



# **Evidence of Things Not Seen**

*Lindsey Lane*

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When high school junior Tommy Smythe goes missing, everyone has a theory about what happened to him. Tommy was adopted, so maybe he ran away to find his birth parents. He was an odd kid, often deeply involved in his own thoughts about particle physics, so maybe he just got distracted and wandered off. He was last seen at a pull-out off the highway, so maybe someone drove up and snatched him. Or maybe he slipped into a parallel universe. Tommy believes that everything is possible, and that until something can be proven false, it is possibly true. So as long as Tommy's whereabouts are undetermined, he could literally be anywhere.

Told in a series of first-person narratives from people who knew Tommy and third-person chapters about people who find the things Tommy left behind—his red motorbike, his driving goggles, pages from his notebook—*Particles* explores themes of loneliness, connectedness, and the role we play in creating our own realities.

## **Evidence of Things Not Seen Details**

Date : Published September 16th 2014 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR)

ISBN :

Author : Lindsey Lane

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Mystery, Contemporary, Fiction

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# From Reader Review Evidence of Things Not Seen for online ebook

## AH says

This is a did not finish review.

Unfortunately, this book was not for me. It could be my mood, but I was not able to get into it.

Thank you to NetGalley and Macmillan Children's Publishing Group for a review copy of this book.

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## Jeanette says

This is a complex and thought-provoking story that is told from multiple points of view. It is a mystery, a coming of age story, and a compelling read. When Tommy Smythe disappears during his junior year in high school, some people think he ran away to find his birth parents while others think he is dead. Tommy was always a strange kid; he believes everything is possible until it is proven to be impossible, everything is true until shown to be false. He is also obsessed with particle physics so maybe he really did slip into a parallel universe. (Lane does a good job of succinctly explaining particle physics as part of the story.) The story alternates chapters between people who knew Tommy--family, friends, and teachers--and people who find objects of his. Lives intersect in interesting ways that lead to few answers. No spoiler intended (or given) but the ending was one of the most intriguing since *The Giver*.

The book will be a hit with teens, especially those who like science and mysteries, but it was also a good read for adults.

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## Sam says

*Huge thank you to Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR) and Netgalley for this ARC!*

### 1.5

I tried to like this book, honest. I thought the premise sounded so interesting and different from a lot of mystery novels, which is why I initially requested it. However, what this book really is, is a disjointed mess of prose thrown together in the attempt to weave a story together.

Tommy Smythe goes missing, and everyone has a theory about what happened to him. Everyone also has their own problems and issues to face, and each "character" if you can call them that has one chapter only to -- poof! Never hear from them again. Seriously, how is anyone supposed to connect with the mystery if they are a one shot character? It's a little tough to muster sympathy and sadness where there's not much to work with.

Furthermore, the stories in this book are either about rape, murder, abuse, etc, but it jumps around so much that you don't really get a chance to digest a lot of what you're reading, nor does the significance in adding these elements feel as important as they could. I think if this book had spent some time on developing

characters, may be this would feel more important? I don't know. I just struggled to care about anyone (including Tommy) because there just isn't enough to work with. Actually, there's squat to work with.

This is a book wherein readers I feel will be wanting and expecting more than they will actually get. The ideas in this book are solid, but the execution of all of it just rubbed me the wrong way, making it difficult for me to find any enjoyment. The negatives just really out weighted any positives I could find, and I hate when that happens.

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## **joey (thoughts and afterthoughts) says**

[See the full review at [thoughts and afterthoughts](#).]

**Rating: 2.25/5**

### **Should this book be picked up? the tl;dr spoiler-less review:**

- Open, interpretative narratives about the realities of life masked behind the mystery of Tommy's disappearance. Some are coming-of-age stories with limited scope, others are charming tales of family, but they're all uniquely independent lives with tangible difficulties
- Twenty very different narrators joined by the six-degrees of separation to Tommy Smythe; reads like a collection of short stories
- A quick, well-paced read despite a variety of darker societal issues that may not be explored in much depth (i.e. child and teenage sexuality, mental health disabilities, science versus religion, murder, physical and substance abuse)

### **Initial Thoughts:**

I'm stumped as to how to go about saying anything about this novel. It's different; twenty POVs different, and there's a certain disjointed connectedness (wait, that doesn't even make sense does it?) about this read that's mind-bogglingly weird and interesting at the same time.

