



The Mystery of Hollow Places

Rebecca Podos

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All Imogene Scott knows of her mother is the bedtime story her father told her as a child. It's the story of how her parents met: he, a forensic pathologist, she, a mysterious woman who came to identify a body. A woman who left Imogene and her father when Imogene was a baby, a woman who was always possessed by a powerful loneliness, a woman who many referred to as "troubled waters."

Now Imogene is seventeen, and her father, a famous author of medical mysteries, has struck out in the middle of the night and hasn't come back. Neither Imogene's stepmother nor the police know where he could've gone, but Imogene is convinced he's looking for her mother. And she decides it's up to her to put to use the skills she's gleaned from a lifetime of reading her father's books to track down a woman she's only known in stories in order to find him and, perhaps, the answer to the question she's carried with her for her entire life.

The Mystery of Hollow Places Details

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From Reader Review The Mystery of Hollow Places for online ebook

Evie says

Quietly powerful and deeply moving, The Mystery Of Hollow Places deals with mental illness, child abandonment, strained family relationships and recognizing what matters most in our lives. It's not an edge-of-your-seat mystery and it's not a thriller - not by a long shot - but it's an excellent psychological drama and a skillfully constructed puzzle. Slow-moving, but insightful and illuminating. Messy and wildly emotional.

"I could forgive my mother for being cursed, and lonely, and troubled waters. All of that made sense. But I don't think I'll be able to forgive her if she's happy."

When Imogene was only two, her mother left and never came back. All Im knows about her is what her dad told her - and he didn't say much. Just that she was troubled waters, incredibly sad and lonely. Now, when Imogene is 17, her father disappears without a trace, too. The only thing that he leaves behind, is a rock that is somehow related to Im's grandmother. To Imogene, this is not a parting gift, but a clue. She believes that her dad went looking for her mom. And she is determined to find him.

I can't tell you just how much this book means to me. The story evoked so many hibernated emotions, I could hardly stop myself from crying. Many readers won't think twice about Imogene, because it's hard to empathize with a character so guarded and troubled. I was able to do that, because I went through a similar thing in my life. And I can tell you that Rebecca Podos did an excellent job depicting Imogenes struggles and feelings. Even seemingly silly and meaningless scenes carry incredible weight and serve to show how much Imogene's past (the absence of her mother, her father's bipolar disorder and the new woman in his life, etc) weighed down on her and shaped her perception of the world and people around her. Im felt very real to me and I was able to fully connect with her character, perhaps even more than I felt comfortable with. As a daughter once similarly abandoned by one of the parents, and a mom to a two year old baby girl, I was deeply emotional while reading this book. I picked up on all the little things and clues to Im's psychological and emotional state. My heart was bleeding for her all throughout the book, but I was also both enraged at and sorry for her parents - both the estranged mother and the bipolar father.

I won't lie, when I went into this story, I was expecting something a bit different. I thought this was a high-intensity mystery/thriller, and I expected Imogene to uncover some dark and twisted mysteries - maybe even a couple bodies. But this isn't that kind of book. It's a sublime read for many other reasons. Not a cheap-thrill type of story full of shocking twists and unexpected discoveries, but more of a sophisticated and unexpectedly hard-hitting meditation on family relationships and mental illness, and how people in our lives help shape who we are. This book reminded me in part of Winter Bones, and in part of early works of Jennifer McMahon and Elizabeth Scott.

Podos' prose is incredibly fluid, her writing - straightforward and very eloquent. The build-up is slow and more impatient readers might find it too boring for their tastes, but if you stick with it, you'll be rewarded with true heartbreak and conclusion full of hope. I am delighted to have discovered this brilliant new author and will definitely be following her career closely.

Rhea Dsouza says

There are quite literally, a BUTT LOAD of things I loved about this book. You a Mystery fan? Duuuude, do you need this book in your life. Like to see teenagers in sticky situations? Bruh, I found what you want to read. Drama? Coming of Age? Either? Both? Look no further. This book has it all and more.

