



The Magician's Tale

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When the police find the decapitated head of a young man with the body nowhere to be found, they are stunned. They begin to piece together the clues and soon find out that the head belongs to Tim Lovesey, a handsome prostitute who worked in the seedy section of San Francisco called Polk Gulch. In this sexually charged neverworld, the police prefer to look the other way and chalk this up as another bizarre crime in an equally bizarre area of town, setting the premise for *The Magician's Tale*, one of the summer's most chilling thrillers.

Kay Farrow, a professional photographer who was working on a photo book about the hustlers in the Gulch, is the only person who seems to care about the grisly murder, and she proceeds to investigate further, hoping to get to the bottom of this strange crime. Kay, an achromat suffering from an extreme color blindness, possesses a unique vision that informs her world as well as sharpens her skills as a talented photographer.

During Kay's quest for justice, the search takes her back in time to an unsolved serial murder case. This case has many similarities to Tim Lovesey's murder, but the police proceedings are what strike closest to home with Kay. Her father was one of the officers on the case and due to police mistakes the case was never solved, resulting in Kay's father getting ousted from the police force. Kay's further investigation of the murder takes her to Tim Lovesey's "uncle," who tells her the interesting tale of Tim's magician past. Kay learns more about Tim's mysterious history and discovers how he was teamed with his twin sister in a magic act that lasted for most of their childhood.

Risking her life and everything she holds sacred, Kay must sort through the riddles of the past and present before she can uncover the truth in Tim's death. Along her search she faces potential mental and bodily harm as her colorless vision shows her shades of lust, greed, jealousy, and desire.

The Magician's Tale Details

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Alice says

The answer to the mystery is sick. Too sick for me to really stomach. Actually, its not just the mystery, its the background on the slaughtered character. And why I do think that the main characters ailment is interesting, its too bad that's the only interesting thing about her. Just blah, and too self aware, and just irritating.

Laura *crofteereader says

I think this book was a little ambitious. I really like the unconventional narrator: full black-and-white color blind photographer playing at being a private investigator (particularly when her disability is not only regularly acknowledged but a key part of the story). I like the setting: post-AIDS epidemic San Francisco in the LGBT street scene, with all the peculiar limitations of 90s life (landlines and payphones and lack of instant Google-generated gratification).

However, there are four distinct plots being interwoven: a 15-year-old serial killer cold case, a brutal copycat murder, several attacks staged against the protagonist, and the murder victim's hypersexualized and enigmatic sister. And while these do all end up tied together about 50 pages from the end (which made the actual end feel like such a drawn-out and unnecessary stretch), throughout most of the book these threads are so tangled up together that it's so hard to focus on whatever the present moment is.

I think I want to read the second book in the series mainly because I did like the way the protagonist and setting were handled and would like to give author David Hunt another shot.

Maureen says

This was gifted to my street library and was I book I probably wouldn't have come across otherwise. I found its sense of place appealing, though I have never been to San Francisco I felt able to sense its layout and geography, both human and environmental. The premise of a totally colour-blind photographer worked well and the descriptions of the people of Polk Gulch, the drug affected and alcoholic largely, were realistic to me. Perhaps the plot was a somewhat overwrought, but it was good diversionary reading, a murder mystery with a difference.

Jill Murrin says

The book was too long and drawn out, but I have to admit, it kept me reading because I wanted to find out who the murderer was. I even Googled it and read several reviews to see if someone who spoil it for me so I could stop reading.... but I couldn't find anything. I finally made it to the almost end, when I decided to start skimming the book until the killer was revealed.

There were some interesting characters and a side plot with a former serial killer investigation that might be connected to the main storyline, but overall, it's not really worth the time to read it. Too many things happening with not enough depth in most of the areas.

One good thing is how the author incorporated San Francisco as character. Also, couldn't help what imagine what SF was like in 90s before all the big tech companies made it almost inhabitable for people like the main character, etc. I wonder how this story would play out if it was re-written today.

