



Strange Places

Jefferson Smith

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Spunky and irreverent, 13-year-old Tayna is every villain's worst nightmare: an uncooperative victim who refuses to play by his rules.

After living her entire life in a cruel orphanage, Tayna discovers that she may never have actually been an orphan, and flees from nunnish captivity to search for her real family. But time is running out and she has two entire worlds to search: one filled with shopping malls and televisions, and another filled with Brownies, Djin and magic!

Strange Places Details

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Author : Jefferson Smith

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From Reader Review Strange Places for online ebook

AnaΣtaΣia says

First of all, I would like to thank the author, Jefferson Smith, for sending an e-copy of his book to me and for inviting me to review it.

I found "Strange Places" brimming with imagination and being a cocktail of magic and adventure. It connected the real with the fantastic world in a way that I'm sure would make children from all over the world wonder: "Could it be me in her place?"

The only thing I consider a minus in this book is that it was sometimes too rich in details. I felt like some parts were unnecessary.

Other than that, I will be looking forward to the sequel!

Richardcossette says

This debut novel from Jefferson Smith is an engaging read from cover to cover that is likely to entice and engage both young and old. The story's protagonist and antagonist are classic archetypal figures and Smith does more than well developing a suspenseful and rollicking series of adventuresome conflicts between the two. Part Harry Potter, part Avatar, this story is sure to entertain while also give reason to reflect. I, for one, cannot wait for the sequel!

Melissa T says

This is a great fast paced adventure story about Tayna, a young girl who lives in an orphanage. Throughout the book we follow her on her journey to find out more about herself and who she really is. This book is filled with elements of fantasy and magic and is a lovely read. You will find yourself turning the pages to find out what happens next. Plus it ends in a great cliffhanger to keep you wanting more. You can read my detailed review here <http://midnight-orchids.blogspot.com/...>

* I received a free copy of this book from the author in exchange for an honest review.*

Lorraine Smith says

I really enjoyed this book. It was easy to identify with the characters and I couldn't wait to see what would happen to them next. The writing flowed easily from page to page. The cliff-hanger ending left me eagerly anticipating the next book in this series.

Somewhere_Encida says

You can always tell my favorite books by their placement in my room. Good books are on the bookshelf, great books are on the shelf by my bed and Strange Places is perched on top of the whole thing, overlooking my entire room, it's cover proudly presenting itself to anyone who comes through the door. This book was definitely a thrill to read! There are so many wonderful and varied characters that I can barely keep track of them, all with their own quirks and goals and ideas and they all somehow mesh themselves together to tell this brilliant story. A story covering friendship, growth, adventure, loss, new beginnings and discoveries, hope, danger, risk, excitement, and lots of other things. You'd stick with any of these characters through any of those stories, and even if you don't always agree with what they're doing, you trust them. The characters become your friends and they all seem so eager to bring you on their adventures and share with you what they can do and what you can learn. Obviously, characters are a big part of the book for me. Not that the settings, the descriptions, the plot and the author's bio weren't lovely, because they were, but strong determined and believable characters with a story worth telling are what I look for in a good book. They are my deal breaker and Strange Places does not disappoint. It doesn't matter if you're as young as Winry or as old as Veest, there is absolutely something in this book for everyone.

Laurie says

After reading a character interview and finding out a smidgeon about the young protagonist Tayna, I just knew I had to read this book. A likable, reliable and compassionate young heroine, Tayna also has gumption and an unconquerable spirit. An orphan who is unloved and unwanted, she discovers quite spectacularly that there is a chance she may find out what happened to her parents. After escaping from an orphanage, she gets lost and in so doing begins a journey of adventure and discovery that kept me glued to my kindle. Chased by an evil sorcerer, she meets up with a string of unlikely new friends.

The alternate world is decidedly strange, beautiful, and fearsome. Described succinctly, the author's carefully chosen words give great depth and clarity to the land in my mind's eye, and to the various groups residing therein. Several story lines are woven together, coming together in satisfying dollops at pivotal points. There is one, however, that was difficult for me to relate to and I had some trouble staying with the story then – I just wanted to skim through those few places because I became frustrated with the odd syntax and structure. It is to be continued in the following book so perhaps it will make more sense later. I am looking forward to reading the next book, aptly titled Strange People.

This book was purchased by me.

Reviewed by Laurie-J

Ying_ko says

Strange Places (Finding Tayna #1) is the first book in a series. The story begins with Tayna in an orphanage and housed with the “unlovable.” The cruel religious sisters who run the orphanage abuse all of the children, but especially Tayna’s group. As trouble brews it becomes clear to Tayna that she needs to escape to save herself. She returns to the area where she was originally found. With the help of The Watcher, she finds herself in another world with little knowledge of the customs. She is on a quest to find answers to who she is, how she got to the orphanage, and what forces placed her there. Along the way she becomes involved

in the affairs of the world.

