

# Hiddensee: A Tale of the Once and Future Nutcracker

*Gregory Maguire*

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**From the author of the beloved #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Wicked*, the magical story of a toymaker, a nutcracker, and a legend remade . . .**

Gregory Maguire returns with an inventive novel inspired by a timeless holiday legend, intertwining the story of the famous Nutcracker with the life of the mysterious toy maker named Drosselmeier who carves him.

*Hiddensee: An island of white sandy beaches, salt marshes, steep cliffs, and pine forests north of Berlin in the Baltic Sea, an island that is an enchanting bohemian retreat and home to a large artists' colony—a wellspring of inspiration for the Romantic imagination . . .*

Having brought his legions of devoted readers to Oz in *Wicked* and to Wonderland in *After Alice*, Maguire now takes us to the realms of the Brothers Grimm and E. T. A. Hoffmann—the enchanted Black Forest of Bavaria and the salons of Munich. *Hiddensee* imagines the backstory of the Nutcracker, revealing how this entrancing creature came to be carved and how he guided an ailing girl named Klara through a dreamy paradise on a Christmas Eve. At the heart of Hoffmann's mysterious tale hovers Godfather Drosselmeier—the ominous, canny, one-eyed toy maker made immortal by Petipa and Tchaikovsky's fairy tale ballet—who presents the once and future Nutcracker to Klara, his goddaughter.

But *Hiddensee* is not just a retelling of a classic story. Maguire discovers in the flowering of German Romanticism ties to Hellenic mystery-cults—a fascination with death and the afterlife—and ponders a profound question: How can a person who is abused by life, shortchanged and challenged, nevertheless access secrets that benefit the disadvantaged and powerless? Ultimately, *Hiddensee* offers a message of hope. If the compromised Godfather Drosselmeier can bring an enchanted Nutcracker to a young girl in distress on a dark winter evening, perhaps everyone, however lonely or marginalized, has something precious to share.

## Hiddensee: A Tale of the Once and Future Nutcracker Details


Date : Published October 31st 2017 by William Morrow

ISBN :

Author : Gregory Maguire

Format : Kindle Edition 304 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Retellings, Fairy Tales, Holiday, Christmas, Adult

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**Maguire**

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## From Reader Review Hiddensee: A Tale of the Once and Future Nutcracker for online ebook

### Joaquin Garza says

Ah, los escritores que tienen su marca. Pegan un home run y lo más lógico es que sigan intentando batear de esa manera. Es normal, porque así se lo pedirán sus lectores. Se lo pedirán sus agentes. Su editorial. Los reseñadores. Y así, es muy fácil encasillarse. Puedo pensar en un par, independientemente de los méritos de sus historias. Creo yo, que entre los escritores que se han encasillado hay unos cuantos que sin la valentía de salirse de lo suyo desarrollan lo que saben hacer de una forma competente.

Entra Gregory Maguire. Por eso es interesante leerlo. Porque fue el pionero en el perezoso arte de recontar cuentos de hadas y dentro de él, sigue siendo un exponente talentoso (muy probablemente el más).

No fui fan de Wicked. Me pareció desenfocado, largo y accidentado, y muy poco directo en el mensaje que quería contar. Esto, por supuesto, sabiendo que el famoso musical era más ligero de tono y un poco más optimista. El meter la mano y expandir a golpe de worldbuilding la novela de Baum le salió bastante bien, pero con una historia que se habría beneficiado de más claridad.

En Hiddensee no tuvo que expandir un worldbuilding ya creado. Tuvo que investigar y conjuntar con su mano diferentes tradiciones para explicar la historia de uno de los personajes más misteriosos del Cascanueces. La investigación le salió impecable, pues la era del romanticismo alemán y sus semillas de nacionalismo que habrían de ir in crescendo hasta la conclusión que todos conocemos es retratada a la perfección, junto con apariciones y menciones oblicuas a los cuentos de hadas clásicos que fueron recolectados en esta época. En este mundo, como señala la reseña de Tor, el joven Dirk vive un cuento de hadas en reversa, saliendo de un mundo de fantasía para enfrentarse a una vida en el mundo real. Así, la novela es completamente moderna en este sentido. Y lo mejor es que no eviscera ni reexamina el famoso cuento originario.

Aquí, las motivaciones del trasfondo del libro son más claras. Tal vez porque nos lo dicen en la sinopsis, pero allá van la melancólica vida de Dirk Drosselmeier en su lucha por encontrarse a sí mismo y por tocar la vida de aquellas personas desdichadas con las que se encuentra en su camino. Una a una, hasta culminar con Clarita, la historia de Dirk es una historia de fallas, de melancolía y de añoranzas. Me temo que no es una historia feliz, ni una que dé esperanzas o que maraville. Es una historia muy moderna, muy adulta y en este sentido, una que niega la redención por medio de la fantasía.