The Mystery of Hollow Places begins with distraught teen Imogene Scott searching for her missing father, medical mystery writer Joshua Zhi Scott. Joshua, as Imogene describes, is a recluse, and the fact that he left her alone with her step mother, with no explanations, strikes not only as odd, but also super irresponsible. All chances of foul play are quickly ruled out by the local authorities, and when Imogene realises that he has left her a clue, she takes it on herself to solve the mystery of her missing father.

But I'd like to talk mostly about a particular person in this book—and that person is Imogene Scott. Except, to me, Imogene Scott was the most relatable of characters I've probably read all year. Imogene Scott *was* me, and I mean that in the best way possible. The way she talked about things, the way she did things. It was all me. And since I was pretty into the story itself, the fact that I was a 100% invested in the main character too was pure fucking gold.

The book was completely unexpected, what with me only expecting mystery and a bit of a thrill, and this turning out to quite literally be a *journey* for Imogene. She turned from this almost-always pessimistic person, to this almost-mature person within a week or so, and unbelievable as it may sound, you can only experience it once you've started on this journey with Imogene. She's both smart and driven, but she's also "emotionally compromised," owing to the fact that her AWOL birth mother might be the key to the her father's missing status. The book also explores the kind of sort of rocky feelings Imogene has towards her step-mother, and that was a good change from seeing the all-black/all-white relationships I'm used to seeing between teenagers and their step-parents. One of my favourite, one of the most cringe-worthy parts of the book was where Imogene and her step-mother have this huge showdown, and it really put a lot of things about Imogene in perspective for me.

The Mystery of Hollow Places is not meant to be a slow read. At least, it wasn't for me, although my problem was chiefly dreading the end of Imogene's company. Her voice couldn't have been more authentic, and I found myself completely immersed in her musings and her thoughts and her complains with the world. I read the book over a span of almost four days and even then, I didn't want to let the book go! It's written in a way that makes you feel like you're a part of the story, you're right there with Imogene in her search for her father, and you're all stressed out because *what if we can't find Imogene's father then what do we do?*

Miss Podos has put together this story in such a beautiful way, making this a YA debut that you most definitely need very high up on your TBR. If you're a lover of Mysteries and Thrills, and in need of a teenage girl who is far too smarter than most adults, then *The Mystery of Hollow Places* might just be up your alley!

I was provided a free earc of this book by Balzer & Bray through Edelweiss in exchange of an honest review. This did not in any way, however, influence the content of this review.

Laurie Flynn says

I was immediately intrigued by this book when I read the synopsis, and when I saw the cover, my intrigue turned into a full-blown need to devour the book. And from the first page, *THE MYSTERY OF HOLLOW PLACES* had my complete attention.

This book is unlike any other I've read, and is difficult to classify. It's intense and psychological and literary, a mystery and a contemporary coming-of-age story rolled into one. It's about coming to terms with the past and accepting that the future is both uncertain and full of promise. As a lover of books that are impossible to peg in one category, I truly appreciated the originality displayed in these pages.

Imogene Scott is the daughter of a writer of tense medical thrillers. When her father disappears, she suspects that he has gone in search of her mother—the same mother who left the family when Imogene was a baby. Armed with sleuthing skills gleaned from her father's own books and the precious clue he left behind, Imogene embarks on a mission to find him—and in the process, perhaps the mother she never knew.

This is a book filled with so many shifting layers and depths. It's like a lake in the sunlight—if you look at it from one angle, you're certain it's one color, then you look at it from a different direction and it takes you by surprise. This story took me by surprise more than once. As a reader, I love that—I love when the unexpected happens. And Rebecca Podos is a master of taking the unexpected and wringing it out, mess and all.

I also really loved the female friendship in this book between Imogene and her best friend, Jessa. They're entirely different, but they learn to appreciate the qualities in each other that the other lacks and lean more on each other as the book progresses.

Haunting and hopeful, visceral and elegant, with a main character I could both relate to and cheer for, *THE MYSTERY OF HOLLOW PLACES* will stay with me for a very long time.