The book provokes thoughtful ideas combined with humor and, mostly, follows Tayna. It does have sections that diverge to follow other characters. As with many series, information develops over time, in a manner that some people may find off-putting; however, as the picture of the world, and its rules, unfold the story carries the reader along. The ending leaves many questions to be developed in the next book.

Natshane says

To be honest, I'm not even sure this is a children book, children book involves Prince Charming and damsels in distress, well if this is a children book, I would say it's very very sophisticated. I had a wonderful time reading it and all the time I was whisked away by the wonderland I was in.

I would say that this book is sort of like Alice in Wonderland, yet another kind of unique altogether. It's hard to describe, there's something about it that seemed special and *strange*, the 'sisters' actually creeped me out and the whole idea of 'Unlovelies' is actually quite sympathetic and pitiful, however in my eyes, Tayna is a strong protagonist (not to mention a beautiful name. In fact, the names in the books are all special and unique, Veest, Djin, Abeni, those are really uncommon names) When I was reading this book, I was really absorbed into the story. Thumbs up!

This is a heart warming story about friendship and the discovery of magic, I would say that I never thought of magic that way! The writing was beautiful and the descriptive words provided me with a vivid imagination, I feel so young reading this (although I'm just 16), it was quite adrenaline junkie and lively. Plus, I find myself laughing at Tayna's jokes. I love the characters, they are like a breath of fresh air, each with unique and distinct personality yet a part of a whole :D Do I make sense?

I can't wait for the next one in the Finding Tayna's series!

Jennifer Varnadore says

I already reviewed this wonderful book on Amazon, but I will take the time to do so again out of the sheer amazingness of this book. It was a book of magic, friendship, and so much more. I love the characters and how well they are developed, especially Abeni and Elicand. The Djin are brilliantly written up, as well as the imagery of the Gnomileshi. I can't wait to read the second book.

Adam says

Updated: I had to change the rating on this book from three to four stars. Why? Because it's been three years

and I still check back every once and a while for the third book to come out. Everything I wrote below stands, but if I'm still waiting for more after years have passed, it obviously resonated with me more than I thought.

While reading the first half of "Strange Places", I was a little worried. The evil orphanage, the spunky heroine who leads her band of misfits against tyranny, who turns out to be... well, I don't know. My issues are with the storytelling. It's not bad. I got to the last page and felt that momentary rage at not finding more pages that marks a book I've enjoyed. But the story branches awkwardly. The side stories aren't given enough room to develop, but they take away enough from the main track that they are more distracting than added flavour. Our protagonist, Tayna, reads like a horrible trope: an orphan with untapped supermagic, a born leader who needs to learn a valuable lesson so she can take charge in a later crisis, a teenager with a pop-inflected bon mot for every situation she faces. If this wasn't a published work, I would have thought that Tayna was the Mary Sue in some one's journal of fan fiction.

But the rest of the characters, and the world they inhabit, are well worth the read. I'm excited that the author has chosen to avoid the standard elves and dwarves that populate fantasy fiction, to give other races with more potential for originality the spotlight. I like the little bits of magic I've read so far. By far, characters like Elicand and the Kijamon brothers represent a more varied creation than our heroine.

In the end, I have to admit liking "Strange Places" in spite of myself. The story is there, waiting to be read. I'll have to read around the distracting bits, but the meat is there and that's the important part.

Joe says

Disclaimer: I received this book from the Goodreads First Reads program.

The first thing I want to say about this book is that you should not go into it expecting a typical swords and sorcery fantasy book. If you do you will be greatly disappointed as this is not even close to what this book is about. Rather than being an epic story of good vs evil as most fantasy is this is a book about a young orphan trying to discover herself and her past.

The story starts with Tayna at an orphanage run by nuns who basically do not care about the children. It turns out that at least some of the nuns are working for the antagonist in the book. Tayna is one of the "Unloveables" that the nuns believe can never be adopted so they are hidden from the public and made to do all of the chores for all of the other children. This first part of the book is very well done and sets up the story lines and characters quite nicely.

Eventually Tayna finds the "Duck Man" who she believes is a stalker that is trying to harm her. It turns out that this is not so and he is actually trying to help her. After a few adventures the Duck Man reveals that Tayna was not born in this world at all, but in a magical world called Methilien and after saving her from the antagonist of the book, Angiron, he transports her there.

Methilien is not like any magical world I have seen in fantasy before. Rather than big showy spells, the inhabitants have more of a nature based magic like druids would have. Tayna is eventually abandoned by the "Duck Man" who at this point has revealed himself to be The Watcher, although he never truly explains to her what this means.

It turns out that Tayna is of the race of the Wasketchin and that there are 2 other intelligent races on this world, the Djin and the Gnomelishi. Tayna finds her way to the Wasketchin and the remainder of the book is about Tayna trying to find out who she is. She ends up traveling with one of the Wasketchin named Elicand and a Djin named Abeni and his 2 brothers. Tayna is attempting to get to the Gnomileshi lands to ask find out about her parents. As is typical of fantasy books there are various adventures that happen along the way but she eventually does reach her goal, but what she finds out is not what she expects.

