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From the award-winning author of "A Stir of Bones" comes the story of two freshman roommates and the "viri" or soul demon who is tracking one of them.

Spirits That Walk in Shadow Details

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Author : Nina Kiriki Hoffman

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From Reader Review Spirits That Walk in Shadow for online ebook

Erika Worley says

I go back and reread this book a lot. It's a fun college adventure.

Cait says

Fantastic setup; very little pay-off. Alas.

Charlie Moses says

This was a book that I just...found someplace, and took home to read because the cover blurb sounded interesting. And it was interesting - it's a sequel to an earlier novel I had never heard of, and which, when I looked for it, was not in my multi-county library holdings list. Too bad, because I would have enjoyed reading that one, if it was as well-written as this one is. Hoffman's take on magic and magical beings is fresh and well worked out. I enjoyed her characters as well. In fact, I'd read this book again.

Dena Landon says

Kim is hoping that her first year of college will be better than her last year of high school - that she'll shake off the crippling depression that set in after losing her best friend and make new friends. But when she meets her new, strange roommate Jamie and is immediately kicked out of their room for a religious ritual she starts to worry. But Jamie has a huge secret to hide, she and her family are part of a larger group that can perform magic. This is her first attempt at living with and getting to know Outsiders. She has lots of rules to follow, meant to guard their secret, but she breaks all of them when she realizes that Kim's depression isn't natural. Someone, or something, is feeding on Kim. When Jamie decides to help her new roommate she enlists the help of her spirit guardian, Rugee, and her cousins Harrison and Josh.

Spirits that Walk in Shadow was an excellent book. I really enjoyed the author's magical system, the descriptions of trelling, the different culture that Jamie's people had developed, and the different skills that they each had, were fascinating and well done. Hoffman pulls off something I've seen few authors be able to do successfully - describes on the written page the process of creation and art that actually makes it come alive. If I had two quibbles with this book it was that at times the two main character's points of view were difficult to distinguish - I'd have to go back to the chapter heading to see whose name was used, or look and see how the character was referring to the cousins. My other quibble would be that the main confrontation and climax took place almost entirely offstage. That aside, I'd highly recommend this book to college-bound seniors and any teen looking for a good fantasy read.

John Loyd says

Another incredible work by Hoffman. Third book in the Chapel Hollow series, but it can be read standalone. The Thread that Binds the Bones explains how all the Locke and Bolte children could do horrible things as children but are now getting better. Jaimie was one of those kids and she is going to college to experience life with humans that aren't magical or part of the neighboring town where everyone is terrified of them.

Kim and Jaimie begin their freshmen year at Sitka State. Kim being super depressed all summer had nothing to do but get prepared. Jaimie showing up at the dorm with no identification and not even knowing she had to share a room until her dad knocked on the door. Within minutes Rugee who is a minor god to the family that wields powerful magic becomes Kim's protector and they have a much less reverent relationship. The story becomes a magical mystery to find and stop the viri which is not only feeding off Kim's sadness, but is also forcing her into that state.

I read this in two sittings. The story flowed so smoothly that I didn't want to put it down. It kept my interest up, no lulls, every page was interesting. Awesome.

Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

My main problem with the book was it was all telling. Now telling has its place in a story but let's show something happening. Well we did get to see an emotional mess in action, not quite what I meant!

A secondary problem was the story wasn't very developed. I enjoy a book better when it's not solved instantly. I mean 2 days really?!

I thought she had a handle on giving us decently developed characters, not much happened with them but we got them. She did leave you puzzling for 20 or so pages on just who the culprit is but once she stops anyone else from coming near you pretty much figure it out.

The thing is you really wanted to experience more in this world! Her world building skills are mad good. She has a great imagination on her and if she would only develop the plot more most readers wouldn't even care she only tells with very, very little showing!

Now I didn't much like the split point of view, mainly because it took you a couple pages to readjust to which girl you were reading because they both sounded like the same character :(mainly I knew the difference if the girl got sad or did mind paintings or talking about her relatives. I like it when a split POV each sound different as you read them so you actual slip in and out of their minds.

All said I didn't hate the book, it didn't take long to read and the world was imaginative. If you miss it though you won't be crying buckets of tears either.

BOTTOM LINE: I want a Rugee too!

Laura Lulu says

Great concept, lackluster execution. It wasn't *horrible*, it was just utterly boring. I was going to give it 3 stars, but when it came down to it, I didn't "like it", it "was ok", which is what the stars say when you hover over them. :)

The story takes place over 2-3 days, and we are supposed to just believe that these strangers all care so much about each other and will be lifelong friends, while never seeing anything to support these instant friendships. Lots of telling, little showing.