Ashley Blake says

This book is gorgeous, wise, emotional, & messy. The voice is all at once authentically teenage girl & vulnerable & brave. It's not an easy book, but a beautiful one & that's even better. Put this on your TBRs, because this book shows us that answers are rarely simple, rarely easy, but love can exist in between all that, and that choices are powerful. And I think we all need that reminder from time to time.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

“One night, my mother left us, taking a suitcase, no money, and half of the heart with her. She sent the divorce papers through a process server a little while later.”

This was an interesting mystery story about a girl searching for her missing father.

Imogene was a likeable character in this story, and it was unfortunate that after having her mother leave her as a baby, she was then left by her father too! I thought she did really well to follow clues and to try to track down both her mother and her father, and she persevered even when things got tough.

The storyline in this book revolved around Imogene trying to work out what had happened to her mother, in hopes that it would lead her to where her father was, and I liked the mystery element of the book and the search for Imogene's missing parents.

The ending to this wrapped things up nicely, and I was satisfied with the way things ended.

7 out of 10

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

The opening chapter of *The Mystery of Hollow Places* promises a story filled with paranormal mysteries and excitement. It's one of the best prologues I've read in a while and it easily made me want to read the rest in one sitting. I adore atmospheric, creepy mysteries, and I was hoping this would be one. The rest of the book, however, continued in a very different tone.

That's not to say I didn't enjoy what came after. Mostly I liked it because of Imogene Scott, a main character that carries the book easily with the depth of her personality. I wanted to know more about Imogene from the very beginning. She is an unusual girl, a bit of an outsider, with only one friend she seems to trust. After growing up with her father's forensic mysteries and his struggles with bipolar disorder, she's very mature and she can be a bit odd and closed off sometimes. When her father disappears, Immy has a single goal – to find him, no matter what it takes. Influenced by his mysteries and his main character, the forensic pathologist, she thinks it's her job and hers alone to find out where her father has gone. But the mystery of his disappearance is wrapped up in her mother's abandonment, so Imogen first has to find a woman she doesn't even remember, and uncover the truth of her parents' relationship.

The Mystery of Hollow Places is in many ways a strange book. It goes in many different directions and it's difficult to determine what it's really about. There were several things I enjoyed thoroughly, starting with Rebecca Podos' subtle and beautiful writing. I loved how she weaved her story with seeming ease. Nothing about it seemed artificial or forced, and I admire the deep understanding behind each sentence. Characterization is what makes this book strong and memorable, starting (but not ending) with Immy Scott.

Aside from the characters and the writing, though, nothing about this book stood out. The mystery itself was mild and fairly uninteresting. I didn't read to learn the truth, I read to learn about Imogen and her fascinating thought process. So if you take this book as a mystery of any kind, you might be disappointed, but if you appreciate a very well done coming of age story and mature, beautiful characters, this might just be the book for you.

Emily says

I love-love-love this book. Since finishing it, I've fallen into a spiral of endlessly tweeting about it. The writing is gorgeous: it's so clean, clear, concise but still unique, voicey, vivid. The characters are fully fleshed out and multi-faceted. No one is caricatured; everyone is nuanced. The best characters, in my opinion, were the ones that sneaked (ugh, I that this is a word) up on me. Lindy and Jessa were definitely my favorites, though Immy, her father, and Chadwick were all fantastic too.

The pacing was PERFECT. It moved quickly and kept me fully engaged from start to finish. I could've done with, like, 200 more pages of this and I would've been happy, but since it was so succinct, I'll probably just reread it. Possibly often. Rebecca Podos is going on my insta-buy list. She knows how to tell a story, and she knows how to use words, and it's pretty rare to find someone with both skill-sets equally matched.

This story cut straight to my heart and I'm sure it's going to do that for a lot of readers. I expect it to become an instant classic, a la Laurie Halse Anderson's work.

It reminded me that vulnerability is the only way to heal what's broken, and did it without being preachy or navel-gazing. A+++ will read again, will love thoroughly and forever.

