



Tricks of the Trade

Laura Anne Gilman

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When magic goes wrong, who are you going to call?

The name's Torres, Bonnie Torres, and I'm a paranormal scene investigator—rooting out the truth about crimes of magic. It's dangerous and boring and scary and fascinating. Though not everyone in the *Cosa Nostradamus* is happy we're around, which can make things...tricky.

Working two cases—looking into a murder for the NYPD, and a rich man's break-in—should be well within our abilities. But when things start getting weird in the Electric Apple, Private Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigations is stretched to the limits, trying to keep one step ahead and out of trouble. Add in rumors of a powerful creature gunning for us and it's not just our rep on the line this time—if we don't solve this case, everyone will suffer.

Fortunately, around here, when the going gets weird, the weird hire us....

Tricks of the Trade Details

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Author : Laura Anne Gilman

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From Reader Review Tricks of the Trade for online ebook

(Tori-Smexybooks) smexys_sidekick says

Originally posted at <http://www.smexybooks.com/2011/12/rev...>

Favorite Quote: "The world we live in isn't black and white...it's always been shades of gray "

Tricks Of The Trade is the 3rd book in Ms. Gilman's CSI like paranormal series-Paranormal Investigations. Heavy with criminal investigative lingo and procedures, this steady paced urban fantasy combines multiple criminal cases with personal crisis's to keep the reader well engaged to the end. Innovative world building coupled with rich characterization continues to improve as we enter the third book of this series. The team has added a new member whose magical talent isn't quite known yet but her administrative skills rock the office. Still not taken seriously by the Cosa Nostradamus or the human police force; the PUPs do the best they can in a political climate that is stacked against them. Bonnie and her team are given to two separate crimes to investigate which while dividing the team's skills, it brings them together in more ways then one. A fatae floater shows up in the river and a rich human's break in has the smell of magic all over it. Add in Bonnie's violent visions of the future, the sudden appearance of an ancient trickster and Bonnie and Ben's merging and you have all the elements for a inventive paranormal mystery.

While I thoroughly enjoyed the investigation and subsequent handling of the robbery (it's really diabolical) and the appearance of Robin the trickster, I did feel the fatae floater was an extra storyline that really didn't do much to enhance the story. Rather is it used to illuminate the problems the trickster is causing for the team later in the story. We see more of Ian and what exactly his talents consist of. He often handles the political schmoozing that is required between the Cosa Nostradamus and his company so it was a treat to see him play a more active role in the plot. Ian's crazy sister is also present and a deal Ian and she make when he asks for her help makes me wonder what Ms. Gilman has in store for this series.

Bonnie Torres continues to grow as a character with her easy going personality and increasing attraction to Ben. She begins to shed her more juvenile/free spirit aspects and starts to settle down. Though originally convinced the attraction is based on the merging of their talents, Bonnie and Ben both realize that the attraction was always there and the merging may be the catalyst that exposes it. A series of events solidifies this and I am very excited to see this move forward. The chemistry between them burns even hotter in this installment and it's impossible to keep it from the rest of the team.

While the rest of the team is present and accounted for, we really don't see as much of them as we did in the last book-Pack Of Lies. This story seems to revolve mainly around Bonnie, Ben, and Ian which leaves you sometimes feeling like you missed something when the scenes flash from the lead characters to the secondary characters without much warning. Plus, the switching back and forth between Bonnie and Ben's POV caused some confusion for me.

Al in all Laura Anne Gilman continues to write a solid urban fantasy series that may not blow you away but it does entertain and ignite the imagination..

Overall Rating: C

Marlene says

<http://www.readingreality.net/?p=3900>

I remember the smile spreading across my face the first time I read *Cosa Nostradamus* in Laura Anne Gilman's *Staying Dead*. The inside joke is of the type that is "funny always", because I'm still smiling every time I see it in the offshoot series, *Paranormal Scene Investigations*. The *Cosa Nostradamus* is never exactly translated, but I can make an educated guess. If the *Cosa Nostra* of Mafia fame is "Our Thing" then *Cosa Nostradamus* is "magic thing" or "magic family". Considering the way that the *Cosa* sometimes acts in Gilman's world, "magic Mafia" might be a valid interpretation.

Tricks of the Trade is Gilman's third book in her *Paranormal Scene Investigations* series. This is an offshoot of her *Retrievers* series, and it is set in the same urban fantasy version of our world as that series. In fact, Wren Valere, the Retriever, appears very, very briefly in *Tricks*, and the events of the *Retrievers* series serve as background for the *PSI* series.

