



# The White Magic Five and Dime

*Steve Hockensmith , Lisa Falco*

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Much to Alanis McLachlan's surprise, her estranged con-woman mother has left her an inheritance: The White Magic Five & Dime, a shop in tiny Berdache, Arizona. Reluctantly traveling to Berdache to claim her new property, Alanis decides to stay and pick up her mother's tarot business in an attempt to find out how she died.

With help from a hunky cop and her mother's live-in teenage apprentice, Alanis begins faking her way through tarot readings in order to win the confidence of her mother's clients. But the more she uses the tarot deck, the more Alanis begins to find real meaning in the cards ... and the secrets surrounding her mother's demise.

Praise:

2015 IPPY Award Bronze Medal Winner in Mystery/Cozy/Noir

2014 ForeWord IndieFab Gold Winner for Mystery

"Cozy readers with a taste for humor will welcome this hilarious series debut . . . [and] will eagerly await the next installment." --PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (STARRED REVIEW)

"Hockensmith...and coauthor Falco deliver a charming comic mystery, which one hopes is the beginning of a series."--BOOKLIST

"[A] clever and compelling tale filled with colorful and engaging characters and a whodunit plot." --FOREWORD REVIEWS

"From the unique title to the cool cover, this book has it all . . . A+ across the board!"--SUSPENSE MAGAZINE

"Fun and light."--ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

## The White Magic Five and Dime Details

Date : Published July 8th 2014 by Midnight Ink (first published July 1st 2014)

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Author : Steve Hockensmith , Lisa Falco

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# From Reader Review The White Magic Five and Dime for online ebook

## A Voracious Reader (a.k.a. Carol) says

4.5

\*Book source ~ Library

Alanis McLachlan has not had a conventional childhood and it ended when she walked out on her mother. So she is understandably surprised when her mom croaks and leaves her everything. However, Alanis discovers, much like her childhood, nothing is ever as simple as it seems. Can she solve her mother's murder and get to the bottom of what she was up to all while keeping herself alive?

This is told differently. Almost like Alanis is talking to the reader. I love it, but a lot of readers may find it off-putting. There's a mystery to solve which is always nice, but her mother is a con artist of the finest order so it gets tricky, tricky and trickier. There's humor and horror (Alanis's childhood will give you nightmares), twists and turns, and the ending surprised me. I can't wait to see what Alanis plans to do now. Glad I have books 2 & 3 from the library. This should be good.

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## Lisa Shafer says

I thoroughly and completely loved Steve Hockensmith's Holmes on the Range series, so I was very pleased to see he'd been writing another mystery. I scarfed up White Magic Five & Dime the second it hit the public library shelves.

I was not disappointed. It's freakin' hilarious. (My favorite part is the tarot card reading given by the protagonist, who has no clue what she's doing. Now, I think a lot of tarot cards are very pretty, and I know a little about them, but Hockensmith's description of each card used in the reading scene ought to come with a "swallow first" warning, as the reader will undoubtedly spew/choke on anything in her/his mouth while laughing uncontrollably.)

This book is billed as a cozy mystery, but I think I'll term it "cozy noir" instead. It's a bit darker than most cozies.

The basic plot is that a 36-year-old woman whose real name might possibly be Sophie, but who chose the name Alanis at age 18, arrives in a small town in Arizona because her estranged mother (with whom she's had no contact for 20 years -- and flashback scenes let the reader know why) has been murdered. Alanis has inherited her mother's shop and apartment -- and apparently her teenage apprentice/flunky as well. Alanis' mom has been a con artist for decades, so Alanis isn't at all surprised her mother was murdered. However, she feels the need to find the killer. Naturally, there's a handsome cop involved in this effort.

So far it sounds like the average cozy, doesn't it? We have the female protagonist who falls within the correct age-range, the theme or hook (in this case, the tarot shop), a murder, the sexy cop who tries to protect/dissuade the protagonist, and the small town.