Sandra says

REACTION AFTER READING THE BOOK

This book wasn't bad, but it didn't blow my socks off either. It has tons of promise. The premise was enough for me to buy the story. The execution of it though, plus the revelation towards the end, was not really my cup of tea.

LONG STORY SHORT

Mysterious disappearances

A stone heart

Ambiguous clues to the past

MEET THE CHARACTERS

I usually enumerate the prominent characters in the book on this part of my review, but for this one, I'll just focus on the main character, Imogene.

Imogene never knew her mum. She only grew up with her dad, then eventually, her stepmother, Lindy, who was actually pretty nice.

I actually really liked Imogene and her persistence. She wanted what she lost to be found. She was going to do whatever it takes to get them back, to find out what happened in her past.

I really liked how she felt like a real teenager. She had angst, but not too much that it ends up being annoying.

THINGS WORTH MENTIONING

◆ THE ATMOSPHERE OF MYSTERY

This book really hooked me and got me glued to its pages. You really are curious as to what really happened and why Imogene's parents disappeared. You weren't sure if it was because of a supernatural reason or if it was just because they were depressed people. You have no idea what was happening, and I loved that.

◆ TEENS ARE REALISTICALLY PORTRAYED

Teens don't always make the most sound decisions. They make mistakes, they don't think things through, and are very often reckless. You'll see that here. But also, you don't see lovestruck teens who has nothing in their brains but boys or girls.

◆ IMOGENE HAS TERRIBLE PARENTS

I really hated her parents. They were selfish, and honestly, just don't deserve to have kids.

◆ IT WAS TOO SLOW

I'm not really a big fan of slow books, and for me, this was one of them. I get why because you'd have to build the tension, but then again, parts of it dragged longer than was necessary.

◆ THE CLIMAX WAS A LET DOWN

I was really expecting to be blown away by the revelation of what really happened to Imogene's parents... but I wasn't. Usually, I'm happy when a book surprises the shit out of me, and this one did, but not in a good way. I really wished it was something more.

IF YOU LIKED THIS, YOU'D PROBABLY LIKE:

I really couldn't think of any book like this at the top of my head right now.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I liked this book for the most part, but the ending really let me down. The thrill of the mystery was done well. Too bad the revelation really didn't deliver as well as I hoped it would.

Mariana says

“This happened, he knew from his school days; with enough time and the right conditions, precious stones could grow in hollow places.”

This is a story about a 17 year old girl named Imogene, whose father has gone missing. Imogene's dad is a successful mystery writer who also happens to have bipolar disorder. "Im" is particularly attached to him because her mother left them when she was only two.

She is convinced that her father left her all the clues that she needs to find him, and she's also certain that if she manages to track down her long lost mother, she will also find her dad. This is how Imogene embarks on an investigation that will bring back painful memories, answer many questions, and finally show her what she's really capable of.

The Mystery of Hollow Places is Rebecca Podos's first novel and, boy, this woman can write. Her style is very beautiful without being over the top. Since the first chapter she gives us a great picture of Imogene's life and how scared she is of being like her mom: a troubled woman who rather disappear than stay to raise her daughter.

The women in that family were cursed. They could be lonely wherever they were.

Imogene is a very well constructed character. She is not super likeable, she is resentful, sad and convinced that she can do things on her own, therefore she pushes away everyone who cares about her. However, her best friend Jessa acts as a counterpart, constantly reminding us that Imogene is not only facing the disappearance of her dad, but also the everyday struggles of a highschool student.

I really liked the way the author treated depression and bipolar disorder, neither romanticizing or stigmatizing them. I also really enjoyed the fact that the author made realistic remarks, such as how a highschool student has a limited budget to conduct a missing person investigation on her own.

The story was very compelling. I was eager to find out what had happened to Imogene's dad and the whereabouts of her mom. I think Podos really managed to build up the mystery, create memorable characters and deliver a satisfactory ending (even when I was waiting for a much darker finale, tbh).

I will definitely keep track of her work and you should definitely give this book a chance. This is some of the most refreshing YA I've read lately.

Note: I received an e-galley of this book in exchange for an honest review. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.