Also, I just reviewed the synopsis and I'm confused as to whether or not there's supposed to be a name change or not (re: Particles, in the last paragraph).

*Full disclosure: I received an advanced reader copy of Evidence of Things Not Seen through Netgalley for an honest review. I extend thanks to Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR) under Macmillan Children's Publishing Group for providing me the opportunity to review this book.*

**Disclaimer: Potential spoilers inherent to this review from here onward.**

(view spoiler)

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## Giselle says

What in the world...

This was really just a bunch of novellas about people either getting raped, beaten, or dying. POVs lasting for one chapter to never be visited again. It was weeeeird. Most stories/characters were not even related at all to the main storyline. Seriously! I don't get it!

Let's start at the beginning. A guy disappears, while learning a bit more about him we find out that he was convinced he could get to alternate dimensions, and we're led to believe that that's where he disappeared to. Everyone who knew him believes that as well, even the police question people about that as if they would actually be considering it. Okay, whatever. I can dig a sci-fi vibe in an otherwise contemporary novel. I loved *Between the Lives* recently, after all. The problem is that, this is all pointless in the grand scheme! There's a disappearance, and while that's the story that ties the book together - or it tries - it gets no progression or resolution AT ALL. Instead, we get thrown into mini stories lasting one chapter each of characters who are sometimes not even related to the disappearance whatsoever. For instance, one POV's only tie-in is due to a note she finds before she murders a guy, that Tommy must have dropped. The note is insignificant in every way, and not even interesting. It's just about how he gave his bike a name. Oookay. Another POV is about a girl who gets her sister's baby dropped on her lap so she can take off with some dirtbag she likes for some reason (but who knows? We've known her for 4 pages). Later, in another POV (there's like a trillion), we hear about this same girl being taken in by some other character. The end. It's all so irrelevant. It really is like novellas surrounding this one disappearance, related to each other by tiny, tiny threads.

And then there's the science blah blah. I enjoy through-provoking science chatter as much as the next, but this one was waaay confusing quantum physics mumbo jumbo. Also, surprisingly, quite dull - probably because it all had no point. It was just a way to bring up a science vs god debate which I have no patience for, frankly.

There were *some* things I liked. It's easily readable, and written mostly in dialogue of people being interviewed by the detectives, but we don't see the police's narration, only the characters' responses which I found kind of neat. I also found a few of the individual stories quite interesting - too bad those only lasted for one chapter - touching on topics from rape to abusive parents and alcoholism, to name a few. If a lot of these mini stories were turned into full novels I would buy these books! But mashed together into one novel is just random. Suffice it to say, the good didn't come close to making up for the rest of it.

In short: It's like this book just barfed a bunch of randomness and called it a day.

Kthxbye

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*An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.*

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#)

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## Wendy Darling says

Disjointed, confusing, and rather bizarre. Each chapter is a different POV from someone often only tangentially related to the missing boy, and as far as I can tell you don't revisit any of those POVs again. It's hard to care about anybody when you only spend a few pages with them, and it's hard to get a feel for the overall mystery/care about the missing boy with this kind of structure, too. AND I really dislike when serious subjects like rape and abuse are just thrown into the plot without any real purpose or meaning.

Might work for some, but after 55 pages, I could tell this wasn't going to work for me.

*An advance copy was provided by the publisher for this review.*

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## Shae McDaniel says

**Originally reviewed at <http://www.shaelit.com/2014/09/review...>**

A few weeks ago I tweeted about that feeling you get when you finish a book that you know is going to be a pain and a half to review. This is that book. Whether the book is good or not seems irrelevant at the moment, because I don't know how to get you through what this book *is* to make any kind of value judgment. I will say that it is definitely unlike most books I read.

The heart of the book, technically, is Tommy Smythe, a boy obsessed with quantum physics and parallel universes who abruptly goes missing right before prom. I say technically because while Tommy is the subject of practically every page, he never actually appears *on the page*. He is one of our many narrators through the found scraps of his journal, but his writing is a discussion that he has with himself, not with us the audience.

If you include Tommy, this book follows a total of twenty-two people. Roughly half are told in third-person POV as we follow them through their lives, while the other half are first-person as the narrators give their accounts of Tommy to the local Sheriff. I guess, now that I think about it, the Sheriff could be viewed as another contributor, though he is never seen or heard in the book. The sheriff acts as our portal into the investigation, a window linking us from our world to the inner workings of the town after Tommy's disappearance.

