



Hidden

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As unnerving as it is mesmerizing, "Hidden" is an evocative, emotionally charged domestic drama -- a willful and traumatized woman's painful search for the truth about the man who assaulted her one summer night. Six years after the attack, Maggie Wilson receives a call from the prosecutor who helped put her husband in jail after Maggie identified him as the man who nearly killed her. Told that another inmate has confessed to the crime and that her ex-husband will be freed, the shock plunges Maggie into memories of her stormy marriage to Nate Duke, the ambitious heir to a real estate company. Secluded in an old farmhouse that was her marital home, Maggie relives her marriage to Nate and his abusive treatment of her. But in her present, a very different man is haunting her -- the born-again convict who has confessed to the crime. As his story competes with hers, Maggie pores through trial transcripts, old journals, and photo albums, trying fruitlessly to remember exactly what happened.

Written in spare, elegant prose, Paul Jaskunas's novel reads like a waking dream as Maggie is torn by the question -- was it Nate? Or was it this stranger who seems to know intimate details? And what will it cost her to discover the truth? A work of searing suspense written in the heroine's brave voice, "Hidden" is ultimately about a woman confronting the betrayal of her body and the ambiguity of her mind.

Hidden Details

Date : Published June 29th 2004 by Free Press

ISBN : 9780743257480

Author : Paul Jaskunas

Format : Hardcover 240 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Thriller, Suspense

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From Reader Review Hidden for online ebook

Soho_Black says

You know how it is. You're stuck in an airport in some foreign land (in this case, Spain) with a flight delay which seems never ending when you suddenly realise that the book you've got as in-flight reading might not even last until take off, much less see you through the flight home.

Necessity forces you into an airport shop and starts you flicking through a succession of awful sounding paperbacks, mostly by people you've never heard of before. Eventually, a combination of desperation and fear that you'll be stuck on a plane with only the in-flight magazine for company leads you to pick up what seems like the lesser of many evils.

Described as a "chilling psychological thriller", Paul Jaskunas' "Hidden" sounded like my cup of tea. It tells the story of Maggie Wilson who, in the summer of 1996 was attacked in her home and badly beaten. In court, her testimony helped convict her husband of the attack and, to this day, she still believes he was her attacker. Six years on, however, another man confesses to the attack and her now ex-husband is released from prison. Still living in their former marital home and suffering both psychologically and physically from the events of six years previously, Maggie fears that her husband will return to town and that she will again have to come face to face with the man who left her for dead.

"Hidden" follows Maggie's life through both traumatic seasons; the happy times when the relationship and marriage with her husband was fresh and her struggles to rebuild her life after the attack and deal with the news that all she believed about her husband was wrong. It follows her relationships with all around her; friends, colleagues, family and her therapist and lawyer and shows how these change over time and with events. It follows her recovery from the attack and those who help her get over that and then cope with the devastating news that her supposed attacker will be free to return.

The problem with "Hidden" is that it takes a long time to go pretty much nowhere. After the attack, Maggie likes to escape from everything and go driving down county roads trying to get herself lost and at the same time find herself and the story takes pretty much the same meandering route to go nowhere. The story seems to be building into a big ending that never arrives. Had the story been better, this could be a talking point in itself; about how the author had made you believe one thing could happen and then delivered another, but Jaskunas simply isn't good enough. The story is so poorly written that you feel you deserve something decent after reading through all the dross, but the fireworks you expect turn out to be a deeply unfulfilling damp squib.

The major problem is the total lack of emotion in the story. There was no point at which I felt involved in Maggie's story. With everything going wrong in her life, I should have been able to feel sympathy for her and admire how she keeps going through all this adversity, but I just can't make that connection. All the characters are horribly two dimensional and none leap of the page to attract either attention or emotion. I found myself totally unmoved by her situation and nothing in the book pushed me to muster up the desire to care.

It's a dreadful shame, as this is a decent enough idea and a writer with more skill than Jaskunas could really have made something of it. The basic idea behind the story is a solid and compelling one but in Jaskunas' hands, it comes out as a bit of a mess. Particularly late on, when the tone changes slightly and her former husband's family try to make Maggie out as the bad person, for falsely accusing her husband of the attack

and, in effect, taking 6 years of his life. Neither character is sufficiently well drawn to be the victim or the aggressor and it all comes out being very dull.