Bonita Torres is the lead point-of-view character in *Tricks of the Trade*. In *Hard Magic*, the first book in the series, we were introduced to Bonnie and the rest of the PUPIs. PUPI stands for Private Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigators. And yes, they do get called "puppies". And pups. Which makes their bosses, Ian Stosser and Ben Venec the "Big Dogs". The PUPIs are all Talent, in other words, current users, in their 20s, with a special skill. Bonnie's skill is detailed recall. It's probable that all the PUPIs also have an incident in their past where the *Cosa's* lack of law enforcement failed them in some way. Bonnie's father was murdered, and there was no system in place for evidence to be gathered and presented to a justice system. PUPI was created to be that unprejudiced evidence gathering organization.

The *Cosa Nostradamus* has three branches; Council, Lonejack and Fatae. Council are the high-muckety-mucks, with power, influence and organization. Lonejacks are exactly what they sound like, they each work alone, and they rather aggressively want to be left alone. Fatae are the non-humans; fauns, nymphs, dryads, minotaurs, demons, and everything in-between. Some of them can pass as human, some can't, not even in New York City.

By the time *Tricks of the Trade* occurs, PUPI has been in business in NYC for a year. They are starting to get some regular clients, at least enough to pay the bills. The Mage Councils are starting to come to PUPI to solve cases for them, at least when things go really, really bad, and they have nothing left to lose. The Councils still believe that Council should solve Council problems, but it just isn't working for them anymore. The Lonejacks are beginning to recognize that PUPI might be what they say they are, in service of the facts and nothing more, nothing less.

PUPI serves order. There is a Fatae who directly opposes this. There are always Tricksters in every myth system. Loki, Raven, Coyote, Anansi, and Hermes are all Trickster avatars. There is a Fatae known as "The Roblin" who comes to New York City to foment chaos. It's hard for him at first. New York City is naturally chaotic, people mostly cope. Then he focuses on the PUPIs specifically, and all hell breaks loose. Not just with the cases they are working on, but with their lives.

Escape Rating A-: I was glad to have an excuse to re-visit Gilman's world again. In spite of some of the bad stuff going down, this is a version of alternate history I wouldn't mind living in, particularly if I were Talented. The idea that Ben Franklin was a mage is one I can't get out of my head--in a really good way. The characters are what make this series interesting. Each of the major characters is definitely an individual, and it's someone I'd like to meet. Gilman conveys the joys and frustrations of team-building so well, how everyone pulls together and finds a fit in this new "thing" they all get consumed by, that joy you experience when you find a job that gives you purpose and not just a paycheck--even when it eats your life.

Hard Magic and *Pack of Lies* maintained a tight focus on Bonnie's point-of-view. Not first-person-singular, but seeing the world from her perspective. It worked very well. *Tricks of the Trade* switched focus between Bonnie and Venec. There were reasons in the story for this, but the diffusion of focus lost something. I think it worked better when we stuck to Bonnie's POV.

I want the next book now! I was not ready to leave this world when I finished *Tricks of the Trade*. So while I was glad I piled the first three books up and was able to have a two-day binge, I'm kind of sorry that the next book, *Damage Control*, won't be available until Spring 2012.

And if you like urban fantasy and haven't read the *Retrievers* series yet, give yourself a Christmas/Hanukkah/Solstice present. Get *Staying Dead* and start now. *The Cosa Nostradamus* is waiting for you.

Katharine Kimbriel says

Tricks of the Trade is the third of the Paranormal Scene Investigations, as the publisher calls the urban fantasies about Bonita Torres, Talent (that's a human magic-user to you) and now a PUPI, a Private Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigator. That unaffiliated part is important, because Bonnie, her teammates and two bosses are trying to create something that has never existed before – people who evaluate the Facts of a magic crime, taking no side.

Less than a year into this grand experiment, there are a few people who grudgingly admit their skills might be useful, people (and I use the word loosely) who are deeply suspicious of the idea, and people who bitterly oppose their venture and are doing everything they can to undermine it.

This time out we have several things being worked on – a theft at a rich man's estate, a murder for the NYPD, and a fantastic creature who most certainly exists and will not be easy to stop. On the personal front, our team works at knitting their group together, dealing with prejudices from neighbors who aren't wild about weirdness in their burg, and the fact that whatever magical stuff is going on between Bonnie and her boss Ben Venec cannot be ignored or suppressed. Stosser and his angry sister are seen in action as the powerful, charismatic magicians they are, reckless yet solving problems, willing to lay their lives on the line for answers. We understand why Stosser cuts her such slack in their ongoing battle over PUPI's existence.

Bonnie and her cohorts are all twenty-somethings, and the things they learn about magic, and about human nature, hit with force because the first lessons are often the hardest. This time is no different – sometimes justice does not come from a court, and the group is both uncomfortable with that solution and accepting of their part in it.

