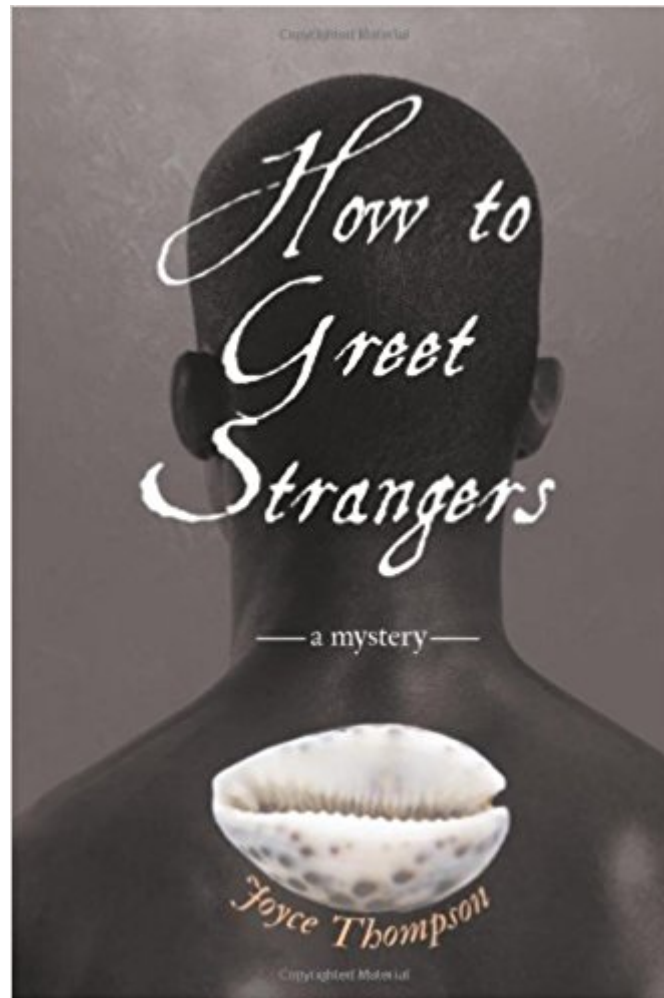




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# How To Greet Strangers: A Mystery



## Synopsis

Archer Barron is rebuilding his life after hiding from it for years. Once he had grand expectations--graduating law school, donning drag to express his feminine aspects, and the love of a devoted boyfriend--but fate became cruel. HIV-positive cruel. And a growing involvement with an Oakland Santería priestess who promised a cure in return for devotion and a lot of cash. His lover died. His faith and spirit almost followed. Now Archer works a sorry job as a university night watchman and volunteers at a free clinic. The walls he's built in the years since his loss are about to come crumbling down when a former member of the Santería family he belonged to comes seeking legal help. And then the police discover the body of the priestess. Archer's grudge makes him a prime suspect. In *How To Greet Strangers*, the Bay Area welcomes a new detective: he's black, he's spiritual, he's stunning. And he's in great danger.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Thompson writes with confidence and authority capturing the rhythm, cadence, language, attitude and swagger of a positive gay male in the 21st century....keep your fingers crossed that Thompson brings Archer back for more adventures." --Drew Jackson, *Edge Atlanta*"An intriguing story weaving in elements of mystery, spirituality, as well as black and gay issues... an excellent pick for fans of mysteries not afraid to walk a different path."--Midwest Book Review"This book is so well crafted that I would stop reading so I could savor a sentence and admire the craft."--Angel Curtis, *OutSmart*"...an important work to include in any fiction collection."--American Library Association,

GBLTRT Newsletter, Summer 2013"Readers will love Archer, the unapologetically black gay narrator of HOW TO GREET STRANGERS. His fierce, queeny asides add sparkle to this gritty thriller, which uses an Oakland-based Santeria cult as its backdrop. Thompson's knowledge of (and love for) Santeria comes shining through. Highly recommended." Craig Laurence Gidney, author of Sea, Swallow MeHow to Greet Strangers is a Finalist for Best Gay Mystery, 2013. The Lambda Literary Awards ceremony takes place in New York City on June 4."How to Greet Strangers is equal parts spiritual odyssey and gripping detective story, a bold and vibrant work. Read it and fall into a world you will not easily forget." --Carolina de Robertis, author of The Invisible Mountain and Perla"With Archer Barron, Joyce Thompson has introduced a truly new personality to the world of the murder mystery and this is no mean feat. What is even more remarkable is the world Archer Barron inhabits. Only a writer of Thompson's skill and imagination could do this justice and she puts the reader right in there alongside Archer. The book is filled with keen and pithy insights into the big existential questions: love, death, religion, and what Archer calls being a prisoner in the human zoo. Oh, and you will be amazed when you find out who done it." --Karl Marlantes, author of Matterhorn and What It Is Like to Go to War"How to Greet Strangers is suspenseful, spiritual, sexy, and satisfying. It's both a kick-ass mystery and a genuine story of love and the human heart. Thompson creates characters on the far edges of modern life and gives them such humanity that we feel deeply connected to them." --Scott Sparling, author of Wire to Wire"A sophisticated murder mystery that explores identity issues and Santeria traditions."--Kirkus Reviews"...I could not put down this very unusual mystery and even grew to accept that spirits could manifest themselves into the believers' lives. Given my usual attitude towards the supernatural in a realistic novel, that is quite an accomplishment on the author's part. The novel is too complex, too nuanced to sum up in a few sentences." --Wayne Gunn for Lambda Literary"With her beautifully imagined and breathtakingly original How to Greet Strangers, Joyce Thompson has single handedly rebooted the murder mystery. The prose sings, the story truly thrills, and the detective, Archer Barron, is a hero like no other (and I'm not just talking about the cross-dressing). This is one of those rare, delicious tales you'll want to both cherish and gulp down in one sitting." --Karen Karbo, author of Trespassers Welcome Here and How Georgia Became O Keeffe

