

Things She's Seen

Pat Esden

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In the recent past, a battle among witches led to the murder of the high priestess Athena. Pat Esden's second book in a suspenseful, paranormal romance series is *Things She's Seen*, covering the investigation into, and fallout from, the crime.

Gar is tasked with unearthing the truth while Em, an emotionally scarred psychic and recovering alcoholic, finds herself haunted by a restless ghost—that of another coven member who was murdered. This complicates the mysterious plot, which is steeped in references to the series' backstory and to roiling intrigue within the high council of witches. Frenzied and adventurous, the story ravel into a half-demon's grisly plans, discovered by Gar, Em, and the coven just in time.

Amid the coven's immediate troubles and a larger arc in which witches seek their own gains, Em's relationship with Gar is a source of racy respite. At twenty-two, Em is a youthful and flawed aspiring poet who sometimes doubts her own talents, even when intriguing encounters, like a brush with a ghost at Goodwill, reveal her compassion and skill.

Fragmented quotes from Em's writings are glimpses into her life on the road. When flashes of her past intrude (scenes in which her mother and aunt shackled and drugged her, exploiting her gifts as a child medium), they highlight the uncertainty she's endured and the bravery she showed in joining the coven, where she finds refuge.

Em's ongoing recovery is intriguing; she shows a mix of strength and vulnerability. However, her adversaries tend toward uncomplicated villainy, if they provide the necessary animus to make the coven's rescue of one of their own thrilling.

Things She's Seen is a flashy, troubling depiction of abusive power. In its variegated darkness, it brings home the healing message that sometimes, real families are the ones people choose themselves.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2019)

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