If you enjoy the CSI style of story, if you like urban fantasy, if you like strong characterization, chances are you'll like this book. Don't read it as a romance (although a strong attraction is being fought in here) and don't expect the crime to be tied up in a bow. Nothing is that simple in a Gilman novel, and her fans wouldn't have it any other way.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

The third installment of the Paranormal Scene Investigations series, *Tricks of The Trade*, picks up a few months after *Pack of Lies* ends. The PUPI's have two new cases to work - a dead fatae found floating in the river and a break-in on millionaire row. Neither case is quite what it seems and the PUPI's, under the

guidance of the Big Dogs Ben and Ian, have a hard time getting to the truth of both crimes. To further complicate matters The Roblin, a mischief demon, takes an interest in the group, and Bonnie and Ben's connection in particular.

While the cases are presented almost immediately it seemed to take a long time for anything much to happen though once the PUPI's have a few clues to go on the pace picked up. The case involving the theft was especially intriguing with a great twist that gives this book a darker edge.

One of the things I particularly like about this series is the way the author naturally introduces and builds more detail regarding the world and the magic/current it uses. Part of this is accomplished by using an alternating narrative that is in the first person from Bonnie as well as the third person which allows us to observe and gain insight into the other characters and situations.

The appearance of The Roblin was an interesting way to force Bonnie and Ben to confront the issues the Merge have raised. Their relationship changes in this book which I was happy to see and I am looking forward to seeing how things progress in the next installment. I would have liked however for The Roblin to have made a little more mischief for the team than he did.

In the background Ian is still fighting for the team's acceptance with the Cosa Nostradamus, Aden makes a brief appearance and Wren, a character from Gilman's Retriever's series makes a cameo appearance.

I enjoy the combination of action and mystery with a touch of snarky humour thrown in with this series.

Once I was past the slow start I enjoyed Tricks of the Trade as much as the first and second titles. While I suppose this book could be read as a stand alone I think the back story from the previous two books are important to the enjoyment of the novel. I still hope to be able to read Gilman's Retrievers series which is set in the same world, though from a different perspective, soon.

Mike says

Another fun entry in a (can I still call it new?) new series. There's plenty of mystery and plot to go around, and the characters are growing and evolving. Best of all, the sexual tension between the lead character and her romantic interest is used to enhance the story not to replace it.

I'm really glad Laura can balance the romance with the plot. She's a wonderful storyteller and it's good to see that without losing it to a overly explicit relationship that makes you want to bathe in hand sanitizer. I first saw her work in a short story collection and when I saw the first book I had to buy it. When the sparks started to fly in some bedroom scenes, I admit to being a bit worried by it. Having been traumatized by Laurell K. Hamilton, who also built an intricate literary universe then really nuts with the naughty stuff. Fortunately, Gilman can maintain a balance between plot and romance. Not by being shy or restrained in depictions of her characters sexuality, but by treating her characters like real people who do have sex lives but also have...lives. This isn't a diatribe on how authors shouldn't put "indecent material" in their work nor would I suggest what kinds of material are indecent. I do want to say that this author has achieved a balance so that when she includes sexual encounters it doesn't seem like something lurid, but a cohesive part of the story she's trying to tell.

That being said, there were a couple of issues that kept me from giving this one five stars. The first is that at least one of the characters is getting the cold shoulder. One of the characters, nicknamed "Nifty", has been on the sidelines for two books now. Afflicted with a magical malady that can be contagious to people without

magic to protect them, he's been left in the office and out of the action for a large portion of two books. He seemed like an interesting character in the first book, and shows some promise, but is currently being used as a typical "heavy" despite other characters discussing his other talents and the depth of his ability. The second is the creature known as *The Roblin*. Various nonhuman entities, called *The Fatae*, seem quite afraid of it, and offer several warnings to the main characters. However, the threat is never realized. It's referred to a couple of times as trying to start trouble, but each of its attempts are ineffectual. It just seems that this creature could have been a greater threat or possibly an ongoing thread or subplot.

Interestingly, this series is set at the same time as Gilman's other series, *The Retrievers*. It starts with *Staying Dead*. Check it out. Follow along there to get some background on this series. There are a lot of backstory elements that are woven into the current series from that one. It's an fascinating tactic, and a fun one at that.

Laura says

When I feel an illness coming on (I'm a teacher--the kids give me lots of viruses), I usually choose a series and settle in. I found the first three books in the series at my library and began reading.

I really, really hate "forced romances." Honestly, love is difficult enough without forcing it. Either they like each other enough to take a chance or they don't. It's fine if people never act on their crushes. It's all part of the growing process.

The story itself was nice. It served its purpose of distracting me from sneezing, coughing, and general ickiness.

Thanks to GoodReads, I've learned there is a book 4. I'm debating whether I should go on ahead and buy it since my library doesn't carry it.