Hay algo que no me termina de convencer de Maguire. No sé si sea mi propia indisposición a los retellings. No sé si sea su estilo danzarín a través de la trama con hechos fantásticos que, incluso con un poco de mejora en el enfoque, me siguen pareciendo desperdigados y dislocados por todas partes.

Me pareció curioso que la novela haya tenido tan poco eco, pese a las entusiastas reseñas en Kirkus y en el Washington Post. No sé si la gente se haya cansado del estilo de Maguire o hayan sido de aquellos que fueron a maravillarse al teatro y salieron cantando Defying Gravity y en los libros se encontraron con algo muy distinto. Es un craso error, porque la valía de Maguire está ahí, a lo mejor para incomodarnos y para traernos a rastras a las realidades más desagradables de la vida. Y quién sabe, pero es muy probable que la historia de Dirk sea la historia de todos nosotros.

## Magrat Ajostiernos says

3,5/5

Muy al estilo de 'Wicked', aquí Maguire selecciona al juguetero del cuento de 'El cascanueces y el rey de los ratones' como el protagonista de su novela. Es un retelling muy particular, como ya lo fue 'Wicked' en el que los elementos del cuento son más bien píldoras que hay que saber encontrar, mientras que el autor desarrolla una historia completamente autónoma por su parte.

Me ha encantado la atmósfera de cuento, la ambientación de Alemania y el misticismo que aparece y desaparece en la obra, pero los personajes (especialmente el protagonista y su amigo Felix) no llegaron a engancharme. La lectura te atrapa pasada la mitad del libro y sorprende que haya menos fantasía de la que podría parecer en un principio, pero esta es una historia llena de guiños para los amantes de los cuentos de hadas, yo la he disfrutado y sobre todo me ha dejado con ganas de leer el cuento de Hoffman y más obras de Maguire.

Pd. Quiero saber más de Klara!

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## Ron Charles says

Gregory Maguire would seem the perfect author for this act of creative investigation into the Nutcracker. He's already delved into the early lives of such fantastical figures as Snow White and Cinderella. And, of course, his novel about the Wicked Witch of the West is the basis for that spellbinding Broadway hit "Wicked."

But there's barely a nutshell of music or magic in "Hiddensee." Maguire has a style glazed with a patina of Old World formality. Don't look for the passion and color of Tchaikovsky here; this is a novel with its own palette of darker, woodland tones.

In Bavaria around 1808, a foundling boy named Dirk lives with an old woman and an old woodcutter. When a falling tree knocks Dirk out, he experiences a vision of a talking bird, a gnome and a very aggrieved spirit of the forest. Returning to life and believing that his guardians will try to kill him again, Dirk runs away from home into the wide world he knows nothing about. "How many times," he wonders, "will I . . .

*To read the rest of this review, go to The Washington Post:*

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/entert...>

*To watch the Totally Hip Video Book Review of 'Hiddensee,' click here:*

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/...>

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## Celeste says

Rating: 2.5/5 stars

I picked up this book because I was looking for a retelling of the Nutcracker to get me in the Christmas spirit. I should've known better than to trust Maguire to instill holiday cheer into anything he writes. I was definitely not filled with cheer and goodwill while reading this, which was a disappointment I should've seen coming.

Was this a bad book? No. It retold a familiar story in a new and unfamiliar way, from the perspective of Drosselmeier, the toy maker who crafted the eponymous Nutcracker. And Drosselmeier's story was an interesting one. But just as he had an incredibly difficult time connecting emotionally to other people, so did I with his story. I found it intellectually compelling but emotionally unsatisfying.

I've enjoyed Maguire's work in the past. Wicked was, in my opinion, an incredibly original retelling of a story that has been told so often that it lost a bit of its life and flavor. Wicked revitalized the Wizard of Oz for me, giving it a depth that I had missed. Elphaba was a far richer character than I would have expected, and I always enjoy seeing both heroes and villains in a different light, as Maguire presented both Dorothy and the Wicked Witch, along with various other characters made famous in the original.

That's what I was hoping for from Hiddensee, but it's not what I got. I wanted more depth and richness added to a tale I love. And indeed, Maguire did add aspects to the old tale that were interesting, as I said before. But I just didn't care about Drosselmeier like I yearned to. I didn't see the Nutcracker in a new light that surprised and delighted me. I saw him given a new purpose, but he was lifeless in the pages of this book. And honestly, the tone of this book reminded me of Uprooted, which I hated. If you loved Uprooted, you might really enjoy this book.