Melissa Gorzelanczyk says

With a great gift for voice, Rebecca Podos weaves a story of suspense and self-discovery within a family best described as "troubled waters."

Imogene has never met the mother who abandoned her, but when her father goes missing, she convinces herself that he's gone to search for her mom--and decides to do the same.

This book is a raw, honest narrative dealing with tough issues through a main character who's trying to find her place in the world and her family. I highly recommend this beautiful book!

I receive an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Aly's Bookish Wonderland says

This review is now live on 100% Rock Magazine!

As long as you don't turn the last page in a book, you get to believe whatever you want to believe. You can have faith the good guys will win, the clearly identifiable bad guys will lose, and everyone will go home and eat Spicy Italians on flatbread on their cheerfully dumpy living room sofa.

I'm not living a sunshiny state of delusion. I know this is real life, not some story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie or Rex Stout. Whatever's in room 256 will be in the room, whether I open the door or not.

But I am so fucking scared to turn the page.

The Mystery of Hollow Places is a beautifully written, artfully set-up mystery novel by debut author Rebecca Podos, and it is, hands down, one of the best debuts this reader has ever had the pleasure of reading. If it hadn't been for real life knocking down my door, this book would've been finished in a day and possibly re-read the next day.

Imogene Scott knows nothing about her mother, except for a story her father had told her every bedtime as a child, about how they'd met the day she had to go and identify her mother's body.

Carefully, he slotted the chisel against it, and with a chink, chink, chink, CRACK, the heart split in two. Inside the thick gray rind of rock there were no vessels, or tissue, or anything warm.

Instead, a pocket of crystals like clear teeth grinned up at him. This happened, he knew from his school days: with enough time and the right conditions, precious stones could grow in hollow places.

Imogene has always been incredibly close to her father Joshua Scott, mystery crime writer and ex-pathologist.

When Joshua Scott goes missing, seemingly vanishing into thin air with no clues left behind (except for the stone heart Imogene could've sworn she'd last seen in his office), Imogene takes it upon herself to find him. She knows him better than anyone — better than the police, better than her stepmother who his besides herself with worry — and it stands to reason that if she finds her father, she will also find the estranged mother she knows nothing about. Because why else would he have run away, if it weren't to search for the woman he had once loved?

Right now, I could fill my own book with what I don't know about Dad. I have the stone heart, and a theory that even I'll admit sounds crazy, but few hard facts. But that's okay. Because in mysteries, if nothing else you know that no matter how weird or dark or hopeless things get, one way or another it'll be all right by the end.

With only a theory, her best friend, a stone heart and one of her father's books (starring Miles Faye, recurring pathologist in Joshua Scott's series of books) Imogene takes us on a journey of self discovery and unsolved mysteries dying to be solved.

Before she was my stepmother, Lindy said in one of our few sessions together that faith is a special thing that only exists where there isn't any proof.

Every family has secrets, and Podos perfectly illustrates that in the starkest way possible: children lie to parents, parents keep things hidden from their children and each other, and when the unthinkable happens, it is impossible to know where to start from. Imogene is a teenager coming to terms with who she is — a motherless girl, attached to her father, fording a friendship with her stepmother where before there was none — and with her father's disappearance, figuring out who she is without her family. Who she could be alone.

The Mystery of Hollow Places focuses a lot on human relationships — familial, friendly, and even romantic. Although romance isn't a huge part of the novel (Imogene has a very sweet childhood crush), it lightened the atmosphere and provided sweet moments that made this reader grin like a fool.

Dad's taught me a lot over the years: how to pick the lock on my old Civic, how to choose the best table at Subway. How to read. How to make a Bloody Mary. How to swim and how to breathe out and sink. How to find a woman with only a seventeen-year-old picture in the back of a mystery book and a bedtime story as clues — and I did that much at least. But if there's one thing Dad's bad times have taught me, it's this: I never, ever want to have

anything I can't survive without.