Lelia Taylor says

Tricks of the Trade
Laura Anne Gilman
Luna, November 2011
ISBN 978-0-373-80331-6
Trade Paperback

Who keeps the Cosa Nostradamus on the up-and-up, so to speak, when it comes to criminal events? Bonnie Torres and her colleagues in an elite crime-fighting unit, the PUPI—Private, Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigations—are dedicated to looking for the truth in magic-related crimes. Created by Ian Stosser and his partner, Ben Venec, PUPI is all about investigating crimes involving the Cosa Nostradamus, the community of magical beings, both human Talent and fatae, supernatural creatures. Talent and fatae coexist fairly peacably with each other and with Nulls, those unfortunate humans who have no magical abilities, but crimes do occur and our little band of Talent is frequently called in to find out the facts, the who, where, why

and how. Then it's up to the Cosa to deal with those facts.

Two investigations are on deck at the moment—a dead body and a theft. The dead body happens to be very non-human but clearly a murder and the theft is of a pair of seemingly innocuous articles after a home break-in that resulted in astonishing damage. Why did someone want the creature dead and what happened to the pocket watch and glass dagger? To make things even more difficult, why is a mischievous imp called the Roblin stalking Bonnie?

I have struggled to write this review but not for the usual “try to find something nice to say” reason. No, my problem has been that there is so much I loved about this book that I could easily get carried away and tell too much. What I will say is that I'm in awe of Ms. Gilman for her inventive mind, from all the different species of fatae to the properties and uses of current to the Merge going on between Bonnie and Ben to the vexations caused by a playful imp who brings new meaning to Murphy's Law to...well, you get the picture. After all, how can you resist a well-to-do Great Worm known as Madame who appreciates roses or a Wookie-like bodyguard named Bobo?

Suffice it to say, I love this book for its humor, the mysteries, the hint of romance, the sheer creativity. I've known of Ms. Gilman's work for years—she was quite popular in my bookstore—but this is the first time I've tried her and I can hardly wait to go back and start at the beginning of this wonderful series and the Retrievers series set in the same universe.

Reviewed by Lelia Taylor, March 2012.

Shelley says

Rating Solid 3 Stars

Genre Urban Fantasy

Review

Tricks of the Trade, by Laura Anne Gilman, features a group of individuals that have various talents that allow them to investigate crimes against the paranormal community and hopefully solve them without stepping on the wrong toes. These people are called the Private, Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigations unit, or PUPI's for short.

PUPI's are supposed to be an independent agency that looks into Cosa Nostradamus incidents, like murder, and mayhem, and solve them or at least find enough evidence to allow the Council to mete out justice.

**If you have read the first two books in this series, or the Retrievers series, you should be knowledgeable of what that Cosa Nostradamus is. **

The cast and crew of PUPI are; Sharon who has the ability to sense whenever people are lying to her. Pietr Cholis is an individual who whenever he stresses out, he becomes invisible like Retrievers who don't want to be seen while casing a joint. Nifty Lawrence is a former football player and built like a brick shit house. Nick is like Sharon in that they seek to have the leadership role in the ongoing investigations, and step on each other's toes in order to get there. Lou is the newest and oldest member of the PUPI's and is basically responsible for running the office while the others are doing their investigations. Benjamin Venec has the

ability to know when Bonnie is thinking out loud) and Ian Stosser is the secretive one whose own sister is a royal pain in the ass, and once cause the death of a young boy who was stuck in an elevator. Ian has been trying to get approval and standing from the Eastern Council which knows that the PUPI's are good, but since they are independent, they basically answer to no-one, and they hate that idea.

Bonita "Bonnie" Torres has the deep seeded background of having grown up around those who are on the Council, or group of individuals who determine the course of policies between Talents, and Nulls. She is obnoxiously perfect in her desire and drive to find out the truth. She also doesn't care who she sleeps with, be it man, or woman.

Venec and Bonnie can pick up on each other's emotions. Also, their current magic keeps getting tangled together without willing it to happen, something that is supposedly impossible. It's called the Merge; rare and annoying but something either wants. Where this merge takes them from here, is an unknown factor in how the rest of the team relates to them individually.

The PUPI's are given two distinct jobs to solve. The first job involves a floater, which nobody likes nor wants. Since Bonnie has caused waves recently with the Merge and the fact that she dies her hair funky colors, she gets stuck with this case with Pietr. This case is solved rather fast after facts lead back to the employer and disgruntled workers.

The other case involves a more complex, and disturbing case of a wealthy man who claims he was the target of a Retriever. It finds Ben at the center of a former client who asked him to find her son, only to later disappear. It also opens the series to the question of where the Old One's are, and whether or not Bonnie's vision of seeing Dragons in NY, will come to light soon.

If that wasn't enough chaos to keep the group busy, the Roblin, a supernatural prankster, decides to target NYC and Bonnie in particular. The Roblin causes all sorts of mayhem with vendors, buses and subways with people being stuck without any way out. The Roblin is a mischief imp, the grandfather of imps, and the grandmother of mischief, the child of chaos and boredom. I would have liked to see more of his interaction with the rest of the PUPI's.

