



Vacant

Alex Hughes

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Nothing ruins a romantic evening like a brawl with lowlifes—especially when one of them later turns up dead and my date, Detective Isabella Cherabino, is the #1 suspect. My history with the Atlanta PD on both sides of the law makes me an unreliable witness, so while Cherabino is suspended, I'm paying my bills by taking an FBI gig.

I've been hired to play telepathic bodyguard for Tommy, the ten-year-old son of a superior court judge in Savannah presiding over the murder trial of a mob-connected mogul. After an attempt on the kid's life, the Feds believe he's been targeted by the businessman's "associates."

Turns out, Tommy's a nascent telepath, so I'm trying to help him get a handle on his Ability. But it doesn't take a mind reader to see that there's something going on with this kid's parents that's stressing him out more than a death threat...

Vacant Details

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Molly Smith says

Initial Thoughts: Wow! I just love this series! Adam is just an engaging character, the tarnished hero. I like his character and continued development in this series. Cherabino is also just an interesting and even she is evolving. In this novel, the story was gripping and compelling. What Adam risks was heartbreaking and I look forward to what happens next. It is astonishing how the plot continues to thicken in the overall story arc. As the series progresses the Big Bad is further revealed, and it is staggering to learn the extent of his influence and power. To see the complete review by myself and Gikany, please click on the link to That's What I'm Talking About blog: <http://twimom227.com/2014/12/review-v...>

Gregoire says

J'aime toujours autant l'atmosphère que créée l'auteur dans cette série. Cette fois, l'intrigue policière prend le dessus sur les démêlés de Ward avec la Guilde. Il se concentre sur le super vilain loin pour une fois de Cherabino qui reste en arrière plan malgré ses propres problèmes avec la police. Ce qui m'empêche de donner un "5 étoiles" c'est qu'il me semble parfois un peu subir plutôt qu'agir pour un homme de quarante ans ayant occupé une position importante et exercé le métier d'enseignant à des jeunes aux pouvoirs psychiques. Mais ses doutes et ses tergiversations font aussi partie de son histoire et de celle de la planète. Quelquefois, le récit à la première personne me gène un peu ici je trouve que l'auteur s'en sort très bien, mêlant habilement infos, émotions, dialogues ... Je lirai certainement la suite ...

John Chichester says

I love this series! It is so well written and the characters are so real! Alex Hughes writes with such tension. She has this ability to keep you on edge throughout the books. This is the fourth book that I've read in this series and the suspense has kept right on through. I haven't read an author that could do that since reading the Gunslinger Series by Stephen King. What's amazing about these books is that the post-apocalyptic world that she has created is a throw back to a world before cell phones. It's a world that many of us grew up in. She has also infused this world with a highly credible Telepathic Guild that feels utterly believable. That world has unfolded slowly throughout the series, almost at a pace that matches the reputation of the Deep South where the series takes place. It feels as if the author has had this master plan all along and she is parsing out the details at a pace that only she is willing to reveal. This is a must read!

Amyiw says

OK, I want to give this a 4 star but I just can't because of few things. There are places that it drags like it is just trying to work in some angst, whether over his missteps in the investigation, his addiction, or his relationship with Cherebino.

I loved the start of this as now it is Cherebino in the hot seat for something she didn't do. The premise doesn't

hold up to scrutiny though because what kind of cop doesn't report an attack and leaves the scene? Still, it is interesting and obviously a set up. So then we get thrown into another investigation and leave Cherebino to fend for herself. Suddenly this FBI investigation becomes the main storyline and we get to hear about Cherebino only through conversations and Alex angsting over being away. The other story line is very interesting though so we get pulled into it. I loved that the FBI players actually seemed to have a little respect for Alex. So the story becomes really good again, except for the angst.

So we are in the middle of this other storyline and realize that they might just overlap a bit. Nobody seems to look at that angle though. Alex is guarding a 10 year old boy and whenever he gets excited he runs off without a by your leave. Well this gets annoying as hell and is ridiculous when it is all about guarding him. The boy is in fear so not listening to his protectors... well ridiculous.

More and more this case seems to have players that have connections to Cherebino's investigation, yet no one puts it together. (view spoiler) So all these loose ends made it seem unfinished. Yes, we get the boy's story but there is a big story that is presented that is not finished. So I might have given it a 4 stars right here but.

Cherebino reacts so irrationally to Alex having to work, when they aren't even totally together really. The investigation into Cherebino does get looked at by, not her appealing but the department for mishandling. I mean the FBI should be connecting the two cases by now especially with Alex telling them what was said right? It was like it was some sort of half ending and the more I think about it, the more I consider it a full on cliffhanger posed as an ending because the boy's story is over. Nope, we get no closure even on that for who is orchestrating all of it.