This debut novel isn't just your run-of-the-mill mystery. It's not a simple Point A to Point B with added Plot Twist to keep things interesting, where you end up seeing the end coming from a mile away. It's atmospheric, and beautifully written (word porn at its finest), with challenging topics and thought-provoking moments. It was easy to see oneself in Imogene's she's, but impossible to fully understand what she felt.

Insanely addicting, wonderfully heart-wrenching and poignant, *The Mystery of Hollow Places* is a book I'll recommend until my last, dying breath.

After reading:

This was insanely addictive, wonderfully heart-wrenching and poignant.

I mean, I've literally just finished reading and I AM FEELING ALL THE FEELS ON A SERIOUSLY LARGE SCALE. Do I want to cry? Laugh? Smile? WHO KNOWS? I'LL DO ALL THREE and casually rock in a corner of my room.

Emily May says

There's a reason for everything, if you look hard enough. An answer for every mystery.

The Mystery of Hollow Places is a strange book. It's a psychological mystery written with an artistic flair - by that, I do not mean the prose is purplish, but that it is built up around carefully-woven metaphors for mental illness and depression. **I liked Podos's style very much.**

The book's opening chapter hooked me instantly. We hear of the bedtime story that Imogene was told by her father, a tale perhaps too impossible to be true, but one which sets the mood for the novel - that underlying feeling of sad, lonely emptiness we tend to call "depression". But don't worry; this is not a dramatically depressing book. It is far too subtle and clever for that.

"She said this feeling inside her was . . . it was anti-feeling. Like a black hole in space, and everything—happiness, anger, hope, meaning—it would all get sucked in, tipped over the event horizon, and she couldn't feel any of it."

Imogene's mother was a troubled woman who ran away from the family when Imogene was a baby. Now, years later, Imogene's father (an author of medical mysteries) leaves in the middle of the night and doesn't come back. Convinced he's looking for her mother, Imogene sets out to track him down, using the knowledge she has gathered from reading his books.

Of course, more questions and mysteries will emerge before this one is solved, and Imogene will find herself

tangled up in her family's history.

The Mystery of Hollow Places book is about so many things that it's hard to know where to start. Firstly, it is a psychological mystery that takes a look at the effects of depression. But it is also about a teenage girl trying to figure herself out. There's mentions of feminism and criticisms of slut-shaming. The characters are diverse and Imogene herself is mixed race. **And she has a great support network of awesome female characters.**

Her best friend, Jessa:

*Jessa tips her head onto my shoulder. "Who needs boys, anyway?"
Resting my cheek on the top of her tangled hair, I try to smile. "Definitely not us."*

Her stepmother, Lindi:

"Imogene Mei Scott, you need to realize that you're a strong young woman who is perfectly capable of having a great time sans male."

The friendship between Imogene and Jessa makes for some very funny moments that had me laughing out loud. And I also enjoyed reading about Imogene's crush on Jessa's brother. Surprisingly, it was not just another excuse to squeeze in some romantic angst, but was more about establishing Imogene as a normal, albeit smart and emotionally mature, teenage girl.

A very interesting book, with **some scenes that are so perfectly-written I had to read them again.** I genuinely look forward to what the author writes next.

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?Tash says

Also on

There is a glowing foreword by a HarperCollins' executive editor on the arc that I received. He says that I have in my hands the debut novel of a phenomenally talented writer. That this book is deep, literary, sophisticated exploration of teen identity wrapped in the tropes and structure of a classic mystery novel. Sounds delightful right? I truly wish it was.

Imogene's father is missing. He apparently just walked out in the middle of the night and was never heard or seen again. Imogene is all too familiar with the pain of being left behind, after all her own mother left her when she was a baby. She and her stepmother refuse to believe that her father, a medical mystery writer, would just up and leave like that. Imogene needs to find her father as he's all she's got left. **play You and Me Against the World by Helen Reddy**

Employing the methods of all the literary detectives she's read about, Imogene unearths the mystery that is her mother, believing her mother is the key to finding her father.

Let me start with the good. Mr. Executive Editor was right, Rebecca Podos is a promising writer. Her writing

is elegant. The beginning of this novel was quite compelling when Imogene was narrating how her father, then a medical examiner found a gem in the hollow of a dead woman's heart. After that though, I found myself less invested.

