

THE WICKED UNSEEN

# READER GUIDE



# DEAR READER,

Much like my characters, I don't have hobbies; I have obsessions.

I'm obsessed with storytelling in all its forms. I'm obsessed with weird little details about niche topics—like bat research and cadaver dogs. And I'm—intensely, endlessly—obsessed with strange and little-known history.

I love history because it is messy and funny and deeply human. Because it connects my own experiences and understanding of the world to a bigger story. And I love dark history because it is a roadmap, a warning, the turn-back-now sign hanging from crooked branch, the bog witch telling us to beware where we step. Reminding us that our ancestors sank to their necks in that very same sinkhole, sliced themselves open on such similar lies.

Which is why it makes perfect sense that my YA debut is set during the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and '90s. A time when white evangelicals were terrified that My Little Pony and Pokémon were trying to turn their kids into Satanists. And that panic spread its ridiculous poisoned tentacles ever outward through the country.

It was a dark slice of history that hurt many people in ways both large and small. Worse, a dark slice of history with echoes in the present: in book bans and burnings, in the panic over Critical Race Theory, in a growing Satanic Panic called QAnon.

So consider me the bog witch, our crooked turn-back sign, warning us all. The danger isn't Satan. The danger isn't the "wrong" books and shows and media. The danger is the panic itself, in its ability to pull our attention away from the real things that hurt us all.

I hope this book is fun and thrilling and scary in all the best ways. I hope it sheds light on a dangerous slice of history. And I hope it challenges the history we're making right now in the process.

Thank you for reading,

*Gigi*

# HIDDEN TRUTHS

This book is fiction, but as your resident history and science nerd, my brain requires me to litter my books with weird truths. Here are a few you'll find in these particular pages:

## **THE FOX SISTERS REALLY WERE SOME OF HISTORY'S GREATEST CON ARTISTS.**

Have I mentioned that I love a historical lady con artist? So no surprise here: these sisters who pretended to speak to ghosts and sparked a giant spiritual movement fascinate me.

They'd ask the spirits to rap on the walls of the house to answer questions, and all the while they were cracking their joints loudly or dropping apples or doing whatever they could to create the illusion of the tap-tap-tap at the walls. They confessed to the con before they passed, but spiritualism lived on beyond them anyway.

## **SÉANCES WERE A CHRISTIAN THING!**

Today's evangelicals are scandalized by the idea of Ouija boards and séances, but those practices actually became a craze in the 1800s because Christians were hell-bent on proving there was life after death. If they could communicate with long-dead Uncle Fred, they figured that proved God's existence.

## **THE SATANIC PANIC REALLY F\*CKED SH\*T UP.**

On one hand, it's kind of funny. Parents freaking out that *My Little Pony* was teaching kids witchcraft and Pokémon were actual demons? You do you, parents of the '90s.

On the other hand, sadly, it went further than that—so far that parents started reporting innocent daycare providers for “Satanic ritual abuse.” Despite the utter lack of proof, some of these people ended up prison or deported.

Sorry, this fun fact is actually pretty depressing.

## **CADAVER DOGS CAN LEAD YOU TO A CORPSE.**

Mostly, these dogs are used to locate bodies or blood in missing-persons situations, but sometimes they're also used for historical research (like locating unmarked graves). And yes, training often involves hiding placentas.

## **CORPSE FARTS ARE REAL.**

The culprit: gut bacteria. If the mortician facts are up your alley, I recommend Caitlin Doughty's books and videos.

## **BATS CAN TELL POISONOUS/SAFE FROGS APART BASED ON THEIR MATING CALLS.**

Bat scientist Merlin Tuttle is responsible for the research that led to this conclusion. If the topic interests you, his book, *The Secret Lives of Bats*, is very cool indeed.

## **YES, DICK PICS WERE A THING IN 1996.**

Honestly, they were probably a thing the moment there was an internet (cis men gonna cis men). But we can trace the term "dick pic" back as far as 1993, well before the internet became a household must-have.

# **/HIDDEN TRUTHS**

# AUDRE'S CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

Audre is obsessed with movies—especially horror movies. Here's every cinematic feature mentioned in the book.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1. Audre's obsession with horror movies frames the story.** Do you agree with her assessments about who would die first, who's the likely villain, etc.? How does your experience with horror movies align with or differ from hers?

**2. If this were your horror movie,** who would you have cast as **the first to die, the monster, and the final girl?**

**3. Did you recognize all the horror references throughout?** How many **classic movie call-backs** did you pick up on?

**4. I like to say my characters don't have hobbies...they have obsessions.** Bats. Spiritualism. Corpses. You know, normal stuff. What's your favorite **weird character obsession** in the book? If you wrote a character with an unusual obsession, what would you choose?

