, but did not. Is a sequel in the future?

Sharon Hughson says

This book looked at fantasy from a different angle. It was a unique perspective. I admire the way the author gave fantastical creatures a new dimension and connected them believably with our modern world.

The main character was a fallible human but I wanted her to succeed. In the end, I still didn't understand the monsters that motivated her. She remained mysterious and I wonder if that was intentional or if the author didn't truly know the protagonist either.

The disappointing aspect of the book was that the resolution seemed too easy. I mean this gal has faced certain death a dozen times and then the bad guy is just going to walk away? I think the fact that there were many villains but no clear antagonist made this a weaker story. Or that could just be me applying my writing craft classes to what I'm reading.

Clarice says

Amazing dialogue. Modern middle America highway fantasy. And Calliope is a character that I could understand, even while she acted in ways I would not. A fully realized character in many ways, although sometimes the landscape of setting blurred and became anywhere as opposed to a specific place.

Dr susan says

Sometimes one reads a book, and the author seems to be talking only to that reader, describing the reader's thoughts and life in the metaphor of driving down the road and taking a wrong turn around a twisty corner where everything is so familiar, yet so awesomely, horribly not right. *Hidden Things* is one of those books. It sat so innocently on the library shelf with its deceptive cover and simple title, hiding a tale of loss, and love, and guilt, and acceptance.... and magic, such believable, wonderful, horrifying magic. I hope Calliope will find other tales and more magic; even if she does not, *Hidden Things* has earned a place in my favorites... And I bought myself a copy for Christmas.

Alan says

"What's in there?"

"Answers." Vikous watched the front door. "Monsters."

—p.314

Charles de Lint led me to *Hidden Things* through his strongly positive review in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (a print magazine, in this electronic era? Yep—worth paying for, too). And de Lint was right; it really is that good.

From its title forward, this book has that whiff of the occult that I like, the notion that things are going on beneath the surface that most people don't know and wouldn't want to know if they could. The hidden things. And the improbably-named Doyce Testerman manages to come up with a fresh twist on the way these things stay hidden, to boot.

Calliope Jenkins is a private detective in Los Angeles. Joshua White—her ex-boyfriend, ex-bandmate and current business partner—is murdered out in Iowa. And then... a couple of hours *later*, she gets a message on her answering machine. From Josh. Events get slowly but inexorably weirder from there. One of the many things Testerman gets right here is pacing, the way he sneaks in elements of the fantastic a few at a time. The book's divided into Stages—in this case, they're the stages of a rocket, constantly escalating the otherness.

Everybody here comes from somewhere

That they would just as soon forget and disguise

—R.E.M., "Supernatural Superserious," from *Accelerate*

Characterization turns out to be another of Testerman's strengths—Calliope is a likeable protagonist, though she has plenty of rough edges to keep her interesting. The way she lives in Los Angeles but isn't *from* there; the way the place she's from affects her, deeply but not very happily.

Testerman's good at writing dialogue, too. There's plenty of snappy patter (and Joshua's case notes on p.17 are mini comic masterpieces) but it never gets too manic to be believable—these are people who speak the way we wish we could.

Testerman also creates rich settings through the observation of telling details, like the dusty-looking orange fiberglass seats at an out-of-the-way bowling alley, or the customs of a karaoke bar. Wisely, however, Testerman always talks around Calliope's music, rather than trying to describe it directly. His prose is usually straightforward, not given to complex metaphors or convoluted sentence structures. Even so, *Hidden Things* does not feel like a minimalist work. Sometimes less is more.

It's a short novel, but that's okay. A more drawn-out work would have worn out its welcome. As it is, *Hidden Things* is a near-perfect little gem.

*****Dave Hill says**

This is a remarkable book. And, beyond remarkable, it's a *good* book.

I had a big review all written up full of glowing praise for marvelous world-building, and of admiration of the twisty-turny plotting and intricate scene-setting, and of deep satisfaction with the sheer, frustrating humanity of the protagonist -- but as I know the author, it seemed more than a bit over the top, even if all of it was sincerely felt.

So all I can say is that this is a deeply-crafted urban (or perhaps rural) fantasy that will carry you, like its protagonist, on a white water ride of discovery and drama and horror and hope. It was well worth reading, and will be well worth rereading multiple times in the future.

Kristin (MyBookishWays Reviews) says

You may also read my review here: <http://www.mybookishways.com/2012/08/...>

When Calliope Jenkins gets a call very early in the morning from her ex and work partner, Josh, she's not sure what to think. He's obviously following a lead, but what? And why did he tell her to watch out for the hidden things right before hanging up the phone? These are certainly the questions that are on Calliope's mind when she gets the news the next day that Josh has been found dead, and she's the last known person to have talked to him. Dealing with the aftermath of Josh's death is enough to handle, not to mention his wife's grief and bitterness, but there's also the mysterious figure (with rather big feet) that keeps showing up at the most inopportune times. As Calli sets out to find the truth about what really happened to Josh, she quickly realizes that reality seems to be slipping, and things are never quite what they seem.

What a gem of a debut! At the start of the novel, Calli's pain where Josh is concerned isn't entirely evident, but as the story unfolds, it becomes clearer and clearer just how much she cares for him, and her grief is a tangible thing, interspersed in interludes that complement, but never interrupt, the action. Twists and turns don't even begin to describe this one. Calli's journey back to Iowa is fraught with danger, so good thing she has a guide in the form of Vikous. He would be the one with the big feet, that looks suspiciously like a clown. He's grumpy as hell, but there's a certain charm to him. A certain odd, creepy charm. Calli is snarky and confrontational, and I adored her. Strangely enough, she and Vikous made a pretty great team. Lest you think that this book is about finding Josh's killer, it sort of is, but really, it's about Calli's journey back to the hometown, and family, that she thought didn't want her anymore. And what a journey! It turns out that you can go home again, but to tell you more would be to reveal much of the awesome that this book is made of. The cover will give you a hint, and I dare you to get through this lovely, soaring book without at least tearing up a little (I may have teared up a lot.) You also may find yourself with a huge, silly grin on your face at the end. Testerman writes with a fluid, sure hand, and your brain will rebel at the thought that this book is a first novel. Can you tell I loved it? I did, and I can't wait for more from this author!
