



# The Secret Kingdom

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

**Books for Keeps** has been reviewing Jenny Nimmo's books since 1986 and there are more than 20 reviews now in the archive, from her Smarties Prize winning **The Snow Spider** to the hugely popular Charlie Bone books. The reviews praise Nimmo particularly for her tightly knit plots, and her ability to weave together myth, fantasy, humour and the everyday.

**The Secret Kingdom** is another clever and entertaining fantasy story that will enthrall young readers. Like much of the best fantasy, the story starts long before the book begins: a war has been raging between good and evil. Viridees, creatures bent on destruction, have attacked the good creatures of the forest, driving some, including the moon spiders, to extinction.

Far away in the Secret Kingdom the king and queen know nothing of this until the day a jinni arrives seeking refuge. In return for their kindness he gives them magical gifts for their children including an Alixir that will halt the aging process. The gifts protect the children, but bring danger too. The viridees want the magical cloak and ring for themselves and when the young prince Timoken is 11, and his sister Zobayda 13, they attack the kingdom. The king is killed and the children must flee.

For the next hundred years they roam the desert, searching for a home. Along the way they find and adopt a camel, Gabar, who becomes the third member of their little family. Gabar is a wonderful comic creation, grumpy, stubborn, always protective of his dignity, but willing to trust Timoken completely.

Fans of Charlie Bone will find particular rewards in the book, which stands almost as a prequel, and even contains some appearances by Charlie himself. For those who haven't read the Charlie Bone books **The Secret Kingdom** is still first-class fairytale adventure. And readers will believe a camel can fly!

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