**5. In the end, Audre realizes that beliefs and actions are inextricably linked.** Agree or disagree? Why or why not?

**6. This book is set during the Satanic Panic.** What parallels do you see between that panic and the moral panics of today?

**7. In the end, Audre chooses to throw a blank piece of paper in the fire** because she's not ready to give up anything, including her anger and her hurt. What do you think about that? Is there any value in **holding onto our negative feelings?** Why or why not?

# Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR

## WHAT INSPIRED THIS BOOK?

I grew up in white evangelical churches during the Satanic Panic of the '80s and '90s—and boy was it a trip. Like, a bad trip. Like, *get me off this ride now, please*. Cartoons were demonized. D&D was a one-way ticket to hell. And words like *feminist* and *liberal* were said with a sneer.

With QAnon following a lot of the same trends, I knew it was time to write a book set in the weird world of the Satanic Panic.

I wanted to tell the story of an outsider—an atheist, evolutionist, a girl who speaks her mind, the very person my evangelical cohort would have been terrified of—dropped into this upside-down world just before tragedy strikes in the form of a disappearance. And a disappearance of the pastor's daughter, no less.

## WHAT WAS YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS LIKE?

In addition to mining my own memories and experiences, I dug into exvangelical podcasts, books, and essays, watched presentations about the Satanic Panic, and got into the history of the occult, Ouija boards, and spiritualism.

I also read a lot (and bothered some very kind people with very detailed questions) about bat facts, mortuary science, cadaver dogs, and 1990's pop culture. Oh, and I dove deep into the world of horror movies. You know you've done something right in life when watching movies counts as work.

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE HORROR MOVIES?

*Ready or Not*, *The Invisible Man*, and *Freaky*. The intensity and humor keep me coming back for more.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE PARTS OF THE BOOK?

Aside from the ending (no spoilers), I love when Audre recognizes she's about to do some dumb shit ("Damn, am I the dimwitted white girl who goes bouncing into the basement to investigate the mysterious noise with no weapons, just boobs?").

I loved playing with horror movie tropes and having her running analysis of how her situation compares to a horror movie.

And I love everything about the relationship between Audre, David, and Natalia. Their banter. Their fierce love. Even when they're messy and fighting.

## I LOVED THIS BOOK! WHAT SHOULD I READ NEXT?

For more badass teen protagonists fighting back against evil in various forms, try *Bad Witch Burning* by Jessica Lewis and *The Girls I've Been* by Tess Sharpe. For quirky characters with weird obsessions, I love *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie Stiefvater. And if funny horror books are your jam, watch for Sami Ellis' upcoming *Dead Girls Walking*.

# / Q & A WITH THE AUTHOR



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gigi Griffis is the author of the Netflix tie-in novel *The Empress* and YA historical horror *The Wicked Unseen* and *We Are the Beasts* (2024), among other things. She's a sucker for **little-known histories**, "unlikable" female characters, and all things Europe. After almost ten years of semi-nomadic life, she now lives in Portugal with an opinionated Yorkie-mix named Luna and a fancy blender that cost more than her couch.

If she were in a horror movie, she'd be the **sly old bog witch** warning you to turn back—or maybe the fool who heard kittens in distress and went into the dark basement to get axe murdered. (RIP another dopey white girl.)

Gigi's work has been translated into **17+ languages** and featured in *WestJet Magazine*, *Get Lost Magazine*, *Fodor's Guidebooks*, and more.

## GIGI GRIFFIS



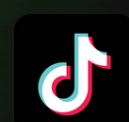
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# COMING SOON

# WE ARE THE BEASTS

**1765. Gevaudan, France.** When a series of **brutal mysterious deaths** start to plague the countryside and whispers of **a beast in the mountains** reach the little French hamlet of Mende, most people think it's a curse—God's punishment for their sins.

But for sixteen-year-old Joséphine and her best friend Clara, it's the best thing that's ever happened to the village. It's their chance to **save their friends** from the nightmares they've been living in—fathers who drink, brothers who punch, homes that feel like prisons.

As they begin to **fake the deaths** of their friends and hide them away, they find escape is harder than they thought. If the village figures out what they're doing, they're dead. If the beast discovers them first, they're dead. And with food stores running low and tempers running high, **if the beast and town don't get them, Mende's harsh winter will.**

COMING 2024 / **ADD IT ON GOODREADS**