Really the story lines are great but there is no closure and some angst, with slow parts that were a drag. If the next book closes some of the open endings, including the relationship with Cherebino, this would be a great beginning but it isn't a great story in of itself. 3 1/2 stars.

-----While reading-----

30% - Great start, wow what questions.

50% - This is annoying with the kid running off with no repercussions. He's scared yet runs off all the time and faster than Alex can keep up.

70% - Next (view spoiler)

This is really, really good but that was such a set up that I just couldn't take it. I still don't see the other connections but like I said the set up stupidity has made it drop from excellent.

OpenBookSociety.com says

<http://openbooksociety.com/article/va...>

Brought to you by OBS reviewer Heidi

Adam's mind injury has finally healed! But when a night out with Cherabino turns bad, she is accused of police brutality and Adam's boss at the police station doesn't want to see him either, thinking that Adam is a

bad influence on Cherabino.

Adam has been plagued with a vision of a child dying because of his inability to save him. So when the FBI calls for him to work on that very boy's case, he can't say no. This is his only chance to change the outcome of that vision! Unfortunately that means leaving Cherabino when she needs him the most.

I really wanted to like this book, but I find this series to always be a bit of a struggle. Something about it always makes it difficult to hold my interest. I can put the books down to easily, and this book was no different. It was a slow read, with me only managing a chapter or so at a time. It really seemed to drag out.

The storyline was okay, with Adam minding for a young 10 year old, and Adam teaching him how to use his own undiscovered telepathy along the way. Adam is once again faced with old enemies that he must defeat to save young Tommy's life. The case itself risking his relationship with Cherabino as he is unable to be in two places at once.

I found Adam's repetitive thoughts of needing his drug, cigarettes, and Cherabino to be insanely annoying!

I think the romance between the duo is what was making this series better for me and the lack of that relationship in this series was a major blow to my enjoyment. And, now with that relationship in jeopardy I don't know what it will mean for the remainder of the series. I'm sure they will eventually overcome their problems, but as long as it took them to get together to being with, I'm just not sure I have the patience.

OBS would like to thank the publisher for supplying a free copy of this title in exchange for an honest review

Kathy Davie says

Fourth in the Mindspace Investigations psychic investigator series and revolving around Adam Ward, drug addict and police interrogator, taking a side trip to Savannah.

My Take

Talk about love! Poor Adam is enduring a concert because Isabella is so eager to attend it. It's worth it, though, when Adam discovers a whole new Mindspace.

In this story, it's Isabella's and Adam's high sense of responsibility that sets up her downfall.

I do get annoyed with Adam; he's such a whiner! How can he not know what a close rate is? He's been working with the police for how many years?

Mom is a piece of work. Her son should be a high priority for her — god knows, she protests about her kid enough to the security people, but she's more interested in thwarting the protection around him than in spending any time with him, even after someone tried to kidnap her son.

Yeah, that idiot (Adam) thinks he's failed. No shit. He knows the dangers to Tommy, and yet he's too hungry to wait and protect him? Duhhh. How can someone so intelligent be so dumb? Why isn't he telling the FBI about the weapons being sold? As for Tommy...idiot. People tried to kidnap him a few days before. People died for him. People he cared about, and he still goes running off?

Jesus, this Fiske is such a piece of work.

Well, Cherabino is definitely all girl. She wants her cake and she wants to eat it too, and she'll blame Adam if she can't.

One of the good things about *Vacant* is Adam coming up against temptation and battling it for the right reasons. It certainly makes things more interesting that Adam is a drug addict, and Hughes does a good job of making me feel Adam's "need" and his battle for and against the drug. It feels so real.

This is a hard series to like with all the stupid things the characters do. And yet, I like the twist that Hughes has put on psychics and this alternate world.

The Story

They're going to railroad Isabella for the timing and the set-up. It's too easy and so cowardly that they'll destroy a good cop.

It puts Adam between a rock and a hard place. He wants to be there for Cherabino, and yet he needs this job. Especially after that vision he's had.

The Guild doesn't help much. Seems they're suddenly hurting for money and the pressure is on Adam to repay his debt.

The Characters

Adam Ward, a Level ?? telepath (after the damage done to his brain, Adam doesn't know what level he is these days), is in love with Isabella and finally dating her. **Swartz** is his Narcotics Anonymous sponsor; Adam got hooked on Satin during a Telepaths' Guild's experiment. (They kicked him to the curb when they found out.)

Detective Isabella Cherabino, a dedicated cop, has a high close rate at the station. **Sensei Rivera** steps up as a witness.

