



The Hidden

Melanie Golding

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The depths of madness, love, and myth converge in *The Hidden*, Melanie Golding's superlative fairytale-infused thriller.

For Joanna, a detective and a satisfying heroine, an attempted murder and a missing child have hit close to home. This stolid investigator is gay and married to her work, but also more than what she seems. While her gruff, businesslike approach to life advances her career, it hamstringing her personal life.

As Joanna digs into a mysterious domestic crime, she finds connections to her own child, Ruby, the product of a teenage pregnancy. Ruby is protecting a toddler whose mother, Constance, believes she is a selkie: half-seal, half-woman. Constance may be a cult victim, or may be telling the truth; when she vanishes, leaving her child's father to die, Harper unravels threads of folklore and guarded secrets to determine what is truth and what is madness.

The novel brings together its disparate threads into a choking net. Intense and unflinching, it digs into the personal lives of friends, neighbors, and relatives, exposing their fears and failings. The result is an entrancing nightmare: in one scene, Ruby watches a video of pregnant Constance battering herself against a door, searching for the seal skin she believes will let her return to the sea, and can "feel the scream of rage and frustration that escaped from her then, her back arching, mouth twisted, fingers like claws, ripping out handfuls of her own hair." With Constance's two-year-old in play, and Ruby's own mental health walking a razor's edge, the novel sticks with high-stakes storytelling. It is packed with gory, unsettling images that infiltrate ordinary life like blood-tinted bathwater dripping through a plaster ceiling.

The unspoken bond between a mother and her child permeates the tight, eerie thriller *The Hidden*, which is irresistible to the last page.

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