For readers of the Retrievers series by this same author, we do have a Wren sighting. It was so brief, that I asked myself what the hell was the point of putting her into this story if she wasn't even a factor in the storyline? Then, I found myself wanting to go back to a certain book in that series, and find out when Bonnie arrived in THAT series to figure out why Wren called on Bonnie in the first place. I also found myself asking the author whether or not we will see anymore of Wren in upcoming releases of this series, or a return to the Retrievers in the future.

Overall, the pace of this story was well thought out, although I still want to see where the author is taking the whole Merge thing between Ben and Bonnie and how it will affect the rest of the PUPI's.

Publisher: Luna; Original edition (November 15, 2011)

*** Jennifer says**

I really love this series - the main character is extremely likeable to me, as are all the secondary characters. The mysteries/plots are solid and one just completely surprised me. I enjoy the writing style and the author

does, in my opinion, an excellent job with the chemistry between Bonnie and Ben. I'm bummed that I now have to wait for the fourth book.

Scooper Speaks says

3.5

Favorite Lines: "I don't think people are meant to share that much, that openly, without the option to say no. It goes against all our self-protective instincts, that loss of choice, and having to trust someone else to keep those private places safe." (p. 283, galley)

Tricks of the Trade is book three in Laura Anne Gilman's Paranormal Scene Investigations. As I've mentioned in the past, this series is the paranormal version of CSI. I've got to admit that I enjoyed this book more than the previous two maybe because I now feel comfortable in Gilman's urban fantasy setting. Fans of Gilman's Retriever series will notice its heroine Wren Valerie makes an appearance in *Tricks of the Trade*. Do not read this book as a stand alone. References to past books are made and the world building and paranormal sciences are laid out in books one and two.

The story is told in the first person from Bonnie's POV, but it occasionally changes to Bonnie's future love interest Ben Venec's POV. It was slightly confusing, but the first two books did the same thing and I gradually adjusted. I think it interrupted the flow of the story like a minor hiccup. The story would also jump to the third person as it followed a villain.

Tricks of the Trade is basically a mystery that shows the growth the PUPs have made learning magical techniques which mimic science. We are introduced to more knowledge about the paranormal world and its past, while the characters attempt to solve a couple of mysteries. Relationships are also explored as characters examine where and how they fit together or within the group as a whole. The character who showed the most growth through the series, however, is Bonnie.

I actually liked Bonnie more in this book than in the previous two. She's still fighting (kinda) the bond she has with Venec, but she doesn't seem as immature as I found her before. I like how she tentatively feels her way around Venec and admits her attraction to him without jumping into the bed with him. (That doesn't mean I don't want them to get it on!)

Tricks of the Trade is a great set up to book four. I'm looking forward to reading how and where Gilman leads Bonnie, her co-workers and boss. I think it's going to get dark and hopefully a romance will bloom. Usually the third book will turn me on or off of a series. I'm pleased to state this book makes me want to continue the series.

Scooper Speaks

Rebecca says

You can also read this review at [Reflections on Reading Romance](#)

I'm a huge fan of Laura Anne Gilman's urban fantasy Retrievers series, so I was really excited when she

began publishing the spin-off Paranormal Scenes Investigation series featuring Bonnie Torres. If you're a fan of CSI-type shows and urban fantasy, I think you'll really enjoy reading about Bonnie and the other PUPs (Private, Unaffiliated, Paranormal Investigations – pronounced puppies) as they investigate magical crimes. While I think you can follow the third book in the series, *Tricks of the Trade*, without having read the first two books in the series, you'll definitely enjoy Bonnie's interaction with the other investigators more if you start the series from the beginning.

The Paranormal Scenes Investigation series is very similar to an episode of CSI, if CSI were paranormal. Just as the investigators on the television show work on several different cases at once, there are three concurrent storylines in *Tricks of the Trade*. The PUPs have to investigate two crimes: one that forces them to deal with the NYPD when a floater is discovered in the river and the other helping the wealthy Mr. Wells recover his stolen objects. The floater turns out to be a dead fatae, a paranormal-type creature unable to use magic, while Mr. Wells is a Null, or a human being who is unable to use magic. In comparison, all the PUPs are considered Talent: they can manipulate current, a magical cousin to electricity that allows them to investigate crimes committed with magic. Mr. Wells is convinced that a Talent has stolen his trinkets and ransacked his home, although the investigation soon proves more complicated than it initially seems. The appearance of the Roblin, a mischief imp fascinated by Bonnie and her colleagues, is the third narrative thread in the novel and provides some mild amusement for the reader, although it's troublesome for the investigators.

While Bonnie and her colleagues investigate these crimes, she and her boss, Benjamin Venec, are fighting their attraction for one another. Their situation is more complex than a mere office romance, since their current is starting to merge, allowing them to speak to each other telepathically and sense the other's feelings. Both Bonnie and Venec resist the Merge, because they resent what they perceive as fate intervening in their lives and forcing them to be with someone not of their choosing.