But, not only is this book funnier than any other cozy I've read before, it has very distinct dark elements.

Alanis was with her con-artist mom until she was a teenager; she is not particularly innocent. Her past is dark. She thinks nothing of breaking laws in order to bring about real justice. She does not trust people easily, and therefore, she never falls into the usual cozy scenario of needing to be rescued by the sexy cop or

other male figure. I liked this side of the book.

Downsides? Well, Clarice's side-plot secrets are incredibly obvious, yet it takes Alanis forever to figure them out, which is annoying. But that's about all I can scrape up.

This is a great mystery read: funny, mostly cozy, and just dark enough to break the mold a bit.

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## **Melissa ♥ Melissa's Eclectic Bookshelf says**

### **The Good:**

~Though this book didn't have what I typically consider a cozy feel it more than made up for that with it's wonderful quirkiness.

~I loved Alanis and her sarcastic personality. We get to know her little by little throughout the story and by the middle of the book I was completely in love with her character.

~It's no secret that paranormal cozies are one of my favorite genres and this one delivers without being too out there. Is there really something to the Tarot? Or is it all about the readers ability to read not the cards but rather the customer? I'll let you decide, but either way...it makes for a great addition to the story.

~Well written and incredibly entertaining, this one captured me from the first page and I was hooked until the end.

~The interactions between Logan and Alanis were priceless.

~It's also no secret that I love "woowoo," the Tarot card elements of this story fascinated me and have renewed my interest to break out the deck I bought years ago and learn.

~Lots of clues were sprinkled throughout. You may or may not guess who done it...but regardless you'll be entertained until the end.

### **The Not So Good:**

~I wish that we had gotten to know a bit more about the town and it's residents. Unlike most cozies, the town wasn't really a "character" in this one...I suspect though that in future books in this series we'll learn more about Berdache and the town folk.

### **Final Thoughts:**

This book was very simply so much fun. I can't wait for the next book in the series.

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## **Chrissie says**

This book was a quick read and had some very funny one-liners. The reason I am giving it only 2 stars is that the entire book was only one-liners. Since it is written in first person, it was impossible to connect with the protagonist and she had zero depth. How can you route for someone who was so consistently one-note? I felt like I was in the company of a smart-ass stand up comic who had nothing to say except one wise crack after another. The mystery solving part was pretty pedestrian and since I figured out (correctly) the 'who done it' halfway through the book, I was disappointed in the lack of surprise at the conclusion.

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## **J L's Bibliomania says**

*The White Magic Five and Dime (A Tarot Mystery)* is not a good book, but it is fun. Written by Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: Dreadfully Ever After author Steve Hockensmith assisted by SME (subject matter expert) Lisa Falco, *The White Magic Five and Dime (A Tarot Mystery)* is a nicely done puff piece of a cozy, complete with Tarot spreads. While much of the plot was predictable, the one-liners and amusing Tarot card descriptions frequently had me smiling. I particularly enjoyed the lighthearted descriptions of selected cards from the major arcana that appeared as chapter dividers.

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## **?Dani? ?Touch My Spine Book Reviews? says**

**Absolutely LOVED this book!**

A great start to a series!? Can't wait to finish it!? I highly recommend this book! It's more than meets the eyes!

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## **John says**

I'm truly ambivalent about this one. Setting and characters were done well, although I had some problems with the plot. Will probably read the second book for the psychic aspect of the series, as the co-author who handles that angle really did a good job in this one.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

Alanis McLachlan has not seen her mother in 20 years so when she is summoned to Berdache, Arizona to collect her inheritance she is very surprised. Her con-woman mother has left her *The White Magic Five & Dime*, a small shop where her mother has her tarot card reading business. Unsure what to do with the place she decides to temporarily open the store to try to figure out how and why her mother died. She assumes one of her mother's cons was run on the wrong person and she ended up paying for it with her life.