Huh. I think Tommy would like that, seeing the Sheriff as a portal. That's the thing about this book. Once you get into it, you start making connections *everywhere*. Everything links back to physics and universes, to perception, possibilities, probabilities, and reality. Some of this effect comes from deliberate calculation on the author's part. We only ever meet each character once, but they flow in and out of each other's stories like the tide through a grate. Once you spot the lines spiraling through each narrative, it almost becomes a game to spot familiar faces in the oblique asides of the current narrator. As the characters dance in and out of view, we get a unique amalgam of facts and opinions that we can then use to shape our view of them, much as we must do to get a picture of Tommy, our absent subject.

Of course, I suspect some of the eagerness to make connections simply comes back to being human. Human beings are notorious for drawing conclusions and finding patterns where there are none. Then again, Tommy might argue that everything is connected—if not here, then in another universe where our choices have spun

off into radically different outcomes. In the book, Tommy's classmates posit that Tommy's obsession with parallel universes may have allowed him to cross over into one, and that's why he's missing. The authorities take the more traditional view that Tommy was kidnapped and/or murdered. What he *is* is, in fact, irrelevant until his state is proven. The science was a bit murky for me (it's quantum physics, after all), but from what I gathered, Tommy was Schrodinger's cat. Until someone could prove where he was and what happened, he was simultaneously in all places and in all states of being. And once someone does narrow down his state to one defined outcome, then all of the probabilities and possibilities of the universe converge into a single point that we call reality. But only in this universe. In the other universes, Tommy is alive/dead/in yet another universe/riding his motorbike with Rachel/at prom/at home with his parents, etc. It's a trippy concept, I know, but also surprisingly beautiful.

Once you get partway through this book, I stopped making assumptions entirely. I mean, how can you assume one particular outcome when *all* of the possibilities are still in play somewhere in the multiverse? Yes, in *this* universe, in the universe inhabited by a grieving Mr. and Mrs. Smythe and questioning Sheriff Caldwell, some probabilities are much higher than others. But I mean, honestly. I can't even decide what genre to classify this thing as. Is it magical realism? There are talk of ghosts, disappearing kids, and plant whisperers who "see things." That seems like magical realism. But quantum physics... that's science. So are parallel universes and probabilities and Higgs-Boson particles. So is this sci-fi? At what point is magic really science? Is it magic because we don't understand it? That's a commonly held sci-fi trope, that magic is really science we just don't understand, but *some* things might be truly unexplainable, right? So which is this? Is it science or magic?

As you can tell, I was pretty fascinated by the premise of this book, but that's not to say that the execution was without its flaws. For one, it can be difficult to keep track of who's who with such scene fluidity. The text makes an effort to keep us in the loop, but characters will naturally refer to other characters by different names (first name, last name, description, nickname, "that guy," etc.), which can make the people hard to follow. Within the narrations, there was some sloppiness as well. For instance, at one point we follow a student named Marshall in his plan to woo his friend Leann. Within a paragraph, we're jolted from Marshall's perspective to Leann's and back again with no warning or even an acknowledgement that the shift happened. In all the other narratives, switches in perspective are rare and clearly defined. Also, since we never heard the sheriff's side of the conversation, the first-person narrators had to do all the heavy lifting. This lead to awkward, unrealistic sentences where they would repeat back chunks of what the sheriff just said, like actors giving a scripted interview.

My biggest problem is that some of the segments were flat-out gross. Abusive parents, an on-page rape, a joke about having sex with fruit, a teen hooker, murder, incest, drugs, drinking, suicide—this book has it all. Some may argue that this is "realism." After all, we're following people, and these are real things that happen to real people, so why not? My arguments are as follows:

- 1) Just because something is real doesn't mean I want to read about it. I really, really, *really* do not want to read about a girl whose mom Fancied her out at age 13, okay? And as a reader, I am totally allowed to say *nopety nope nope*.
- 2) There is such a thing as too much. A person can have dramatic, fiction-worthy problems without being disgusting, you know.
- 3) To me, some of the scenes genuinely had no point. What was the point of that hooker? What did she contribute to the narrative? Her only tie to Tommy was that she found one of his belongings. She had never met him. She had no insight to give. And though her actions affected others in later narratives, the *cause* of

her actions could have been easily changed. What was the point of Izzy and Alex's tete-a-tete? Or the conversation between Alvin and Jake? BLECK. At this point, some may argue that there is no point to reality because reality *is* the point and it all just *issssss*, to which I call crap. This is not reality. This is fiction, which means those who create it make deliberate choices regarding what enters the world, and they are choices that need to be justified.

