



Book Review - The Hidden Whisper by JJ Lumsden

Paranormal publishing appears to fall into one of three camps nowadays. The factual, scientific research tome (I'm thinking of books such as *An Introduction to Parapsychology* by Irwin), whilst hugely informative and factual, tends to put off the more casual reader, and is perceived (although not necessarily correctly) to be the domain of the super sceptical. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the multitude of psychic autobiographies which, whilst occasionally hugely entertaining, can hardly be regarded as repositories of facts and information. The third category is paranormal fiction, which inevitably describes a world full of demons, ghosts and native American Indians buried under the patio. So I was intrigued by an apparently new concept in the field - a work of paranormal fiction written by a genuine parapsychologist. Lumsden's research has been in the areas of the effect of emotion on PK effects (looking at the effect of emotion on Random Event Generators), then later exploring the effect of direct mental healing on REGs. I was initially concerned that this background may mean that Lumsden was from the Wiseman school of parapsychology (Richard Wiseman appears to have built a whole media career around being the arch sceptic of all apparent paranormal phenomena and it may be argued that he lost his objectivity some time ago). Being myself initially from a field research background rather than an academic background I always worry when the academic parapsychologists get involved, as they inevitably (apart from a few notable exceptions) have no concept of how field research is conducted.

However, I need not have worried. This book works on many levels - as a story it is written in an easy-reading yet well written style that will have you reading "just one more chapter before bed" to see how the plot pans out. As such, it is a book that can be read in a few days which should appeal both to the reader with little time to get involved in a heavy novel, and the more casual reader who wants to read something a little less taxing than *War and Peace*. But there is so much more to this book. As Luke, the main protagonist, is asked questions by various characters concerning his field of speciality (paranormal research), the various concepts and ideas within parapsychology are described in an easy to understand fashion. But more than this, each new concept has a reference to an endnote which explains the concept in far more depth. In fact, the last quarter of the book is entirely taken up with endnotes and references, all of which provide an excellent introduction to the concepts current in the field of parapsychology.

Lumsden obviously either has experience of field research, or has discussed the subject at length, as the character of Luke manages to tread the fine line of investigating in a truly objective fashion whilst managing not to alienate the people surrounding him. Obviously I cannot give away the ending of the book, but I will only say I approved of the final denouement, although the case was far more dramatic than most of what I have seen in real life!

I recommend this book both to those who wish to learn more about the field of parapsychology, as the endnotes are a mine of information, and also to those who feel they already have a background in the field, as at best you may learn something new, and at worst you'll have read a witty and well-written paranormal detective story.