While the plot comes across here as complex, in truth the mysteries unfold in a natural manner, and the writing is engaging and easy to follow. It may take you a while to fully understand the world-building if you haven't read the other books in the series, but truthfully you can enjoy the cases investigated by the PUPs with ease, a big selling point for any novel.

I also like the multiple points of view in this book. Bonnie's narration is all in the first person, but we see the other characters from the third person POV. I thought this was an interesting choice of narrative style, because you don't usually see that combination but it was clear at all times who was speaking and we got a little insight into what the other PUPs were thinking. I really like that we're able to see a bit of Venec's feelings towards Bonnie and learn more about his reaction to the Merge. I should point out that in the e-ARC I received there were no spaces to indicate changes in the POVs, so you'd be reading along and all of a sudden realize Bonnie wasn't the one speaking any longer. However, I fully expect this to be resolved in the final edition of the novel.

I find the paranormal CSI tone of the novel to be a lot of fun, and the concurrent storylines are easy to follow while keeping the action moving. My only real criticism is that early in the book Bonnie has a vision of the future that involves a sense of impending doom and a dragon, but the situation never materializes. I'm sure this is part of an arc that will appear in future books, but it was distracting, since at first it appeared that the vision was warning about the arrival of the mischief imp, the Roblin. However, it soon became clear that the Roblin has nothing to do with Bonnie's vision and nothing further is revealed. The vision was completely superfluous to the rest of the story, and it didn't advance any overarching themes in the series either.

That said, this is one of my favorite urban fantasy series, because I find the idea of a paranormal crime scenes investigation unit so much fun. I highly recommend this series to any UF or CSI fans!

I received this book for review from the publisher through NetGalley.

Stephanie Rinkel says

The format of the book I read is the eBook for Kindle. There were a lot of point of view changes and because it seemed to always be in first person at times it was hard for me to figure out whose story was being told. It is possible the actual paper book is formatted differently so that you can easily tell whose point of view it is but as I do not have access to the paper book I cannot make that determination.

Runningrabbit says

Ultimately, I've been disappointed with this book. At the end of the day, nothing progressed with this novel, just more of the same.

It was the same old continuation of the ongoing saga: the investigations were the same old, the relationships continued with the same old. There was no epiphany, no innovations, no new characters, no introductory concepts. That's a big NO, for anything injecting freshness into the series.

The story went on for way too long, dragging out the investigations to the point of boredom: because there was nothing, even remotely, different about it to keep you reading.

It will be a long time before I bother with the next novel.

Why do authors do this? A push from the publisher? Because it sure doesn't motivate you to buy the next novel.

Sonia Lal says

I enjoyed Tricks of the Trade. It's doesn't move at a breakneck speed, but it's not slow. It just kind of advances at a very steady, moderate kind of pace.

Tricks of the Trade is the third in Paranormal Scene Investigations. It's like a magic CSI: NY. Sometime between the last book and this one, the team got a new player and I really think Ms. Gilman ought to do a short story or two detailing her interview and subsequent disaster in the field (referred to by the characters, but not in any detail.)

This time they have two cases and Bonnie gets to investigate each in turn. One involves a robbery, the other a murder. The robbery is pretty interesting. ;) It's not quite what it seems.

Bonnie is more mature than in the last two books. She has seen so much, poor girl, it disturbs her. Her teammates have found out about her relationship with Ben, and yes, at the end of the book they even kissed! Nothing else, sadly. They have accepted their attraction to each other, and I think it had something to do with how the robbery case was resolved. ;)

An ending which, by the way, I didn't see coming. (I didn't see the ending in the last book coming, either). But it's pretty much the only way it could have ended. You can't really ask anything else of the perfect

ending. ;)

There is no information on what this Merge thing between actually is. Bonnie hasn't talked to her mentor/adopted father about it and I really think she should.

But the most hilarious thing in this book is that one of the bosses, Ian, apparently cannot parse evidence. He can't keep his own magic from tainting the evidence. And really that is the whole premise of the book - to process evidence like magical CSI techs. I just found it funny he couldn't do that. But his job is political schmoozing, so it works out.

Robin the Trickster also shows up in this story. My other favorite scene was when people are screaming because the train won't come, the shuttle won't come and people are screaming at the poor cops who telling them it will come, just be patient. The trickster is cackling to himself, and than some cabs show up to take the poor stranded strap-hangers to their destination. Robin the Trickster is baffled and decides to think up other ways to spread mischief in the city.

The weak point of this novel are the POV changes. It's not that they happen a lot, they don't, but sometimes the change in voice isn't clear. Different POV characters sound the same. Especially when they don't spend time talking to other people and the scene takes place mostly in their heads. I suspect that's why some other people were confused by the POV changes.