So do you see my dilemma? I came out of this book in two frames of mind. On the one hand, I was blown away by the author's talent. The way the narratives and plot worked together so cohesively is fantastic. This is the kind of book that you can chew on long after you put it down. It's literary and deep and beautiful. Fantastic. Four stars. On the other hand, my brain can't chew indefinitely because it keeps getting a mouthful of the unnecessary ickiness floating throughout. Bleckity bleck bleck. One-half star.

Huh. How interesting that a book all about probabilities would push me into such an uncertain position. Since LibraryThing and Goodreads require a rating, I suppose I'll have to settle eventually, but for you, dear reader, the possibilities are endless.

### **Favorite Non-Spoilery Quotes:**

*Looking at the birds together in the same moment was the conversation. I mean, if you're with a guy who is thinking that each person, each thing contains waves of possibilities and those possibilities might exist in alternate dimensions, then you can kind of see how being together seeing the same thing at the same time is a pretty big deal.*

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*He would get tripped up in simple conversation. When I'd leave the art room and I'd say something like, "See you next time." Instead of saying, "Okay," he'd say, "What next time?" It's like he had to be superliteral about everything because he was thinking in so many different dimensions. So if I said something casual or unspecific, it caused like static in his brain and he had to stop and tune the channel.*

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*Tara looks up at the blanket of stars. She wonders, if one exploded, would all the other stars wobble in their orbit? ... That's how death is. It turns your world up side down. It makes what was real seem unreal. It pulls you out of normal. Makes you do things you've never done before. Like sit outside in the middle of the night with a bag full of your dad's ashes. When someone dies, your whole orbit changes.*

**Points Added For:** Some really on-point observations regarding an abuser's claim that they "couldn't help it," quantum physics, beautiful prose, connections.

**Points Subtracted For:** Some sloppiness within the narratives, a slow start, nastiness.

**Good For Fans Of:** "Issues" contemporaries, magical realism, possibilities, philosophical musings.

**Notes For Parents:** Language, incest, making out, sex, rape, murder, pedophilia, child abuse, drinking,

drugs, domestic abuse, suicide.

*Note: I received a review copy of this title from the publisher for review consideration.*

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## **SoWrongItsRANDI {Bell, Book & Candle} says**

Bell, Book & Candle | Evidence of Things Not Seen Review

I feel like I have been conned; a part of some bait-and-switch tactic by the author. I'll admit that I was initially intrigued by the cover (I've always been a sucker for an amazing book cover). Then I read the synopsis, and I was instantly a "easy mark" for Ms Lane, the author. Actually reading the book left me with one thought: what? That's it?

I'm all for the unknown, and I generally appreciate books that explore and take that direction. Nevertheless, the author seemed to be trying to achieve this element of mystery and illusion, without really grasping it; kind of like scratching the surface of a massive iceberg with a butter knife.

The story is comprised of a series of events told in either: first person, third person or third person omniscient. In between each event is a note the victim, Tommy, wrote. Granted, some of these stories are somehow interconnected; some are from left field figuratively. Almost all of them are ended abruptly like a door quickly slamming in your face. It left me confused about how it all tied together in the big picture.

The ending was anticlimactic and left me feeling a little miffed; I don't really like this book. While Tommy prattles on and on about multiple dimensions and possibilities...I wonder, can I get my 4 hours I wasted reading this book back?

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## **Sandra says**

**This is one crazy book.**

Its told in alternating POVs, in both first and third person. Gaaawddddd... There were times that it is very confusing, but i loved how it was told. It was like you were watching a psychological thriller movie, only you were reading it. If that makes any sense.

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## **paula says**

I was sent this book in a group of potential New Adult titles. I don't know what New Adult is. I thought I did, but apparently not.

But I don't think Evidence of Things Not Seen fits the category however it is sliced. The characters in it are juniors and seniors in high school. It's a mashup of quantum physics and...pain? There is a huge amount of really ugly parent-on-child or uncle-on-child violence, most of it sexual and the VAST majority of it aimed at girls. And I have read painful YA before, YA with rape and cutting and prostitution and whatnot, I have read J.T. Leroy and I can take it, but in this book it feels like voyeurism, feels like shock for shock's sake.