Dollycas's Thoughts

Alanis McLachlan (the name she is currently using) has quite a life which makes her a very interesting protagonist. Her mother has been a con-woman Alanis' whole life and as soon as she was old enough she ran away and left that world and her mother behind. Arriving in Arizona with a long list of unanswered questions she finds her mother had a teenage roommate. Did her mother replace her with this girl to help her with her con games? She hopes by reopening the shop and meeting with her mother's customers she may get some answers to her questions and find out who killed her mother. Alanis is very cynical but with her upbringing it is easy to understand why. She truly is a good person and wants to do right for a mom who really did a lot of things wrong. I was engaged by her story immediately.

The authors also gave us some great supporting characters. Clarice, who seems to be Alanis' mother's

apprentice, and Josh Logan, the officer in charge of her mother's investigation. The dialogue between Josh and Alanis is absolutely fantastic.

The mystery was well written and well plotted. All the information about Tarot Cards was very interesting. While this area of Arizona is known for psychics and its energy vortex the paranormal part of the story is very mild. Alanis starts out feeling it is just another of her mother's cons but the story has a nice twist that makes her question her theory.

I can't believe how quickly I read this story. I was captivated from beginning to end!! I can't wait for Book 2.

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### **K. says**

I received an ARC of *The White Magic Five & Dime* through NetGalley.

(3.5 Stars)

I expected *The White Magic Five & Dime* to be a good guilty pleasure read for yet another snowed in winter night and was happily surprised when it turned out to be less "guilty pleasure" and more "genuinely enjoyable." While the book's premise (young woman inherits new age shop from her estranged con artist mother, finds herself at the center of a revenge plot engineered by her mother's marks) errs a bit on the absurd side, Hockensmith and Falco manage to keep things reigned in.

The present-day predicament of Alanis inheriting her mother's new age gift shop and tarot reading business is interwoven with flashbacks to Alanis's childhood. These flashbacks lay the groundwork for Alanis's eventual estrangement from her mother, taking the reader through a series of increasingly high risk and violent cons. As much as Alanis strives to escape her mother, she finds that she carries pieces of her wherever she goes. Through this look at Alanis's history, Hockensmith and Falco are able to ask some tough questions about the role that toxic family relationships can play in shaping our personalities.

*The White Magic Five & Dime* had a good blend of humor and suspense - but was never downright funny or scary. If you read a lot of mysteries, you'll see several well-worn tropes in play, the majority of which are executed skillfully. Like most good mysteries, *The White Magic Five & Dime* feels familiar from the outset, but is never entirely predictable.

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### **Tim Hicks says**

Hockensmith? I'm in.

Tarot mystery? Don't care.

And indeed the tarot was very well handled and integrated.

Alanis is a smartass, and smart, and bold, and funny, and I want to see what she does next.

She starts in an interesting situation that gets more interesting as we learn more (with her).

The plot is surprisingly good for what looked like a generic small-townner.

Thoroughly enjoyable. Recommended.

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## **Cheryl says**

The White Magic Five and Dime by Steve Hockensmith with Lisa Falco

When Alanis McLachlan gets a call that her 20-year estranged mother has been killed in a botched burglary and she has inherited her mother's business in Arizona, she flies out of Chicago to assess the situation. Signing into the varied accumulations, she is also given the duty of the afters that follow death. Knowing her mother's wish for cremation, she nearly seriously asks the executor "Where would you go around here to pick up some charcoal briquettes?"

Yeah, it's one of those.

Set outside Sedona, where the vortexes are not as strong. Coming from a lineage of con artists, Alanis is hip to the sham and adept at playing dupe to get what she needs. Reverse con. Savvy from an upbringing of close escapes and constant lam life, she is street smart and super snarky.

Reading from a tarot lesson book by "Miss Chance", Alanis gleams some necessary information and we, some chuckles, as she attempts to restart the business she just inherited. As a (not so) bonus, the upstairs apartment comes with a roommate, in a teenage girl Alanis' mother was implementing in her scams. There are secrets both will divulge to each other after a testy span of trust-seeking.

