



Darkness, My Old Friend

Lisa Unger

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New York Times bestselling author Lisa Unger returns to The Hollows in this "gripping psychological thriller" (*Publishers Weekly*) that uses the fears found in everyday life to keep readers up all night. "This is one book that will have you racing to the last page, only to have you wishing the ride wasn't over." (Michael Connelly, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author)

After giving up his post at the Hollows Police Department, Jones Cooper is at loose ends. He is having trouble facing a horrible event from his past and finding a second act. He's in therapy. Then, on a brisk October morning, he has a visitor. Eloise Montgomery, the psychic who plays a key role in *Fragile*, comes to him with predictions about his future, some of them dire.

Michael Holt, a young man who grew up in The Hollows, has returned looking for answers about his mother, who went missing many years earlier. He has hired local PI Ray Muldune and psychic Eloise Montgomery to help him solve the mystery that has haunted him. What he finds might be his undoing.

Fifteen-year-old Willow Graves is exiled to The Hollows from Manhattan when six months earlier she moved to the quiet town with her novelist mother after a bitter divorce. Willow is acting out, spending time with kids that bring out the worst in her. And when things get hard, she has a tendency to run away--a predilection that might lead her to dark places.

Darkness, My Old Friend Details

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From Reader Review Darkness, My Old Friend for online ebook

David Roth says

I generally review local authors who are either self published, Indie Writers or published by small imprints. The common link between them is that in most cases, you probably never heard of them. There are exceptions of course, and this is one of them.

Clearwater author Lisa Unger is a New York Times bestselling author whose books have been published in more than twenty-six countries around the world. Her newest mass market paperback is called *Darkness, My Old Friend*, e-ISBN 978-0-307-46519-1, © 2011 by Lisa Unger and Crown Publishing. I read the Kindle® version.

The story is resplendent with characters, from whom it is difficult to really pick the main protagonist. Is it retired detective turned handyman/dog walker/ investigator Jones (pronounced Jonas) Cooper? High school freshman and loner Willow Graves? Eloise, the local psychic? Could it be Michael, the bad boy come home to the Hollows to solve the mystery of his mother's death while cleaning out the old homestead? Cole, whose mother ran away when he was a child, and whose step-mother has just followed suit?

I haven't even considered the plethora of incidental and less important characters, or what may in fact be the most important character of all – the one that links all of them together: The Hollows itself, the small, seemingly perfect suburb to which they all have some kind of tie, and of which Jones says there is "Too much history there, like everything in The Hollows. Everything was tangled and connected across years and families."

Agatha Christie's fictional sleuth Hercule Poirot once said of a case in which he was involved, "There are too many clues here." If *Darkness, My old Friend* has a singular flaw, to paraphrase Mssr. Poirot, it may be that "there are too many stories here". By my count there are at least four major threads and three minor ones, and any of the major story arcs could easily provide the fodder for a standalone novel. Unger even gives at least three endings viewed from individual character's perspective and leaves the door open for a couple of them to make a return visit.

I give *Darkness, My Old Friend* four stars because the author managed to confuse me with so many side issues and clutter that the murderer (did I mention that there was a murder buried – literally – in there somewhere?) caught me completely by surprise, something that doesn't happen much after fifty-plus years of reading mysteries.

Wendy says

I thoroughly enjoyed returning to The Hollows.
Great characters with many secrets.
An intriguing read!

Fran says

Darkness My Old Friend

Author: Lisa Unger

Reviewed by Fran Lewis

Darkness comes to many people in different ways. Some fear death and hope it will never come or overtake them quickly. Others dread going in a car, swimming in the ocean or just living life in general fearing that someone ominous or evil lurks and they are just waiting for it to come. Others like Jonas Cooper live life one second at a time hoping that nothing will take away what he already has yet leaving his position as a police officer in the Hollows he becomes a general handyman, house watcher and mail collector for neighbors until one morning something changes things. A psychic by the name of Eloise Montgomery enters his home and leaves him with a cold chill running down his spine as she relates events of his imminent demise hoping to warn him before things get worse or even happen. While another man deals with his family, his wife's needs and frustrations hoping to find solace and darkness in a different way. Smiling as he holds the one thing that makes him calm and serene: black handgun.