The book is constructed as a series of very tenuously-linked stories of individual teens, and inserting the one where an adult male says to a 13-year-old girl, "Get into your birthday suit and pour me a drink. I've got cherries to pop" is gratuitous. In another story, a boy is in love with a girl who has been abused by her uncle and cousin, and she thinks to herself, "Love. The word drips like the remains of semen down the back of her throat." That just made me forget whatever the story was about because a) gross and b) would you say... things... drip...?

Parenthetically - writing criticism of sexual content is difficult because it's not like you can run a sentence like that by your co-workers without seeming like you're assuming things about them that you totally would rather not know.

Anyway I don't want to review it. There are interesting ideas and moments of fine writing, but the rough stuff just jolts you right out of the larger story. The book doesn't hang together. And if this is what New Adult is, I'd rather not read any more of it.

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## **Stacee says**

I just don't have words for this book. It was one I was really excited for because I loved the synopsis. When I started reading it was just upsetting.

Right away, there's a character who is being forced to have sex with her uncle and cousin, but it must be okay because they tell her they love her and they're "real nice" afterwards. When her mom finds out, the girl is sent away for being a tease. Next there's a girl whose mom sells her for \$1000 so she can have sex with a bunch of men. But don't worry, the mom gets her drunk first. And let's not forget the girl who forces sex on her male BFF because he's a guy so he automatically wants it. He even tells her "Replay that whole scene. Only this time, I'm forcing myself on \*you\*."

I don't know what any of it has to do with the story and the reoccurring assault was really disgusting to read. After about halfway through the book, I started skimmed to read the parts that pertained to Tommy -- which were few and far between.

The execution is interesting: telling the story from other people's POV as they're {mostly} getting interviewed by the police about Tommy's disappearance. In the end, there's no real answers and I was left

with an icky feeling.

**\*\*Thanks to Farrar Straus Giroux and NetGalley for providing the arc in exchange for an honest review\*\***

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### **Crystal says**

I DNF this one. I got about 1/3 of the way through and then looked at a few reviews which uncovered that this book is full of short one chapter novellas that don't really tie into the overall storyline. I don't understand why this book was written like that and I just don't feel the need to find out. All the science stuff went over my head also and I just had to drop it.

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### **Carmen says**

A powerful debut with rich, complex characters that you can't get out of your head. I found myself completely captivated with the disappearance of high school junior Tommy Smythe and eager to solve the mystery through the clues he left behind and the people that intersected his life.

This story has caused me to consider the impact my decisions and choices have on the people who surround me and intersect my life. How as Tommy said, "We leave pieces of ourselves everywhere. Every time we meet someone, they take some of us and we take some of them. That's how it is Little particles stick us together. Bit by bit. I think it's how we get whole."

It's a profound story that feels all too real about life, relationships, circumstances, and the choices we make. A honest look inside a rural diverse town and how people affect us in the smallest or biggest of ways.

An emotional bender that delivers.

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### **Annie says**

Cover design.

This is how you do it.

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### **Brittany (The Book Addict's Guide/Novelly Yours) says**

Started and then shortly thereafter, marked as DNF. Made it about 50 pages in and what in the world is this book. It's only 225 pages long so 50 pages in and we learn nothing about Tommy. Practically nothing except he was nerdy and into weird nerdy things. That about sums it up.

The different POVs in this book (I mean, as far as I made it) were just... weird. I don't mind heavy subjects and serious issues, but to throw in topics of sexual abuse like it was, and seemingly serving no purpose to the plot...? I mean, I didn't finish the book, but what purpose does this serve to tell the details about how a girl is

abused by her cousin and her uncle and give explicit descriptions of things that she went through? I don't even know how she's connected to all of this... or anyone really.

Anyway. It may have gotten better if I kept reading but I felt totally taken by surprise at all of this intense content with no context at all how it related to Tommy. In fact, I don't even know who Tommy is.

This is a big issue with too many POVs too. Who are all these people and why do their stories relate? I'm not saying their stories don't matter because clearly they have stories to be told... But maybe they shouldn't have been told in this book. Maybe they need their own books because to tie this into the mysteries of Tommy's disappearance... it just didn't seem to fit.

This just really wasn't what I expected it to be and I just don't feel interested in continuing.

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