Kt says

Review originally posted on my blog: [A Book Obsession..](#)

Bonnie's still hard at work along with her fellow teammates working paranormal crime scenes to get to the root of the offense. They've slowly been able to establish some credibility, though nothing is ever easy as they are treading in untested waters. Working two cases at once shouldn't have posed a problem, but then some crazy things start happening and everything gets turned upside down. To make matters worse a faceless creature is loose in the city wreaking havoc and the team seems to be its latest target.

To be honest, Tricks of the Trade was a little overwhelming at times. There just seemed to be too much going on at once to really follow. Not only were there two cases, but there also was the Merge issue as well as another fatae mess stirring the pot. To make matters worse was that the pups kept getting switched around in their assigned jobs that it was too hard to keep track of it all. At times I found myself really frustrated to the point of losing interest. This was all with having the knowledge from the first two books on how things work. It would be almost impossible to pick the series up at this point without that foundation, and even then some of the magical aspects still baffled me. I think if one or two of the issues had been removed, the book would have been a lot more enjoyable, but as it was, things just seemed crowded.

Tricks of the Trade was every bit as much about the cases as it was the ongoing issue of the Merge between Bonnie and Ben. It is such a rare thing that they don't really know its full reaches or what to fully expect. That would be fine and good, and the mystery of it all would be quite interesting if that had been the only issue. However, both Bonnie and Ben are fighting the thing tooth and nail to the point of sheer stubbornness. He doesn't like not being in control, and she has major issues with relying on someone else. Every time they let their guard down they both relax and benefit from the connection, but in no time at all one or both panics and they are set back again. They seem to be using the poor excuse of the boss/employee taboo and its effect

on the team. But to be honest I think the team would rather have them shacking up and get things back to normal versus having the pair of them on such an edge all the time. It is really starting to effect their work, and they cannot afford that. Also, the lack of progress was just general frustrating to me as a reader. At this point I just want them to either get it on already or find a way to completely sever the connection. This hanging in limbo just might drive me batty.

While I can't say that Tricks of the Trade was my favorite installment, it didn't turn me off the series. I love the dynamic between the team members and the two top dogs, as well as the very intricate world behind it all. I think with a little less chaos and some forward progression in the romance area there is plenty of promise for the future. I'll be looking forward to seeing where things lead after the ending events of Tricks of the Trade as a whole new can of worms may have opened. It should prove to be an interesting ride.

Cathy says

Another strong entry in the series. I still really like Bonnie, she's a great mix of level-headed and fun. The science and magic mix of what the "puppies" are doing continues to be interesting and I still like all of the characters. And Bonnie finally met Wren, that was a long time coming! It's a small but long-anticipated part of the book for fans of Gilman's other Cosa series featuring Wren as the main character, the series where Bonnie was first introduced.

Stephanie says

Tricks of the Trade on Fangs, Wands & Fairy Dust

There are so many good things I want to say about this book and Laura's writing. First, it is truly intelligent. I have to look up words! I love learning new things so this is great. I'm not saying that you need a dictionary at hand but once in a while I do look something up. I think it's indicative of not writing to the Lowest Common Denominator. It's quality writing and quality Urban Fantasy with a mystery bent.

It is also one of the best thought out worlds I have come upon; with little or no discontinuity. Laura has an entire explanation for the existence of magic that is unique and so nearly plausible that it makes suspension of disbelief easy. Do you know someone who kills street lights when walking under them? They might be paranormal.

This is a second series within the Cosa Nostradamus Novels, The other series is The Retrievers. She also wrote the Vineart War Series.

One thing that I love about Laura's work is that she is expert with the backstory. With eight other books under the Cosa umbrella that's a lot of past. I think it's brilliant that includes in the fantastic and well-written prologue and the first chapters there is stuff that series fans don't yet know. It keeps that part of the book really interesting and makes me look closely at what I am reading.

Laura switches up points of view within chapters from Bonnie's first person to a more omniscient POV. The abrupt switch got a little confusing for me but made me pay better attention. This is not fluffy writing. The subject may be urban fantasy, there may be romance, there is always a mystery, but it is well-written and I can't be lazy or I miss a lot.

The characters are engaging, interesting, smart and fun. They are "Talents" or magic-wielding humans working in a world where humans have access to the knowledge of magic but many choose to ignore it. They work to get along, but sometimes they don't, but they are complementary personalities and different skill sets as necessary for the type of office and the book.

There are three main arcs: A murder, a robbery and a developing relationship based on some type of chemistry between Bonnie and her boss, Ben Venec. Ben sounds sexy as hell.

Bonnie is cute, maybe beautiful, and comfortable with her bi-sexuality, and just comfortable in her own skin. The dialogue is great. True and natural. There is some slang, but it works to make the characters so real you feel you might run into them on the street.

it's interesting that Laura Anne decided to make Bonnie bisexual and then makes very little of it. I think that is pretty classy.