Willow is a liar, has a big mouth and is definitely unhappy that she has moved to the Hollows with her divorced mom a famous novelist. Unhappy in school, trying to befriend on teacher, making him uncomfortable in her presence she tends to overreact, lie and run from the present in order to deal with the past and her future. But, Willow cannot stand confrontations and she is one that likes to avoid situations that make her unhappy or uncomfortable so instead of going to her art class she leaves school, finds her way into the woods in the Hollows and sees something that frightens her causes her to run for her life, tear her best shirt, cut her arm and race home without her cell phone hoping that her mother will hot question her. But, when she arrives Bethany is concerned, not quite sure what to believe knowing her daughter lies and does it quite well. A phone call would change that and when Willow finally relates what she saw and how she lost her phone she tries to convince her mother to ignore the call, not tell the stranger where they are and definitely not pick up her phone. But, that was not what happens.

Moving ahead author Lisa Unger brings back Jonas as he meets with his doctor who encourages him to look deep and hard into himself to decide where his life is or will be going. Reenter Eloise and her partner Ray who knows about her meeting with Jones. Where will this go and how will this turn out remains to be seen as so much has been revealed as she character exhibits his/her own fears, darkness and nightmares. Jones Cooper needs a direction and working as a consultant for the Hollows PD might just what he needs to put his life back on track. But, after meeting with Eloise and hearing her predictions things really begin to change as more than one case falls into his lap and things start to happen that just might connect more of the players. Asked to find out what happened to Marla Holt who disappeared in 1987 brings him in closer contact with Eloise and a nosy neighbor that is holding back information. Added to that he is asked to find another missing woman who seems to have disappeared and left her son with her ex-husband whose wife wants her found. Cole Carr has been staying with his father Kevin who seems to have a shady past, gone over the edge in many ways and whose wife Paula intends on leaving him as soon as Cole's mother is found. But, there is much more as Cole befriends Willow and they are found at a graveyard that is said to be haunted one where Michael Holt, Marla's son was seen digging something up namely a body that he hoped to find buried there years ago. Below the ground many find darkness and enjoy the solitude and silence as the darkness and envelope them and create calmness many can't find in the light. But, Michael needs the dark underground world and lives his life as a caver finding out what is under the ground but still able to smell the flowers and enjoy the scenery as he feels displaced or disjointed until the darkness comes.

Willow is a liar and gets caught in every lie. Few if any believe what she says but her lies keep her on solid ground with her friends until she gets caught. A stepfather that stopped being there for her when he divorced her mother, kids in school that a difficult for her to deal with a Principal that really cares and one mixed up teen with friend named Jolie who is no better than her. As Cole and Willow connect things begin to change between her and Jolie. As they are caught in the woods and she tells her mother, the principal and Jones the truth about why they are there and what she saw will they believe her? Lying is her way out of things so the truth might not set her free.

Paula Carr is caught in a web of her own lies and deceit yet who could blame her. A husband who controls her finances, what she buys, wears and her bank account not allowing her the freedom to stand on her own, even having an affair not caring about her or allowing her to make decisions on her own thinks it okay to want money left to her to bail him out of his financial problems. Her goal is to take her kids and leave fearing for her life as he comes at her with gun when she stands up to him.

Eloise has her own past and her own demons to conquer as the author recounts to the reader how she first learned of her visions, what happened to her husband and daughter and when she realized she had this curse or this gift. The first time seeing a little girl named Katie in a well and hoping to help save her. But, there is much more. Just how will all the pieces connect remains to be seen.

As you get to know each of the characters you realize that each one has their own secrets to hide, lies that have yet to be revealed and many hide behind their own versions of what they want to believe is their reality in life instead of what is true. Willow a fifteen-year-old teen just wants everyone like and accepts her even if the person that she allows others to see and perceive is really not who she is. Jones just wants to be left alone, not deal with therapy and find the answers to what happened to several people missing from the Hollows and not be bogged down with the rest. Lies are coming easier to him too in order to deal with the realities of his own life.