If you do pick this up, and you're feeling how I felt about it and want to know who the killer is, just message me. ;P

Ann says

A complex story of sex trade business and police corruption.

Krait says

Set in San Francisco, *The Magician's Tale* is told through the eyes of a colour-blind photographer, Kay Farrow. After her favourite photographic model is murdered in what appears to be a street hustle gone wrong, Kay begins to use her street contacts to find out what happened.

The descriptions of San Francisco at night through black and white eyes is an eerily perfect description of this oft-times fog bound metropolis. And as Kay delves into the background of the victim, while trying to retain her street credibility, secrets slowly exposed about *all* the characters makes for an engrossing read.

Judy says

Picked this up at the Salvation Army, got about halfway through and set it down for three months with no problem. So, obviously, this is a book you can put down. Or at least I could.

The story is good enough, but I couldn't get into the writing, or at least the dialogue. Too much of it seemed contrived, as when the newspaper editor (Kay's former boss) calls her "kiddo" every other sentence.

I also found that I had a hard time getting into the reality of the story. It may be my experience as having lived most of my life in the Midwest, with San Francisco seeming like an exotic locale (even though I've actually been there a few times). In between the time I set it down and picked it up again, I read "Mystic River," by Dennis Lehane, and I found Lehane's portrayal of the neighborhoods in Boston was far more believable for me than Hunt's San Francisco.

Floor Flawless (Tussen De Boeken) says

Ik had moeite om me er doorheen te worstelen. Elke kleine alinea was een totaal andere scène wat ik erg afleidend vond. Sommige scènes hadden wat mij betreft weg kunnen blijven want die waren wel erg willekeurig.

Sergio says

Un thriller originale

William Witt says

A good read that held my interest. Logical with interesting characters that I almost cared about..

Kirsty Darbyshire says

Partway through this I thought it might turn out to be one of the most stunning mysteries I'd ever read but I felt it trailed off a bit towards the end and perhaps went on a little too long to achieve its full potential

The gimmick here is that the narrator Kay Farrow suffers from an achromatic eye condition which means that she can only perceive shades of grey and no colour at all. She makes her living as a black and white photographer and is following a group of street children and sex workers in San Francisco as material for her next book. One teenage boy she gets very close to turns up dismembered and Kay feels that no one will investigate his death properly if she doesn't.

This is a cracking story on many levels, great descriptions of San Francisco, some very interesting characters, a fascinating premise for the story and a central character with a disability that becomes part of the tale and isn't just a hook to hang a moral on. I'm glad to learn that Hunt has written a followup book *Trick Shot* that also features Kay as I'd like to see her again but this did feel very much like a standalone.

Bondama says

This is a drop-dead fantastic read, with a brilliant premise: the heroine is a photographer who, because of a genetic abnormality, can only see black and white: no colors at all. Spellbinding and really well written.

Nicolas Chinardet says

A thoroughly engrossing tale of murder and dark impulses. A real page-turner of a book, very nicely written with a endearing collection of characters. Some of the minor characters were particularly successfully drawn in my view. Hunt also manages to make San Francisco a welcome part of the story. I picked the book by complete chance and was most pleasantly surprised by it. I've order the sequel.

Bart says

The author's ambition exceeded his skill with this story which is overwrought and undertold. It's interesting for a good portion of its total length, but then the writer can't seem to quite bring it all home.

I would not recommend this to most people.

Jaime Robles says

A mystery set in San Francisco. It follows the case of a young gay sex worker, who was killed on the edge of the Tenderloin. The “investigator” is the man’ best friend, a young photographer. Born with achromatopsia, the most severe form of color blindness, the photographer finds extreme light debilitating, but her inability to see any kind of color allows her an oddly unique way of seeing the world, one in which shape and texture are the dominant ways of separating objects from their setting and from each other.

A shade kinky, but not repulsively so. Hey! It's a mystery.