Then there is hunky policeman who offers help and protection, a handful of inherited grudges, and a bevy of wrongs Alanis hopes to make right.

In her own backchannel method of seeking justice, the twists nearly vortex with comical dialogue before the totally unexpected climax. Hats off to this duo for that surprise.

I loved this read, just as I did *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies*. Now, to seek out the others.

Favorite line: "Churches were just competition working a different kind of con."

Page 74. Big LOL. Added bonus: Learned some tarot card tidbits

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## **Tara♥ says**

I picked this book up in a charity shop for 50c on Friday. Bargain says I! It sounded like something I'd enjoy and for that price how could I not? Yesterday I remembered to add it to GR and discovered that this was the first of three books. The other two books are not on kindle and they are €11 each on Book Depository. It's like Age Action Ireland and Steve Hockensmith have partnered up for some elaborate book selling con!!



Obviously I bought Fool Me Once (oh how ironic) and Give the Devil His Due

I really enjoyed this book. It was a quick, easy and a fun read and I picked it up in the first place because the Tarot element caught my eye and that was a really great part of this. I loved the Tarot back in college and me and my friend used to have so much fun with it. I personally don't believe that they predict the future but I've always liked the idea that they simply show you possibilities and I think that is reflected really well in this book. In actual fact combining it with the con artist element made Alanis discovering what tarot was all about even more enjoyable. Kind of a 'you can use your power for good or for evil' kind of thing.

The mystery was a little predictable but I actually enjoyed that as well. All in all this was a great find and I'm so glad I read it. Now I need the other two books to get here pronto!!

Also...

I may have done a thing...

I may have bought these in a cyber Monday sale...

I have the worst impulse control!!

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## **Leslie aka StoreyBook Reviews says**

Do you believe in White Magic? After reading this book you might...or might not. Alanis is notified that her mother has died and she has been left everything. Yet when she arrives in Berdache AZ, she finds things maybe aren't as cut and dried as it seems.

For some reason, I thought this book was going to be a cozy mystery. I don't think I would put it in that genre. Mystery? yes! Cozy? hmmm, borderline. However, that doesn't matter because this is still a GREAT book! I have always been fascinated with things like psychics and tarot card readers (and maybe one day I will visit one for a reading!). This book explained more about tarot cards and what each card means (or could mean) when chosen.

The characters were very real and there were flashbacks to Alanis' life growing up that filled in the gaps as to why she hadn't seen her mother in 20 years and what it was like being a part of a con artist's life as a child. There are twists and turns that I definitely didn't expect and the book had an ending that could lead to another book, or could just as easily end here as a stand-alone book.

Worth the read!

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## **Maggie Gordon says**

I went searching for books involving tarot and stumbling across this fun mystery. Alanis McLachlin (even she admits her teenage name choice was terrible) is the daughter of a con artist. When her estranged mother is murdered, she finds out she's inherited a metaphysical shop and decides she needs to solve her mother's murder. The book incorporates some basic tarot lessons as Alanis learns the cards (and is ever the skeptic). Hockensmith plays with a lot of tropes of the genre, giving them some new spins. Overall, a fun, cozy mystery that's great for a relaxing read. Will definitely be seeking out the rest of the series!

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## **Melodie says**

Really enjoyed this one, though it isn't really a cozy. Our heroine was brought up by her con-woman mother & her boyfriend. She ran away as soon as she was old enough to fend for herself and never looked back. After years of no contact at all, she's more surprised when she gets a call that her mother has died and left all that she had to her. Once she arrives in Arizona she finds that Mom's death wasn't "natural". She was murdered. Even though she had no relationship with her mother, she feels like she ought to try and find out who did her in. Along the way she meets up with some disgruntled clients and some not so "gruntled". Was a bit surprised with "whodunit", but it worked for sure. Looking forward to the next in this series. The tarot got worked in handily, too! Recommend!

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