Michael Holt just wants to find out what happened to his mother and Paula Carr her husband's first wife. Could this all be connected? Why are so many people disappearing in the Hollows and what is really buried in that mine? Author Lisa Unger created a plot with so many characters each so vividly described, each different yet the same with that one commonality: Fear of being in the light. The darkness seems to create a calm in each one and the lies that surround them make living in the present easier. They almost believe what they are saying and they seem to thrive on adding to their own made up stories. Just how this plays out you won't believe.

When Jones begins to investigate the disappearance of Paula Carr and finds out the truth about Cole's mother things start to fall into place and one woman's life is in danger as another is almost destroyed. Can he stop Kevin before it's too late and what else will he uncover? Learning more about Marla Holt and going back into the woods a startling discovery is found, the truth about her death revealed and one young man's life in tatters.

As Eloise predicted he winds up at the river and what happens is not exactly the way she envisioned it? Willow and Cole are in danger what happens will shock the reader and endear you not only to Jones but the two teens too. Will Willow ever find the light and realize that she is who she is and that is just fine? Will she ever stop lashing out at everything and everyone and trying to hurt the ones who care about her the most? What will happen when Cole learns the truth about his father will he run too? Will Jones decide that being a PI is right for him and start another career and move toward the light and away from the dark? Darkness My Old Friend brings to light characters who seem hopeless, lost, unloved and in need of direction. With the help of Dr. Dahl Jones hopes to find his and with the support of his wife Maggie he just might. Willow feels

abandoned, lost and when her stepfather leaves and she moves to the Hollows her answer is to rebel. Cole angry with his mom and doing the things typical teens do when they do not get their way falls prey to what wiles of others and winds up with his Dad. What happens to enlighten Cole, Willow and Jones you will have to read for yourself. What happens that changes the way they think about their lives, the dark and life you will learn when you read this outstanding novel by Lisa Unger: Darkness My Old Friend. Some hide behind the stillness of the night and others flourish in the daylight.

Fran Lewis: Reviewer

Viccy says

I had a hard time getting into this book about the Hollows, that haunted place featured in several of Unger's books. Jones Cooper's life has changed a lot; he is no longer on the police force and is having a hard time finding his way after his "retirement," which was really a forced withdrawal from the police. Jones is seeing a shrink, but it is not going well. Bethany Graves, a famous mystery author, has moved to the Hollows to remove her daughter, Willow, from the bad influences in NYC. Willow hates every minute of it up until she meets Cole Carr, a new student at the local high school. Meanwhile, Michael Holt has returned to the Hollows after the death of his father. He is hoping to find out what happened to his mother, who disappeared from the Hollows years ago. Willow comes across him digging near the old abandoned church and graveyard. The local psychic, Eloise Montgomery, is having visions of a woman running through the woods. Could it be Michael's mother? Unger excels at weaving together a lot of plot lines in an entertaining way. As the pace picked up, the book got much more compelling.

Lisa says

The Hollows is a town where a lot of troubled people live married, singles policeman etc who have troubled pasts they cannot leave behind.

After giving up his post at the Hollows Police Dept Jones Cooper is having trouble facing a horrible event in his past. Theon on a brisk day in October he has a visitor Psychic Eloise Montgomery comes to him with predictions about his future some dire.

Michael Holt a young man who grew up in the Hollows has come back determined to find out the truth about his mother Marla who went missing years earlier in comes local PI Ray Muldune & Eloise to help him solve the puzzle what does he find might be his worst nightmare?

Fifteen year old Willow\Graves is exiled to the Hollows from Manhattan after her mothers bitter divorce Willow is acts out spending time with kids who bring out the worst in her, when things getr hard she has a tendency to run will she ever be a normal girl again or will the Hollows swallow her up.

