



Lost Grove: Part One

Charlotte Zang

Alex Knudsen

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Marked by supernatural intrigue, the mystery novel Lost Grove reveals a town's misgivings and secrets.

In Charlotte Zang and Alex Knudsen's gripping novel *Lost Grove*, a young woman's death reveals a web of mysteries in her small town.

Strange things happen in Lost Grove, where each resident has a secret to keep. When Sarah Elizabeth's body is discovered on Mourner's Beach thanks to a tip left at the police chief's door, a murder investigation begins. But the townspeople may be unprepared for what's revealed—including that supernatural beings abound and that Lost Grove's medical and mental health facility may have nefarious connections.

Multiple points of view direct the story. Seth is a former Lost Grove resident and a police sergeant who returned to town after years in San Francisco's homicide department; decades earlier, he'd had a vision of Sarah Elizabeth's body. And Noble, a high school student, saw something on Mourner's Beach days before Sarah Elizabeth was found. Theirs are among the voices that make this mysterious novel feel robust—and that leave the impression that the citizens of Lost Grove know and are hiding something. But no one voice emerges as the book's lead, even though Seth's perspective is often privileged above others because of his active involvement in the murder investigation. Further, the depth with which individual characters are developed varies.

This book is the first of a duology, and background information is shared in the course of informative conversations between the residents of Lost Grove. Explanations about the investigation and about Sarah Elizabeth's murder are handled in the same manner. However, the book's heavy reliance on dialogue means that its tone is inconsistent: it switches between teenagers speaking as teenagers do, swaths of information about previous murders, and coverage of what makes particular people prime suspects in a jarring way. Further, information seems to be missing at the book's end, including about intriguing threads; Noble's Romani ancestry and his family's connections to witchcraft are introduced but underexplored, for example. Nor are the town's supernatural elements explained in full; even the true identity of Sarah Elizabeth's killer remains in question in the volume's cliffhanger ending.

Marked by supernatural intrigue, the mystery novel *Lost Grove* reveals a town's misgivings, secrets, and unique qualities via the discovery of a body.

RACHEL TELLJOHN (March 15, 2024)

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