DeKalb County PD

Detective Michael is partnered up with Isabella. **Sergeant Branen** doesn't like Adam but will use him for interrogations. **Chou** is brought in to battle against the witch hunt, a hunt in which most of the rules are being broken. And *not* for Cherabino.

Fulton County PD

Officer Fulton goes from professional to hostile.

FBI

Special Agent Jarrod had tried to recruit Adam a few weeks ago. **Mendez, Loyola, and Sridian** are the special agents brought in. **Tanya** and **Jason** are private security hired by the sheriff's department.

Marissa Parson is the judge sitting the high-profile Pappadakis case. Her son, ten-year-old **Tommy**, suffered an attempted kidnapping that morning. Seems he has some psychic ability that Adam begins teaching him how to use. **Quentin Alexander** is the ex-husband who cares more for his son than his ex-wife does. However, he deals too regularly with crooks to have gotten custody.

The Telepaths' Guild

Edgar Stone is Adam's Watcher with an ultimatum for him. **Margaret** is Stone's twin sister and a strong teleporter. **Kara Chenoa** is Adam's traitorous ex-fiancée and in public relations for the Guild.

George Pappadakis, a local (and suspected criminal) businessman, is on trial for murder. **Lolly Gilman** is the mistress who was killed. **Marcia Josepha Garces** is Pappadakis' housekeeper who has tried to ignore what he does. **Lila** is the cook. **Bron Jones** is the gardener who tries to protect both women.

Garrett Fiske is a crook no one seems to be able to pin anything on. **Blair Sibley** is a psychopath that works for him; fortunately, he's in prison. They thought. **Keenan** is the man shot who knows nothing.

Basie is part of a theatre group raising funding by selling weapons. The **Python** is the big boss; people end up dead when they cross him. The **Booker** set up the kidnapping.

After the war, the world takes serious control of any tech. **Mindspace** is the space in which minds interact with the world, through a medium no one really understands.

The Cover and Title

The cover is a cobblestoned street in Savannah, a bright yellow light throwing Adam into shadow as he races across the cover in his flowing duster, a crowbar braced on his shoulder with psychic swirls surrounding him, as he desperately searches for a sign of Tommy. The title and author's name is in a deeper yellow while the series name is settled between them in white.

I think the title is what Adam feels like at the end, *Vacant* and alone, doing everything he can for the woman he loves.

Tamer Sadek says

Great fun but then I'm a sucker for books done in the first person.

J says

As much as I'm enjoying the series, the one thing that has been bothering me for a while now is the fact that no one ever mentions why addiction can't be "fixed", in a future where telepaths do everything from security to medicine. I understand that the main character's addiction is a driving theme/motivation, from page 1 of the prequel novella, but the main character's telepath training, "Structure/Deconstruction", is explained as people that know how to use telepathy to fix/change problems/issues with the mind, rather the physical problems that a different type of telepath deals with.

So... it would follow that the main character should know how to fix his own drug addiction, if not to do it himself, someone with the same training as he, could do it, depending on whether it's a physical or psychological addiction. If the former then the other type of telepath should be able to fix it. Either way, someone should know how to do it.

Again, I understand it's a main theme and driving motivation of the series, but if I'm understanding her description of telepathy correctly, it should be an easy fix for a trained telepath, but it never comes up in any

of the books.

?Misericordia? ~ The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?????? ✨*♥♥ says

On about our fav telepath and the world of the future.

Q:

“Don’t borrow trouble. Enjoy what you have now.” (c)

Q:

Sometimes a man needs to make his own way. (c)

Q:

“...The longer things pile up, the harder it’s going to be to get them sorted again.”

I recognized the thought patterns of a workaholic... (c)

Q:

The Guild told you to get lots of sleep and eat well. The Guild told you to scout out your surroundings and plan ahead, and know reality. At worst, they told you to build a steady sense of reality in stolen glimpses of other people’s vision. There were blind men at the Guild who saw just fine like that, through others’ eyes, through Mindspace and overlapping views of the world. But this—this was everything the Guild told you not to do. (c)

Q:

There’s a time to tell the truth, and there’s a time to lie. When you’re in the middle of a horrible tunnel and you can’t see and your mind is busily trying to take your senses apart one by one—and you’re with a cop of whatever stripe—this is not the time for the truth. Even less so when he’s faltering. (c)

Cory Rose says

Another great read

4th book in the series picks up shortly after the previous one. Focuses almost exclusively on Adam working a job out of town. Very little of any of the other characters I've grown accustomed to and was looking forward to seeing again. Still excellent and entertaining moves the story along nicely character and plot wise. Nice to be 4 books in and continue to see the characters grow and change and learn. No one suddenly becoming stupid or drastically changing personality. I think that is my favorite thing about these books, the gradual realistic character development. The storyline moves along too the relationship between Cherabino and Adam, both the personal and professional aspects continue to evolve. Overall another great read and will be looking forward to the next even more eagerly than this one. After having waited till midnight to read this the night of its release and read the whole thing through in a single night i can't complement or recommended this series any more highly than that.