I enjoyed this book the follow on from Fragile the setting was good but the characters have issues that they can not cope with 3 1/2 stars

Darcia Helle says

I like Lisa Unger's writing style, the flow of her sentences and the way she takes readers into the characters' heads, but I had problems with this book. First, I would not call this a stand-alone read. Darkness, My Old Friend is the follow-up to Fragile, which I did not read. And while many series books can be read as stand-alones, this is not one of them. The first half of the book in particular was frustrating for me because characters kept dwelling on issues and traumatic events in their past but those events were never specifically mentioned. Unger relied on readers to remember these characters and the events from Fragile. Eventually, some of these characters' issues were clarified so the story made more sense, though not all.

This book has several different plotlines running at once, with tenuous threads holding all of the characters and subplots together. Because of this, and possibly because I had not read the first book, I didn't feel a strong connection to any specific characters. The suspense aspect was more psychological than mystery, which requires a better understanding of the characters' background than Unger offered.

Overall, this is a good read that could be made much better by clarifying the background stories. I highly suggest reading Fragile first.

Barbara says

The Hollows has a lot of troubled people. Jones Cooper, a retired police officer is in therapy, bored, and looking for an outlet for his energy. Michael Holt, a disturbed young man whose father recently died - and whose gorgeous mother, Marla, disappeared long ago - asks a private eye to re-open his mother's case. The private investigator asks Cooper (the original investigator) to help look into Marla's disappearance, and Eloise Montgomery - a local psychic who sees ghosts - is also drawn into the hunt.

Fifteen-year-old Willow Graves is a chronic liar and runaway whose mother recently moved the two of them from NYC to The Hollows. Willow hates it there, makes some dubious friends, and continues to behave badly.

Then there are Kevin and Paula Carr. Kevin is a sociopath who controls and frightens his wife. She needs to get away from him, but how?

Though the central mystery of the story is 'what happened to Marla?' the other residents' dramas make up a good part of the book and provide some mild suspense.

I thought the characters were well-developed and the Marla story was moderately interesting. Most readers will probably guess Marla's whereabouts and who was involved with her disappearance. For me the book was just okay.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot....>

Linda says

The Hollows, a rural town not far from The Big Apple, is populated by people who have lived there for generations. It's a quiet place, where the only danger comes from a patch of woods, where disused mine shafts and passages lie concealed under the ground. There's generally little drama, and folks still talk, 20 years later, about the disappearance of Marla Holt, a beautiful young wife and mother. While that event comprises the focal point of *Darkness, My Old Friend*, it's really a book about abandonment, which has played a crucial role in the lives of each of the major characters.

It isn't easy to combine parent-child relationships, teen angst, marital discord, midlife issues, and a missing person mystery into a single coherent novel, but Lisa Unger has done just that. She makes little attempt to conceal what happened to Marla Holt, concentrating instead upon the lives that were affected when she vanished. The story is told from multiple points of view, at the point when Marla's son returns to town hoping to find some answers. And it's a compelling story, full of psychological insight, and there's enough suspense to keep the pages turning.

Michelle says

I loved the author's book *Fragile*, so was very excited to read another literary thriller from her. Unfortunately this book didn't immediately engage me as the other had. It almost felt like it was written by someone else. As with *Fragile*, this book changes viewpoints but it just didn't work for me this time. Maybe there were too many people or I had difficulty connecting with any one of them. I had the book with me at the hairdresser and she asked, "what's it about?" and even though I'd been reading it less than 12 hours before I honestly didn't know how to answer her question. Now, this week has been crazy for me so maybe it's more my state of mind than the book itself. But while I wholeheartedly endorse *Fragile* I can't get behind this one. I'll definitely check out her earlier books, however.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

If you like to sniff other people's emotional and psychological armpits, this book will probably work for you. Me? I'm letting it go after 170 pages. Lisa's good at pit-sniffing, if that's what you're into. I was expecting a mystery/thriller like her other books.