The book ends shortly after this with many threads hanging loose. There is no info on what eventually happens to Elicand after he disappears. There was a scene in the Gnomileshi lands where what seemed to be a corpse came alive in the home of one of the Gnomileshi priests. Neither of these episodes seems to have had much to do with the rest of the book, although with this being advertised as a series hopefully some of these things are tied up. It also seemed odd that Tayna's best friend from the orphanage, Eliza, has a scene late in the book where she is getting adopted, but it is also unfinished.

Overall I truly enjoyed this book. It had excellent character development and moved along rather nicely. As above my major criticisms are the unfinished parts about Elicand and the Gnomileshi priest which really did not seem to fit in.

I had given this book 5 stars when I was 2/3rds through, but reduced it to 4 because of these things. I wish I could give it 4.5 as they are not major but did slow the book down and were very odd.

I look forward to the next book that hopefully makes some of these things fit in better with the overall story.

PixelSprite says

This is a fun and funny book with a lot of twists and turns -- you can't tell what's going to happen next in it. The protagonist Tayna is one of the spunkiest book characters that I've come across in a long while. At times I wondered how author Smith thinks, as some of the imagery in the book was just plain weird. Or icky. Or both. He seems to have a wild imagination... all the better for readers. I recommend this book for fans of Harry Potter - it has something for young adult and adult readers alike. I look forward to book two.

Jeff Brown says

Four stars. Definitely a four star book. Why not five? Lets go into some detail. First of all as I first started reading this I was about to put it down for good simply because I was getting a very strong little orphan Annie vibe off of it. And then things started happening. So many things. I would describe it as a sort of whirlwind ride into a very strange world. Not many things are explained sufficiently and you are just sort of sucked in and carried along with the story. And now, with book one of this series completed, I am left with much more questions than answers and wanting to read more just so that I can get a grip on the world I have been transported into by this book.

All in all a very good young adult novel and worthy of buying and spending some time with. You will definitely not be bored. You will just have a lot of questions as the book just sort of ends without much

resolution. Eagerly awaiting the second volume.

Roseanne says

This story is outstanding. The characters and races are simply original and fresh! The third person head hopping, however, irked me. I think and feel that it was too much head hopping... I enjoyed the story. But I did not enjoy the book. I am not sure if that will make any sense but I'll try to explain a little.

While I have nothing bad to say about the characters and plots... I didn't like the way those plots appeared in this book.

Just as the head hopping took away from the voice... The plot hopping took away from the story... I'm still not sure which plot has been tied up and which ones weren't.

Like I said ... the story is amazing. Or I'd have not read the book. I just didn't like the way it was unfolded. But you might...

Give it a go! And tell me what you think of it!!!

Giselle says

First off I want to thank the Goodreads' First Reads program and the publisher for giving me a copy of this book, but unfortunately it was not my cup of tea. Strange Places is about an orphan girl who is trying to find her parents and embarks on a journey in a completely different and magical world.

In the beginning it was actually pretty great. Very intriguing, mysterious and actually had lots of funny dialogue. But once Tayna goes into the magical world, it dragged on and on and on and on. Eventually I lost interest and skimmed the last 80 pages or so. It's a bummer too, because of that great start I was sure I was going to really enjoy it.

It's not a bad book, and I can see why others like it. It's the little details that bothered me the most. The names! Village names, character's names, kin names. They were strange and hard to keep up with. Some of them had apostrophes, some were tedious and most were just strange. It was hard to keep track of what the heck was going on because of it. I was often confused as to if we were now talking about a person or a town!? Likewise, the towns, villages, the whole world was huge. A map at the beginning of the book would have helped situate us in the story. The point of view switches were also bothersome. They seemed to be random and shifting to characters that were either mundane or irrelevant: I wasn't interested at all in Elecand in his pocket and that weird empathy language they had going on. I just wanted to walk along Tayna and let her find her parents already! Cheese whiz on a stick!!

Now, there ARE a some good aspects in the book. The humour was actually pretty decent; It had me chuckling a few times. I really enjoyed the protagonist. She was strong and brave, and the mysteries behind her life were very interesting. So it wasn't all bad, or even half bad. Mostly, it just felt too long. If the author would have given us a few hints and more excitement towards the middle - or been shorter - it would have definitely kept my interest. Instead, the beginning was great, the middle was way too monotonous and kept changing directions, then the ending was very abrupt: we get all our questions answered in the very last pages. It had nothing in between to keep it fresh. Giving us nothing to ponder over.

I really really wanted to like this. I especially liked the hand written note I got with the book. I presume from the author or publisher. So it pains me to give it a low rating, but it is what it is.