There have been a lot of books published in recent years containing "real life" stories, told by those who have experienced traumatic or otherwise life changing events. This would seem to fit quite nicely into that kind of category and I can't help but wish it had. If this story had been written by someone who had experienced the same kinds of things as Maggie Wilson, it would have been a lot more emotional and, as a result, a lot more compelling. Jaskunas, however, writes from the outside and can't properly generate the emotion the characters should be feeling and it all falls flat.

Admittedly, I would rather have read anything but the in-flight magazine and, as it was a night flight, I couldn't really admire the clouds, but it was a close call. Fortunately, with "Hidden" being a short book, it didn't take long until I was finished and could put it away for good.

In good faith, I could not recommend a book this lacking to anyone. Although if you're an aspiring novelist, reading this might be good for your confidence, as it will make you realise that you don't have to write a masterpiece, or even anything halfway decent, to get published. But even for that kind of ego boost, no amount of money is worth sitting through this dross. No matter what the price you see this for sale at, it's recommended that you keep your purse or wallet well hidden.

This review may also appear, in whole or in part, under my name at any or all of www.ciao.co.uk, www.thebookbag.co.uk, www.goodreads.com, www.amazon.co.uk and www.dooyoo.co.uk

Chana says

This is the book that wouldn't end, it went on and on my friends, some author started writing it not knowing where it'd end, and then he kept on writing it forever just because...

This is the story of a young woman who was assaulted in her home by she knows not whom, or she thinks she knows whom, but is she sure she knows whom?

Written in the popular crack-pot style of the non-ending, the literary equivalent of being dropped on the side of the highway with a wink and a smirk, left to make futile obscene gestures at the backside of the author's retreating vehicle. Which I am doing now, in my mind.

Also, a lot of reviewers seemed impressed that this book was written by a man because he writes in the female first person and expresses her thoughts and voice so well. I say, wait a minute: this female character is an immature, self-centered, adulterous drunk whose sanity is in question. The male character had a difficult childhood, betrayed by his mother and raised by a domineering father, yet he puts his best (well admittedly drunk) foot forward and still, look what happens to him! Because of another woman! This book was not only written by a man but very possibly a misogynist man.

Holly says

Set in rural Indiana, this is the story of a young woman who is beat to within an inch of her life by an assailant. She is left for dead. When she comes out of her coma she can't remember the attack. As pieces come back to her, she is convinced it was her husband. He goes to prison and is only released when another man comes forward and admits to the crime. Maggie is wrecked - did she send the wrong man to prison?

As Maggie tries to remember, the reader learns of her unhealthy marriage. She and Nate marry at a very young age with dreams of the future. Nate primarily wants a trophy wife who does what he wants her to do. He is strong and handsome and comes from a family with money; women find him attractive and men find him to be a worthy adversary. Nate is at the top of the pecking order. He was raised w/o a mother, and this may be a large part of his problem. Maggie finds this overt masculinity attractive; he's a "catch;" she finds him sexy and enigmatic. She's grateful he picked her. They marry and move to his hometown, he gets busy w/ his father's business, and Maggie gets bored. She's working for the local newspaper, writing obits. She's so young and so alone, it is painful. The book is beautifully written; it is a character study of a woman and a marriage; the plot moves backwards in time as Maggie struggles to remember something that cannot be remembered. As Jaskunas's publisher notes, he writes women very well.

Felicia says

I enjoyed the book and couldn't put it down. The story is about Maggie, who was brutally beaten ten years earlier. She had accused her husband who is put in prison but then... spoiler alert... 10 years later another man comes forward and confesses to the crime and knows details he couldn't have possibly known. The book does a great job with the essential question of: how reliable are memories?

Pros:

I liked the writing. I thought Maggie was interesting and thought Paul did a good job writing as a woman. I did feel connected to the Maggie character and was rooting for her. I liked his descriptions of Indiana.