One of the amazing things about fairy tales and folk tales is their ability to entrance us and move us in a very limited number of pages. Hiddensee felt both too long for a fairy tale and too short for a deeper, more compelling novel, leaving it on a shaky middle ground where it was unable to keep its footing. Of course, this is a personal opinion, as all of my reviews are. But now I feel the need to track down the original story to rid myself of the sour residue left by Maguire's book, so I can reclaim a story I love. If anyone has another retelling of this story that they love, please share it with me; I don't want my vision of the Nutcracker to stiffen with age.

*Original review can be found at Booknest.*

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## **Jess says**

My experience with Maguire is that basically leave your conception of the favorite fairytale or folk tale because the book won't give you the same feelings. I am a Nutcracker fan and was eagerly looking forward to this book. This book was original, full of Old World magic and lore, and interesting... yet, it failed to capture the magical feeling I get when I experience the Nutcracker. It's slightly darker, matter of fact, and quite fitting with the capriciousness of the old gods/goddesses. I can say "I liked it" but wasn't left with that warm holiday entrancement that I love.

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## **D.L. Morrese says**

An orphan boy is raised by an unlikable couple who live alone in the woods, leaves after an accident with an axe, and muddles through another two hundred pages with no clear goals. If there is more to this story, I missed it. There is no real plot. I didn't find the characters engaging. The prose is awkward and the dialogue wooden. This is, of course, my subjective assessment. Others may find something in it that I did not.

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## Erin Cataldi says

CRAP! CRAP! CRAP! Why did I trick myself into reading this utter nonsense?!?! Why?!?!?! After Alice (his Alice in Wonderland adaptation) was bad enough (another 1 star review) but I was lured in by the premise of a backstory to the nutcracker. I'm an idiot! I should have stayed clear! My god, this story hardly anything to do with the nutcracker and the first 200 pages was about a boy named Dirk wandering the countryside, no mention of A nutcracker or THE nutcracker OR Christmas. NOTHING! ZILCH! Literally dumb. I hate this. I'm never tricking myself into reading his stuff again. Avoid if you know what's good for you.

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## Erin Clemence says

*Hiddensee by Gregory Maguire tells the story of Drosselmeier, the man responsible for creating the Nutcracker, as well as how he came to give it to young Klara.*

Full of Maguire's typical prose and poetic language, Drosselmeier starts as a young boy living with Hansel and Gretel in the woods. When a tragic accident leaves him without an eye and brings him to "the other side" and back, Drosselmeier is then sent to live with various families until he is old enough to become a toymaker. When his beloved friend Felix dies, Drosselmeier assumes paternal responsibility for Felix's children and develops a quick bond with Felix's granddaughter, Klara, a sickly girl who lives in a world of fantasy that is very similar to Drosselmeier's own.

"Hiddensee" is a short novel to read, with quick chapter that flow together rather nicely. Drosselmeier's story, as told by Maguire, is an interesting one, full of mystery, fantasy and family.

Normally, I find Maguire's writing a little hard to take, with his extravagant, expanded vocabulary that has been scrambling for a dictionary at least once per page. In this instance though, "Hiddensee" was far more digestible, while still remaining beautifully written.

Drosselmeier is the ultimate misfit- alone for most of his life due to his creative imaginings and strange behaviours, he finds love in the wrong places and with the wrong people until finally finding an adopted family of his own. He is a wonderful anti-hero, creating empathy and connection with the reader.

The story is well-told, with well-developed characters and a smooth flow. Creative and charming, this novel is the perfect novel for the holiday season. Set in "Bavaria" and its surrounding lands, "Hiddensee" takes us through beautiful, isolated settings, with strange customs and characters from fairy tales. This novel has a distinctive and sweet ending, allowing for the satisfying finality I love in novels like this.

"Hiddensee" is a great re-imagining of the Nutcracker, told in the way only Maguire can. A beautiful novel for the Christmas season and beyond.

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## Café de Tinta says

Este libro es un pequeño tesoro. Escondido tras la fachada de 'origen del cuento del cascanueces' Maguire nos habla de la historia de Dirk y traza un relato complejo sobre la pérdida de la infancia y la búsqueda de la propia identidad.

### **Melki says**

Young Herr Drosselmeyer travels around meeting people - some are interesting, most are not. Klara shows up in the last few pages, a sickly ray of sunshine, but by then it's too late. I kept wondering why the author wanted to revisit this tale if he couldn't be bothered to breathe a little life into the story.

The Coda, however, was lovely and almost, but not quite made me want to tack on an extra star.

My friend Myles had a similar reaction, and has written a much more eloquent review -  
[/www.goodreads.com/review/show/2054467...](http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/2054467...)