But most importantly for me, the character development was sorely lacking. These kids felt like robots--there was nothing that made me care about a single one of them, and I actually found myself wondering on more than one occasion why they cared about each other. And there were *many* instances of someone saying something that was so stupid & dorky, no teenager would ever say it to someone he knew for 2 days, let alone 2 months.

And the added "first week at college" backstory--so stupid. Here is this girl being pursued & attacked by something that feeds off her emotions and particularly likes her depressed emotions and has the ability to *make* her horribly depressed from a distance, so she's a sobbing idiot who just falls to her knees with no warning. But she is adamant about not missing freshman orientation. Whatever. Just dumb and forced. Ooh, the college experience.

I didn't care about who hooked up with who, in fact, I found myself again questioning the attraction. The boys were boring & stupid automatons, even more than the girls.

So, it wasn't bad enough to not finish, but I had less than 20 pages left and fell asleep reading it. Make of that what you will.

Shannon Kauderer says

A fine book but with not much content. Honest feels like a Naruto filler arc. Some of Nina's pay books have been brilliant, particularly the magic systems. I'm still willing to read more, I simply hope they have thicker content.

Jennifer says

Sigh. Another Chapel Hollow book that just falls flat. I had to read this, despite my reservations after the first two, just to see where it went. Disappointing and even weirder than the first two. It suffers from the same issues as the earlier books (inexplicable magic, no consequences, glossing over serious issues, flat characters) but then adds a shapechanging succubus-like creature.

Spoilers

It switches back and forth between the POV of Jamie (I think she appears in the first book) and Kim (ordinary girl...who apparently has super pure, awesome emotional output). They are just starting college, which will hopefully be a new start for both of them, and Jamie will be able to see how Outsiders live.

Which might work, if she wasn't always blabbing about Forbidden Topics when people can hear her and doing magic publicly. There is no discretion in this girl at all, because back home in Chapel Hollow, her family openly uses magic - mostly everyone in the nearby town is terrified of them and doesn't say anything about their magic. Despite the first book and this one blaming the horrible things on a bad apple of a teacher...her own family has a rule that you can do whatever you want to each other, as long as you don't scar them. Conveniently you can "memory wash" your victim, so maybe some of the stuff you've done to them would have traumatized them forever, but they don't remember, so it's all cool. Using the Voice to get them to obey embarrassing orders...yeah, that's fine too. Transforming your siblings because you're stronger? Yep. Sounds to me like there were major problems in this family long before that last teacher got hold of the young ones.

Some members of the other branch of the family show up as well, a couple of whom were in the second book. Despite having been chastened in the last book, they aren't any better in this one. Nor are they discreet about magic use either. I'm not sure how this branch is supposedly better at hiding their magic use, when Uncle Rory commands his niece/nephews to vanish immediately if they are in danger, without considering that the vanishing could be witnessed.

The entire book takes place in about three days, and between bouts of soul-sucking despair and hunting said soul sucker, Kim is determinedly dragging them all the orientation events. I didn't find the friendship convincing, nor the backstory with the creature sucking her emotions. The Presence that accompanies them and looks like a salamander was random (didn't seem to fit with earlier stories of the Presences), and let's not even talk about the "baby" that was born.

Quartzen says

Kim is an artist with synesthesia dealing with acute depression brought on by her relationship with her best friend turning toxic that hasn't responded to therapy or medical treatment, hoping to make a fresh start in college. Jaimie is a member of a close-knit, secretive magical family trying to be a better person than what her abusive magic teacher shaped her to be (see *The Thread that Binds the Bones*, a non-YA fantasy novel where Jaimie is a minor character) and define her own identity among normal people (though in the company of Rugee, one of her family's household gods, in the shape of a large and typically invisible salamander, who has decided to accompany her to college.)

Jaimie quickly figures out that Kim's depression is caused by a type of malicious shapeshifting psychic vampire called a viri, another one of which killed three of her cousins from another branch of the family a few years before, and that it's likely the viri has followed Kim to college, and in short order Kim finds herself under the protection of Rugee, Jaimie, and Jaimie's cousins from the other branch of her family, a girl their age and two boys a year older, as they try to seek out and defeat the viri while still making it through orientation on schedule, make friends, and enjoy the Real College Experience.

This novel deals with depression, anxiety, panic attacks, and the consequences of emotional abuse all the way through. I was worried it might deal with magical depression in a way that invalidated real, biological depression, but that didn't feel like the case to me here- Kim's depression, though magical in nature, remained a tangible thing that she had to try to cope with, the experience of having lived with it remained after the situation with the viri was resolved where I think some authors might have taken a more simplistic "all better now, just like before this ever happened!" resolution, and the recovery from the emotional manipulation included grieving the relationship she thought she'd had, trying to value the good parts while

clearly seeing the harm of the bad parts, and learning to set and enforce personal boundaries while building healthier friendships and realizing when other preexisting relationships in her life weren't healthy either.