This is not a terrible book, it just did not work for me at all. The primary reason why I did not like this as much as I wanted to was because I did not connect to the main character and narrator, Imogene Scott. At face value, she's my homegirl - a book loving introvert who carries a book in her purse at all times. She is also a loner who, with the exception of her Dad, downplays all other relationships as **mutualism**, nothing more. These all make her interesting, but she is also a dour and somewhat judgmental narrator. She has a great friend Jessa whom she treats like a shallow rich girl who has nothing better to do but Tweet and date around, despite being friends forever. Dour and judgmental- a combination that overpowered all other likable things about our main character. If she can also pipe down on Jessa's America's Next Top Model body and beauty that would've been great. I get it, she's beautiful and you're supposedly plain, just move on.

The story itself, about a girl piecing together a past from wherever she could find the pieces, is not ground breaking. It's been done and better imo in *On the Jellicoe Road*, which is fine, but what dismayed me was the representation of people with depression. Heavy stuff. I don't have first hand experience with this but I've interacted with people who have been diagnosed with clinical depression. They've got bad, worse and worst days, but are still considerate human beings who try their best to function despite their condition. In this novel though, it seemed like the people with depression are self-absorbed flakes without any notion of consequence or regard to loved ones.

The resolution to the central mystery was also a let down because it was more of the same idealizations. It got tiresome. Even with the revelation of years of darkness and woe, all it left me feeling was an overwhelming meh.

We all understand loneliness and how it fools us into thinking that no one is or will ever be there for us, that we're alone. *The Mystery of Lonely Places* tells us that loneliness is a choice, just like happiness. It is really an exquisite message, if only it were carried out better.

ARC was provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

S.M. Parker says

The Mystery of Hollow Places is one of the best YA novels I have ever read. From the voice to the brilliant and flawed main character (and her journey), I could not put this book down. This debut novel by Rebecca Podos has a lot of precise and precious things to say about mental health, forgiveness and identity. To say I loved this book would be a huge understatement. Podos has joined the ranks of insta-buy authors for me and I'm already eager to see what she writes next. No, not eager. I'm impatient to see what she writes next. Because I look forward to being in this author's capable hands once again.

Drew says

The Mystery of Hollow Places is a beautifully written novel, beginning with an eerie story Imogene's father tells her about her mother.

“The bedtime story my dad used to tell me began with my grandmother’s body.”

Even though it's been years since Imogene's mother left when her daughter was very young, Imogene and her father are still coping with their grief. The absence of Imogene's mother was obviously jarring and traumatic on her dad - he took to drinking and became quite depressed. Then one day he leaves the house without so much as a goodbye note.

As Imogene searches for her dad, tracking down clues about her mom in the process, she comes to terms with her own loss and learns to appreciate the things she *does* have in her life - good friends, a wonderful stepmom, and a brilliant father, despite his ups and downs.

Imogene's love for reading was absolutely delightful. Her tendency toward books originated from her father, who was a mystery author. Imogene frequently mentioned some of her favorite mystery authors - Daphne du Maurier, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Agatha Christie. And all along, there was an underlying sense that Imogene **wasn't just searching for answers in her books**, but was searching for her long-lost mother, who she was never able to put out of her mind.

One thing I LOVED was the strong female friendship between Imogene and her best friend, Jessa. These girls were so wonderful together and really built each other up, rather than tearing each other down with jealousy over some guy (something I see way too often in the YA genre). They talked openly about their lives - their problems, interests, and what dress they were wearing to prom. Even when they had a fight, they made up and put it behind them. **They were just so refreshing to read about.**

This book was really more of a contemporary than a mystery, and I think the title is slightly misleading. I expected a typical murder mystery, but it was actually a simple, quiet story following Imogene's life that exploited her thoughts and feelings toward her parents. I think it will appeal to readers who like a realistic, soul-searching main character and don't mind a bit of whimsy.

“There’s a reason for everything, if you look hard enough. An answer for every mystery.”