Cons:

Sometimes I had a difficult time sympathizing with Maggie, as she does some pretty terrible things but I did like that she wasn't the stereotypical female victim. Her husband was a little 2-d, I thought he could have been more fleshed out.

And I was pretty annoyed with the ending. The whole book feels like it is leading up to something big. But at the end, even though Maggie is more at peace, the reader is left wondering what the point of it all was. I was very upset when I realized that the book was over. So many unanswered questions. Still mad about it.

I wouldn't call this a thriller but it was an interesting read and I give it three stars.

Brian says

Maggie Wilson was knocked unconscious and almost killed by her husband, or so she believed. It was what she told the police after she awoke from her coma. But years later another man confessed to the crime and his knowledge of so many of the details of the event and the house in which it took place were enough to convince the state prosecution that he was telling the truth and that Maggie's memory was unreliable. Living alone in the house she shared with him, a house in which his grandparents grew up, she struggles with the possibility that she might have been wrong despite the certainty that she wasn't.

Set in the American mid-West, *Hidden* is informed by a powerful sense of place. The sleepy, fetid atmosphere of the forested ravine behind the house in which Maggie spends the lonely hours of the night, drinking and endlessly going over the events of the night she was attacked, is powerfully evoked by Jaskunas' carefully crafted prose.

Yet despite the quality of the writing and the uniqueness of the situation, I was never completely gripped by the book. Though this book is set in the nineteen nineties and early twenty-first century, the characters felt to me like they had strayed into the text from a John Updike novel of the nineteen fifties. In particular, I felt that Maggie was a woman seen by a man rather than a fully convincing character in her own right.

It's an impressive debut novel, clever and extremely well-crafted but in the end it left me a little cold because the characters never took complete possession of my imagination.

Beth Kluesener says

I would give this 2.5 stars probably.

I read it because the premise sounded interesting and there was a quote from Anna Quindlen - an author I enjoy and respect - on the back recommending it.

Although it is repeatedly called a thriller or suspense, I did not find it overly suspenseful.

I enjoyed the theme of the actual truth versus what our minds convince us is the truth, and the idea that truth is different to different people, and the fact that time changes memories and what we thought we knew. This is an interesting (and true) concept to think about.

I agree that the male author did a fine job of writing from the female perspective.

But I had a hard time feeling as much sympathy for the main character as I possibly should have. She is an innocent victim in the attack, and some of her choices after the incident, while not good ones, can be blamed on that night. But her choices in the earlier days are horrible for no good reason, and I think this is the reason I had trouble really feeling for her throughout the book.

One last thing that I wondered about throughout the book: why is she so antagonistic or indifferent towards her mother? I cannot remember any reason as to why she would have so much dislike, even disdain, for her mother. This bothered me. It made her character childish and petty to me, which may be yet another reason why I did not feel any connection to the character.

Overall - it was on the better side of okay but did not do all that much for me as a whole.

Rebecca Davis says

Thoroughly depressing: wish I had not read it. While parts of the book are beautifully written, the book is a tremendous disappointment. The main character loves to run, walk, and ride endlessly through the country without direction as if she doesn't know where to go and I often felt the author was as aimless as she was.

Wish I had chosen something else to read this weekend. Would not recommend this to a friend.

Jim Leckband says

It is only two days after finishing the book that I found another meaning of the title of this book. Spoiler Alert! The wife of a full-of-himself real estate developer (are there any other kind, one has to ask) is attacked in her home one night after midnight, leaving her with a debilitating head injury. The couple had problems, and the husband had battered her to ground before.

The husband had no alibi, and during the night in question he went on a bender and said nasty things to

people he ran across, ultimately falling asleep in a field (he says). No alibi, motive, and means all add up to a conviction. The wife even said it was him who attacked her.

But it is well known that head injuries commonly wipe out any short term memory of the incident. The truth is hidden from us for the whole book, but the truth is also hidden from the wife as well, making it excruciating for her when a born-again convict confesses to the crime and sets the husband free after six years.