As far as the mystery goes, usually I am pretty good at sussing them out. She also ties up the arcs in different places. So you get more than one climax and a little denouement in between. With this one I had the mysteries all wrong. I wasn't led the wrong way and then had a device pulled into the story, I just didn't see the end. I picked the wrong clues! The pace is well-timed; maybe a bit of a lag getting the cases going. I suspect that is more what real crime solving would be like; not a shoot-'em-up, car-chasing event, slowly moving forward until the clues reach critical mass.

I HIGHLY recommend this book and the series. If you already read the series it is an absolute MUST READ. I can't wait for the next volume! And, I plan to go back to read the Retrievers series as well. I just love these books and I am in good company—many reviewers feel the same way!

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Image by darknesschildsin via Flickr

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Kindle Edition: 543 KB

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VampireNovelFan says

Review posted to Your Urban Fantasy

The pieces are all there for Laura Anne Gilman's Tricks of the Trade. Your enjoyment will simply depend on your tastes as a reader. If you want mystery, there is tons of it. If you want mythical creatures, you get that too with a little comedy along the way. Basically, it delivers what it promises. Our protagonists are

detectives of the PUPI (Private, Unaffiliated, Paranormal Investigations) organization. It's supposed to be pronounced as "puppy", but my Kindle's text-to-speech doesn't seem to understand that. I'll let you guess what it sounds like instead, but I can say that I got in a few immature chuckles at first. Anyway, these detectives have magical powers which allow them to solve paranormal cases. Interestingly enough, electronics interfere with their magic use, so they can't use them. There are two cases: one is a murder mystery surrounding a murder/break-in, while the other looks to be an even bigger issue with an ancient creature targeting them.

To get to the bottom of everything they of course hit snags along the way, both professionally and personally. The POV switches between the main character, Bonnie, and her boss and reluctant love-interest, Venec. I usually don't read a lot of books that switch between POVs and I found it a little confusing at times. It may have been because the ARC I received was not formatted. The only way I could signal the change was the switch from first person (for Bonnie) to third person (for Venec).

This series is supposedly standalone. They are all from Bonnie's POV, though you get references to the cases in previous books. So on one hand you don't necessarily have to start with the first book, but on the other hand that means you may not be able to rely on a lot of development for supporting characters (aside from the slow going romantic development with Venec of course). Instead you will have to rely on the author's good story-telling abilities to make the cases interesting.

All in all, it's a solid read. I think I was personally in the mood for more of the world-building fantasy elements, which is why it wasn't that enjoyable for me. But as I said before, it just depends on your tastes. It's definitely worth giving it a try to see if it's your cup of tea.

ARC Provided by Net Galley

Harlequin Books says

Miniseries: Paranormal Scene Investigations

I loved this series when it first came out and would recommend it to anyone. So cool that is now available in ebook! ~ Kim

Maja (The Nocturnal Library) says

3.5 stars

Members of the Private Unaffiliated Paranormal Investigations (P.U.P.I.), often referred to as puppies, function extremely well as a team. A year of solving crimes together made them pretty confident about their skills and it allowed them to get to know each other really well. They even have an 87% success rate, something that Ian Stosser likes to mention as often as possible. Sharon and Nifty are still battling for leadership, but their power struggle doesn't affect everyday work. If anything, the strong competition makes them more focused and reliable.

Bonnie and Venec are trying to figure out their Merge and what it might mean for them, personally and professionally. They both realize that their compatible currents might be put to good use at work, but they are also too stubborn and possibly even too scared to explore the possibilities. Neither of them is the kind of person who can easily accept destiny, they both want to believe that they're in control, so they prefer fighting their mutual attraction instead of just surrendering to it. Of course, there's also the fact that he's the Big Dog and Bonnie is just a puppy, which means that their relationship might prove disastrous for the team. Bonnie's recreational, emotionless sex with Pietr doesn't really change things either way, but that's not to say that Venec's too happy about it. Big Dog can growl like nobody's business!

In *Pack of Lies*, we had the usual first person major point of view, but we were occasionally allowed to see things from Venec's perspective as well, and those parts were in third person, probably to avoid confusion. This time, Gilman takes it even further and offers more POVs: Venec's, Ian's, Nick's and Sharon's. While some might be uncomfortable with such a choice, and especially with the changes from 1st person to 3rd person and back, it was necessary because the puppies were divided in half, working on two unrelated cases, and obviously Bonnie couldn't be everywhere at once.

Bonnie is a really good heroine: she is smart, honest to a fault, self-confident and pretty good at what she does. I like that she's not in any way better than the rest of the team. Instead of focusing on a single character, these books focus on the actual cases and everything else, even romance (especially romance!) takes the back seat.

Book 4, *Damage Control*, should be released in Spring 2012.

For this review and more, visit [The Nocturnal Library](#)