Keikii Eats Books says

96 points/100 (5/5 stars!)

When Adam and Cherabino are on a date, they end up in a fight where the other participant later ends up dead. Now, Cherabino is the number one suspect - and her job is on the line because of it. Since Adam will

only hurt her case, he takes a job in Savannah with the FBI to protect a little boy - a little boy he has previously seen in a vision.

I really liked the book. If you've read The Dresden Files, Vacant was Mindspace Investigations' Changes. This was the book where the series starts to take a new direction. Things started moving that direction in Marked, and this just continues that trajectory. It was really good.

Adam's working with the Feds is just plain good. He does almost everything right and the way he is supposed to. He isn't given situations he had no business being in in the first place. When the scenario was tough, Adam is realistic about his abilities, he tells his superiors about his limitations, and he confirms they understand. I really, really liked the way this entire story played out.

The best part of the book was that people are respecting Adam. The hardest thing in the previous three books was how much people take out of Adam every single day. Sure, they are thinking less than courteous things about him, but people can't help what they think. The problem is, is that they have been working with him for years now, and they still hate him just for what he is. So, with this change of scenery, we find that not everyone hates Adam because of what he is. and that is so, so nice. I never want to go back, honestly.

This book was the most Adam and Cherabino have been have been apart, before. And, it is during one of the hardest parts of Cherabino's life. This was probably why I liked this book so much. Their relationship is just awful, for the both of them. Adam needs someone who likes him for him, and that is not Cherabino. The amount of complaining she has over who Adam is completely killing any enjoyment I have out of their relationship.

I really enjoyed reading this book. It was a lot of fun, and it left me craving more, even though I know it may still be a while yet before the next book is released. Please, more. I crave.

To read more reviews in this series and others, check out keikii eats books!

Jacqueline says

All 4 books in MINDSPACE INVESTIGATIONS are solidly turned mysteries with well rounded characters, and plots strongly driven by intimate relationships.

These novels are what I have termed Intimate Adventure, the hidden genre.
<http://www.simegen.com/jl/intimateadv...>

Telepath/detective stories were among my first introduction to the Science Fiction field, and I've never seen it handled better than Alex Hughes has done here.

If you haven't picked up this series yet, do start with the first book as the series is one, long, continuous story all about one strong relationship driving life choices, very much as Gini Koch's ALIEN series is.

Tracy says

4.5 stars

Ubiquitousbastard says

This honestly felt like a filler book to me. The main plot was just flat and uninteresting to me, while the overarching plot was exactly filler between the previous book and the next. The "romance" was tired and nothing new, especially for this series. If only that part of the books could just go away, I think I would be happier. I'm glad that there was less Cherabino in this book, but she was still there and beyond annoying.

Also, too much exposition, still telling me all about the world in ways that I really don't care at all. And the wording itself, wasn't that great. There were several instances where I stopped reading just because I didn't like the word choice or phrasing or just found it flat out annoying.

Okay, there were a lot of complaints, but overall the thing was readable and short. I also still enjoy a male protagonist that isn't Rambo at all times; it gives me something kind of new and gives the story a touch of realism. I'm also interested in the Fiske aspects and where that's going to go in the future. Plus, he's kind of awesome as an antagonist, just because it seems like he's at least a step ahead of everyone else.

Ian Cockerill says

Vacant is the fourth (and hopefully counting, according to the author's website we might get number 5 this year) of the Mindspace Investigations series. The books feel like urban fantasy but are actually science fiction. It has an ex-addict telepath consulting on criminal activities in a dystopian post-apocalyptic future. The apocalypse being essentially digital rather than nuclear in nature, so nobody has computers beyond a pocket calculator.

Suffice to say our hero is deeply troubled, is obsessively in love with his police partner and spends a lot of time in an angst ridden state. For all that these books are excellent. The characters feel genuinely real, although I still struggle to do anything other than dislike Cherabino, his partner and girlfriend-ish, but we all make mistakes, right?

Here the stakes are raised as the 'big bad' in the background takes a personal interest in Adam and Cherabino, while Adam is assisting the FBA in 'minding' the son of a judge who is being threatened during a high profile case.

A very decent mystery and a very good read. Let's hope that Alex Hughes ends her long hiatus and produces the next novel. I'll be there to read it when she does.