Joyce Thompson is the author of ten previous books, nine of them fictitious. She is owner and president of Launchismo, a marketing services company. Thompson lives in the Oakland flats, where the barrio meets the 'hood.

I'm not a big mystery reader - the last one I remember seeking out was Thompson's *Bones* in the 90s. My sheer pleasure in reading *How to Greet Strangers* speaks to the book's unusual achievement of straddling and defying genre conventions, not unlike iconoclastic protagonist Archer Barron himself. The mystery plotline is well-crafted and the book fast-paced, but the expansive, internally-driven characters make for depth and emotional impact that set the book apart. Following Archer on his amateur detective quest means snagging a front-row seat at a drag show, crossing East Bay class barriers, and falling in love with a painted, bass-lined, all-consuming faith, only to be shattered. Whatever you've read, you have not read a book like this.

This is an amazing book. Archer Barron's voice grips you on the first page and doesn't let go. *How to Greet Strangers* is a beautifully written account of a fascinating character and his increasingly complex world. Joyce Thompson's writing is top-notch - Archer is an extraordinarily well-developed, nuanced character, and someone you'll want to know. Thompson's writing allows us to share in his struggles, ones that echo struggles deep within all of us - the greatness and devastation of love and loss, the careful balance of belonging and independence, the search for spiritual identity - themes which aren't always so accessible, and those that make Archer deeply appealing. The plot twists are thrilling, and will keep you engaged until the very last page, a page that comes too soon. I found myself trying to slow the pace of my reading so the book wouldn't end - this is a wonderfully original tale.

I bought this book on a whim after hearing my friend talk about how much she enjoyed it, and I was blown away. Joyce Thompson has given the world a new hero; A gay, cross dressing, HIV positive, faith questioning Santero, whom I fell madly in love with. This novel follows Archer, a gay man who has lost his faith in the Lucumi religion after the loss of his partner and dealings with an abusive god parent. Someone suddenly shows up in town and begins killing Santeros, the priests of the Lucumi faith, and Archer is called upon to help solve the case. We find several struggles within these pages, and all of them real. The loss of a lover, a questioning of faith, a desire to express yourself, and the fear for one's life. As a gay man, who is also a Santero, I want to see more of Archer.

I'm a Mom of two young kids and a book has to really capture my attention, and this book truly did. I hid away to read it as often as possible!! The protagonist, Archer, is complex yet easily accessible-smart, vulnerable and passionate. His voice kept me engaged throughout this mystery

that offered twists and turns I never imagined but which resonated with me. The line between the spirit world and reality blended beautifully. I hope we can hear more from Archer, as Joyce Thompson comes through with a fully realized character ready to take on his world in new ways. Yet in "How to Greet Strangers: A Mystery" it is Archer's past that propels this fascinating and transformative journey.

I rarely read mysteries, and I would say that (1) this book is a terrific mystery, and mostly that (2) this is a terrific book. Archer Barron is a wonderfully developed character, as are several of the secondary characters. The writing is so, so good - I love Archer's voice, and he's entirely believable despite "being on the fringes" in so many ways. His spiritual struggle is quite convincing as well as painful, his intelligence is palpable, his sense of irony is delightful. The suspense of the book yanked me along insistently, so I'm sure I'll read the book again to savor the writing a bit more. One piece of advice - maybe don't finish it right before you go to sleep...

How to Greet Strangers: A Mystery You will immediately become engaged in Joyce Thompson's latest book of fiction "How to Greet Strangers: a Mystery". I could not put this book down! I found myself crack a smile. I cried. I even jolted out of bed, Kindle in one hand and death grip with other on sleeping husband. I know the ink has barely dried on this first edition, but "How to Greet Strangers" would also do well in Spanish and Portuguese editions. Hollywood needs to look at this for something fresh. I can see Archer or Darla on the Big Screen. When this happens, I know just the person to design the music for the soundtrack.

I probably never would have picked this book but for the fact that it is written by my best friend in high school. I am glad I did. It is a well written and kooky look into a world I never would have thought about. Archer Barron is a fascinating multi-faceted character who draws the reader into his world of drag, Santeria, and loneliness while working to untangle a series of deaths and murders. Here's hoping there will be a sequel.

As I posted on Goodreads: Entertaining. A good read - well structured, good chapter breaks. First person narrative from a milieu I haven't encountered, so educational as well. Enough plot points to keep in rolling, with some nice twists.

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