What sets this book apart from many of its ilk is non-sensationalism and disregard for "thriller-ness". We don't get stalking and menacing, just anger, frustration and confusion. There aren't red herrings or gotchas. Instead we have a very well written analysis of a broken mind trying to find truth and maybe in that quest, heal itself.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

I gave up tv and mysteries last year. Nevertheless, I'm open to either if something good enough comes along. Hidden was worth breaking my no-mysteries rule for.

Hidden is the story of a woman who is attacked in her home. She suffers a serious head trauma, but feels no hesitation when she is asked to identify her assailant; she is certain that it is her husband. She is taken aback, then, when an imprisoned man, due to be released shortly on parole, steps forward and confesses to the crime.

The story is an intriguing one about truth and reality and perception; I'm glad I read it.

Michelle Richards says

I was conflicted about whether I actually enjoyed this story however parts of it have stayed with me. Maggie is a compelling character who is exploring her memories of a terrible event she believed her husband committed until someone else confesses to the assault throwing Maggie into confusion. It's an interesting story about how our memories are not always what they seem no matter how much we believe them to be true.

Kelly says

"Hidden" is the story of a young woman, Maggie, who is attacked and left for dead one night in her rural Indiana home. She survives the attack, but for many years afterward is plagued by unanswered questions and self-doubt as she struggles to form a clear image of the face of the man who did this. Her husband Nate was convicted and put in jail, but 6 years later, another man confesses and Nate is subsequently exonerated and released, bringing fear and more uncertainty into Maggie's life.

Jaskunas did a wonderful job of making me feel emotionally connected to this character, which is quite impressive considering that he is a man writing from the perspective of a woman. I really enjoyed this book and kept rapidly turning the pages, reluctant to put it down even at 4am when I could barely hold my eyes open. Now that I've finished the last page, I will miss Maggie and the small little world in which she lived.

Great book!!

Gracey says

This was a very interesting, very unusual book. I won't say that I loved it, but I certainly can't stop thinking about it. The author has done a great job of allowing the reader to come to their own conclusions about who is wrong, who is right and who is ultimately at fault when it comes to the attack on Maggie Wilson. I don't always love it when male authors write from a female POV, but I think Jaskunas did a pretty good job; there were only a couple of places that made me cringe.

Again, the question of who attacked Maggie makes for a pretty good mystery and the author does a good job of keeping the reader interested. I'd definitely recommend this book.

Liz says

A bit of a mystery (more suspense/drama) since this book was written by the perspective of Maggie - a woman who was attacked to the brink of death, leaving her memories jumbled. The book jacket practically tells the overall story: "domestic drama - a willful and traumatized woman's painful search for the truth about the man who assaulted her one summer night."...and goes on to indictate that Maggie had accused her husband of the deed, but six years later, an inmate confesses to the crime which releases her now ex-husband. The book did a good job on letting you feel Maggie's confusion since she was adamant that her husband attacked her that night. A kind of a reverse "Shawshank Redemption" (even though I only watched the movie, didn't read the book) since this is told from the woman's side.

Shona Moyce says

The author's debut novel is well written and incredibly believable in as he writes in a female voice.

The female in question, Maggie, is a shard of her former self; a troubled and tainted soul, tormented by the memories of a violent attack from her past.

As she comes to terms with that night, and the things that led her there, she is forced to peer into the recesses of her mind, and what she finds makes her question the testimony that locked her husband away for the brutal act.

Maggie is relatable as a character and all three male characters (Manny, Nate and Carson) have distinct personalities. The detail is vivid - presented in a way that isn't long-winded and I was particularly impressed with Maggie's internal monologue of her struggle. Her psychological state is so accurately captured that her confusion became mine. The doubt, the fear, the seizures - utterly believable.

The only disappointment for me was the ending.

It felt right for Maggie to make peace with herself and her demons but somehow I was left wanting in some way.

On the whole however, if you're into psychological drama, this was a rather gripping read. (3.5 stars)

Ashley Ebmeier says

I very much enjoyed this book. The writing style was a little different, which kept me on my toes. I was also very impressed with how well the author seemed to understand his female character. It did not feel trite or forced.

The end was a bit frustrating for me, but I think that had more to do with my desire to read something with a neat and tidy ending, and less to do with the novel itself.
