



The Strange Disappearance of Imogen Good

Kirsty Applebaum

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Kirsty Applebaum's delightful gothic novel *The Strange Disappearance of Imogen Good* weaves magic into a girl's search for her missing cousin.

Fran dreads visiting her aunt, uncle, and bossy cousin Imogen while her mother is away on a weeklong work trip. But when she arrives, everyone in town seems to be pretending that Imogen never existed. Her bedroom is intact, and pictures of her are still online, but it's as if everyone is under a forgetfulness spell.

Fran reads the last entry in Imogen's diary and learns that she planned to sneak into the overgrown garden of the house down the street, which is rumored to be haunted, the day before she disappeared. Fran is determined to break in herself and find her cousin, even though the strange woman who lives there, Ms. Quincey, warned her to stay far away.

Cliffhanger chapter endings and action scenes keep the plot gripping and suspenseful. Alternating between Fran's search for Imogen and a story within a story about the history of the haunted garden, the novel's two puzzle halves slide together in time, revealing an intricate, moving image of a house whose inhabitants yearn to heal from tragedies. However, the characterizations are quite archetypal: Ms. Quincey's coldness toward Fran reflects her knowledge of her garden's theft of children, for instance, but not enough is revealed about her beyond this. In the place of concrete details come elements of magical realism in the form of tangled brambles, wish-granting flowers, and grief-fueled gothic specters. And the prose is eloquent and enrapturing, following Fran as she navigates the thorny, overgrown garden of nightmares.

The Strange Disappearance of Imogen Good is a bewitching fantasy novel about grief, regret, and redemption.

AIMEE JODOIN (May / June 2026)

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