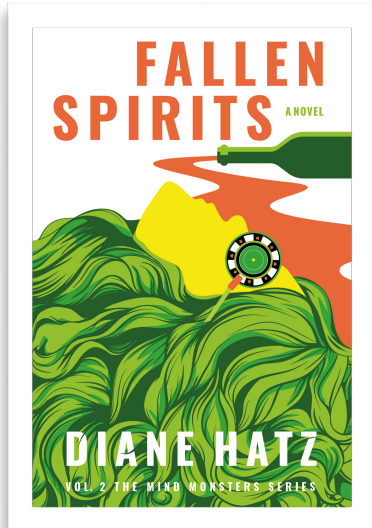




INDEPENDENT BOOK REVIEW

A CELEBRATION OF SMALL PRESS AND SELF-PUBLISHED BOOKS



Fallen Spirits

By Diane Hatz

Genre: Sci-Fi & Fantasy / Satire

Reviewed by Toni Woodruff

Content warnings: rape, addiction

Wild, thrilling, weird, and beyond the scope of our reality (I think)

Fallen Spirits is an absolute whirlwind. Who in which world could connect such inter-dimensional insanity combined with the unbelievable truth of human reality like Diane Hatz has here.

This is a sci-fi thriller mashup with angels, the highest of high-tech, the uber-rich, and a villain who can't

keep his shit in his pants.

Alex Scott gets fired and broken up with by the same guy in a matter of pages to open this novel. The only natural solution for her is grab four bottles of wine and two bottles of vodka and drown in it for a while, but she's stopped outside the store by a thin woman who doesn't know who or where she is.

"I'm lost."

What compels her to take this woman she's naming Crystal to the hospital in her own BMW, only she knows. But it sparks the beginning of a wild goose chase to tear these two apart. The novel transforms into a thriller when big tinted-out SUVs start ramming into her car, trying to kidnap Crystal, and requiring Alex to lean on mysterious strangers who seem to know what's going on with her and how they can help. Should we trust them? Do we have any other choice?

JT is the owner and operator of the biggest online commerce website in the world. With his never-ending pool of money, he goes after the normal stuff for the ridiculously rich—turnstile assistants, the race for Mars, etc.—but behind closed

doors, he's experimenting with inter-dimensional travel and, in the process, creating small black holes that could become a bigger one and sending angels down to earth without any idea of who they are.

The mystery of what in the worlds is even going on is what drives this novel for a while. You do know what the characters are doing, where they're going, why they're going—so it's not a clarity issue—it's more of a cascading snowball of mysteries that keeps getting bigger and bigger. I don't want to share too much because I want you to venture through the mysteries too, but I'd gladly say that it'd be pretty much impossible not to engage with the plot as long as you can make it through JT's incessant sharting.

Speaking of...JT is a villain to laugh at despite his atrocities. He's not funny, and it's not funny when he's on the page, but he's soiling his extra-strength not-diapers on almost every page he appears. He's presented as a weak, incontinent man who wields his power in dangerous ways, but with his short temper and embarrassing mouth farts—literally!—we know he can't win in the end. He's a laughable, satirical mess. It can be a lot to deal with the descriptive bowel issues that creep up every time we see him, so squeamish readers beware. It can also feel a bit repetitive and gross, but it's supposed to be.

It can be quite disgusting how the uber-rich spend their money in the real world, and it's blown up—I hope—to ridiculous proportions in this kind of real, kind of not world. The worldbuilding is a mishmash of creativity; what Hatz dreams up, Hatz makes happen. Readers in love with the places language can take us will relish seeing what tricks the author has up her sleeve.

The ending leaves me wanting more from the installment. I obviously wish we could travel wherever else this can take us, but that will be left to the next book. Still, you'll get no other book like this one. Unless we count the first.

Imagination knows no bounds—or bowels—in this inventive, high-stakes sci-fi thriller.