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### **Lori says**

The book began with a 'tale' which never really seemed to take shape or reach a conclusion. Mr. Maguire knows how to write this genre well; but I was disappointed with the disjointed story of Dirk and his purpose, and the mainly incidental references to the nutcracker he made.

I will re-read soon and try to piece together what I may have missed the first time around!

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### **Selena says**

Another amazing mythical fairy tale from Gregory Maguire. A young foundling, Dirk Drosselmeier, who has courted death, leaves his home of an old man and his wicked wife who want to harm him. He has to learn to live on his own wits. He discovers many scary things in the world along with the fact that anyone he loves dies or leaves him.

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### **Shorty says**

A very beautifully told story, about the reimagining of the nutcracker. Not exactly the story of the nutcracker itself, but instead about the creator of the nutcracker, Heir Dirk Drosselmeier. I completely enjoyed listening to the entire audiobook, and about this guy's life. I found it fascinating. I recommend it to others who might enjoy this story as well.

For a much better written review, please read this one:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Recommended, and 4 stars.

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## Kay Kuever says

My entire life I have spent every Christmas indulging in the Nutcracker, from performing in it as a sugar plum fairy or mouse as a child, attending annual local performances with my in-laws and watching film after film of live performances. It's a story I hold near and dear to my heart, if for nothing than the nostalgia. I've likewise, spent my entire adult life raving up and down the streets, parties, anyone who will bother listening to me my utter and COMPLETE love of Gregory Maguire's work. Having been a voracious reader at a very young age, fairy tales have always interested me, so growing up and finding this intelligent, adult narrations and retellings of my favorite stories were like my dreams had been answered. So, now, imagine what my reaction was to find out an author I adore and admire for his creativity and beautiful way with words was going to grant me the pleasure of reading his take on such a beloved story. Really, imagine. Kermit waving his wands around like a limp puppet has nothing on me.

For those of us unaware of the story of the Nutcracker, the story was originally written by E. T. A. Hoffman in 1816, revised by Alexandre Dumas in 1844 and adapted as a ballet in 1892. The story follows Marie Stahlbaum, sometimes known as or Clara in the ballet, as she awaits with her siblings to see what gifts their godfather, a clockmaker, has brought them for Christmas. She almost immediately becomes infatuated with a nutcracker that her brother insists on breaking after attempting to crack a nut just a bit too large. Upset, Marie puts the nutcracker to sleep and is started when the nutcracker seems to come alive inciting what could only consider the most fantastic of all fever dreams. Mice begin to attack, along with their seven-headed mouse king, and the Nutcracker leaps to life to defend Marie with the assistance of her dolls. When the fight begins to look bleak, Marie whips off her slipper and flings it at the Mouse King (also my favorite part of the ballet). Of course, no one believes her because she's just a child. But, after fixing her beloved nutcracker her godfather regales Marie the story of Princess Pirlipat and the Mouse Queen, a story of revenge and the birth of the Nutcracker. It eventually ends with a final battle with the new Mouse King and Marie being whisked away to the Nutcracker's doll kingdom or in the ballet, after the Land of Sweets.

Hiddensee is the amazing, beautifully written story from childhood to adulthood of Marie's (or Marie-Claire) godfather Dirk Drosselmeier. At first, I wasn't sure what I was expecting from this book. Part of me wanted a pure retelling of the story I've grown so fond of, but I was pleasantly elated at the peak into the life of the man behind the woodcarving. There was so much mythology, Germanic and Greek, and true to Maguire's nature, he spent plenty of time setting up each nook and cranny until the entire story became perfectly allied for that fateful night on Christmas Eve. Maguire's prose is majestic and carried me over each page until I realized I had signed into a perfect ending in one sitting.

Dirk is a lovable dolt of a character, both burdened and naive by his youth being raised by unloving guardians (a hint into some Brother's Grimm) who he fled from after an ancient in the forest left him with a single working eye. Dirk himself seems to straddle the line between reality and fantasy in a way that had me hook and invested in his every thought. While he seemed unable to allow himself to believe the frivolous things of a child, he also rarely allowed himself to feel other things as well, like romance, lust, and true happiness. He seemed stuck. While he learns as he grows up to feed into other children's games in place of his own childhood, he fails to belong. He's neither child nor fully adult.

If anything this story begs for us to reclaim our childhoods and our pasts to find that moment that brought us so much joy and cherish it, because before we know it, it could be too late and it'll take a sweet girl and her stories to show us what we missed out on.

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## **Debra says**

### **The walnut, opened.**

I was intrigued by the gentle telling of this story, but the truth is, I didn't realize I had loved it until the very end.

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