So, imagine a small town in the Northeast where NONE of the citizens are average and mostly boring like you and me. Absolutely everyone is screwed up, hiding secrets, trying to reconcile traumas from many years ago that they've all suddenly decided they need to come to terms with RIGHT NOW. AND...They all just keep bumping up against each other. Surprise! All their weirdness is somehow intertwined, even though some of them aren't even originally from this little town. Oh, and they're almost all in therapy, so we get to sniff their psychological socks, too.

*One guy is a sociopath, and he's about to do something awful to his family. His wife is a fool who knows he's planning something, and she should get out right away, but gee, I'm just not quite ready yet, so I'll stick

around and wait for the hammer to fall!

*One lady had a horrible accident many years ago that put her in a coma and when she woke up--WHEEEEE!!--she had developed magical psychic powers!

*One guy's mother disappeared many years ago, while he was still a boy, and now, all of a sudden, he's decided he's going to find out what happened to her, just when all this other weird stuff is going on in town!

And on and on it goes with all the characters. I couldn't see any cohesive story developing. Unger just skips back and forth between all these characters. I couldn't stay interested for more than a few pages at a time, so I decided to let it go rather than force myself to read it and then bitch about it.

It may eventually go somewhere good, but after just recently slogging through *The Upright Piano Player* four or five pages at a time, I couldn't do another one like that. If you decide to read it all the way to the end and you really like it, that's groovy. I certainly wouldn't discourage anyone from giving it a try.

Susan Tunis says

Lisa Unger's second *Hollows* novel is stronger than the first

Readers first met Jones Cooper in Lisa Unger's previous "Hollows" novel, *Fragile*. He was the police officer married to that novel's protagonist, who resigned in disgrace over deeds from his past. When I reviewed *Fragile*, I had commented at the time that Maggie Cooper wasn't a strong enough character to rest a novel upon. Jones, however, is.

As the novel opens, this man, still in the prime of his life, is at loose ends. He's puttering around the house and seeing a therapist—mostly to appease his therapist wife. When he runs out of things to fix around his home, he starts doing odd jobs for friends and neighbors, just to keep occupied. However, it isn't a handyman's job that psychic Eloise Montgomery warns him about. No, former cop that he is, Jones has been lured into a mystery. A woman's seemingly simple request for help locating her husband's ex-wife spiderwebs in directions that will touch many lives and will put Jones in direct jeopardy.

There are many other characters involved in what is a fairly complex plot. This is one of those novels where you see the ends of the different threads, you just can't figure out how they'll all fit together. But Unger does an excellent job creating suspense and intrigue as her plot unravels. Additionally, readers are getting to know the denizens of The Hollows better. They're in intriguing bunch. They seem to keep a lot of secrets, and I suspect the Ms. Unger is going to unearth a few more in the next few years. The first two "Hollows" novels are essentially stand alones, but the recurring characters and shared universe of these books makes the *Hollows* a place I will look forward to hopefully visiting again soon.

Karen says

If I could give this book no stars I would. It had way too many plotlines that didn't wrap up nicely at all. If I didn't HAVE to finish a book I would've stopped after the first chapter.

Diane S ? says

Four threads tie together in this psychological suspense novel. Elois the psychic from Unger's previous novel *Fragile*, plays a prominent role in this one and she is a character that I find very interesting. Also Jones Cooper attempts to find a new phase in his life after leaving the police dept. and is of course embroiled in these story lines. Secrets, how the past affects the future and a young girl attempting to come to terms with her new home and life are the main basis of this book.

Roxanne says

Oh how I have missed the hollows...

Emma says

I never seem to see anything mentioned on here about Lisa Unger, in which case she is very underrated. I haven't read any of her stand alones, but really like all her books set in the Hollows. If you want to dive in, start with the 3 short stories which set the scene. Lisa Unger is very good at the psychologies of normal and not so normal people in a small town. I find her insightful. I really enjoy Jones Cooper and ELouise Montgomery. You don't need to believe in psychics and/ or mediums to enjoy these books- many of the characters are cynical too, even Elouise herself cannot always make sense of her gift (or curse as she refers to it). Recommended series. Recommended author.