I wasn't really happy with how Kim and Jaimie were romantically paired off at the end with Jaimie's cousins in the epilogue- I wish there had been more development of those relationships shown on screen, but I guess it might have come across as forced and unrealistic given the very short timescale of the story's events (a few days at most). This and a few other scenes (eg Jaimie and Kim's brief discussions about researching boys that kinda went nowhere after they happened) felt like someone had written **THEY'RE HETEROSEXUAL** in sharpie marker on the characters when outside those scenes sexuality and gender were more mutable and less sharply defined as in the rest of Hoffman's novels.

The handling of the emotionally abusive character might not work for some readers; it relies on (view spoiler). Kim considers them to be, effectively, dead because of this, and has no further contact with them after that happens.

Slight spoiler and content note for nonbinary readers, the viri are canonically non-gendered; a non-evil one we meet describing itself as "a non-gendered person" and referring to itself and other viri as "it". It's ambiguous whether viri are human or not, viri in general are described as being "a different kind of person" living among humans like Kim's family is also a different kind of person with their magical powers); there is a "but do you have sex?" question moment where we find out viri reproduce by fission rather than sexually (this... is plot relevant, eventually, though, when (view spoiler)).

Kelley Ceccato says

Hoffman can certainly write. From time to time as I was reading, I would happen onto a beautiful, captivating passage. The two central characters were engaging enough, and I appreciated the role played by art and creativity.

My dissatisfaction may boil down to one thing: my dislike, in general, of urban or contemporary fantasy. There have been exceptions; the first that spring to mind, which I absolutely loved, are *War for the Oaks*, *Among Others*, *The Rook*, and *The Girl with All the Gifts*. At the book's beginning, as I got to know Jaimie and Kim, I had hope that this would join the ranks of those exceptions. Had the focus remained on Jaimie, Kim, and Rugee, and their battle against the vampire that feeds on human emotions like depression, it might well have done just that. But the wider the cast of characters expanded, the shallower I felt the story growing; the more people showed up (and didn't go away), the less invested I found myself, and the more I noticed the things that try my patience in urban fantasy in general -- for instance, that in order to get to those beautiful, captivating passages I mentioned above, I had to wade through pages and pages of banal-sounding dialogue, reminding me that not only was I reading urban fantasy, I was reading YA. I do love a well-written YA fantasy, but my favorite YA fantasy does not call repeated attention to its YA-ness, either in style or dialogue.

A decent story. Just not really for me.

Nick says

I found the book to be a very interesting alternate take on various magical and vampiric concepts. It is the story of two teen girls, off to college for the first time. One has had major emotional stress for the previous several months, having lost the friendship of her best friend, who has turned into a terrible personal enemy. The other girl comes from a remote town in the Pacific Northwest [no, not the one from Twilight, although there are similarities:] and who is off to the "big city" life of college. Both encounter culture shock, but also become friends as they face what seems to be a supernatural problem.

Interestingly, the "vampiric" entities in this story, while not drinking blood, are potentially just as deadly as Dracula, or as relatively benign as the nice vampires in Twilight. What if the difference between them is no more than the difference between, say, Jimmy Carter and Charles Manson? A matter of personal morality and sanity, rather than species?

The book was definitely thought-provoking and interesting. There were tiny plot issues that could have been smoothed out, but nothing major. Most of these had to do with inconsistencies of the "magic" side of the story, and the foreshadowing of one of the villains.

Alexa says

I felt that the concept of this book was really great, however the pace seemed a little slow. I don't think things actually picked up until around chapter 28 (there are only 33 chapters). I also felt that Hoffman could have gone into detail about Jaimie's powers, and about her family and their background/history. Jaimie kept wondering what the full potential of her powers were for the entire book and nothing ever happened. I think more information could have been added or explained. The ending was also very unexpected and I was totally caught off guard about it, including the epilogue.

Laura Morrigan says

So many fascinating ideas! Loved it! Now pleeeeeeeease can we have more stories about these families!

Xenophon Hendrix says

I've now read six of Ms. Hoffman's novels. This one isn't bad, but it is the weakest.

The storyline features the primary and secondary characters flailing around while accomplishing little. Then the resolution of the conflict doesn't much come from the efforts of either of the co-protagonists. The result is less than satisfying.

The writing as writing is fine. The author's deft hand at depicting outsiders remains effective. There was enough here to keep me reading, and I enjoyed it, but Hoffman usually does better.
