



# Beach Reading

*Mark Abramson*

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## **Beach Reading** Mark Abramson

Gay tourists are arriving in San Francisco by the planeload for the party of the decade at the Moscone Center, a tribute to a late disco star. On the same night as the dance festival, a infamous evangelist plans to bring his nationwide crusade against gay rights to the Civic Auditorium a few blocks away. Tim Snow finds himself caught in the middle when his activist friends plan a protest. For Tim, the fun-and the intrigue-are about to begin. Beach Reading is equal parts mystery and romantic comedy set in romantic San Francisco with a taste for adventure, a touch of magic.

## **Beach Reading Details**

Date : Published July 15th 2008 by Lethe Press (first published July 2008)

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Author : Mark Abramson

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# From Reader Review Beach Reading for online ebook

## Kris says

The Review:

Honesty from the outset~

I think because I'm not familiar - like not at all - with Castro in San Francisco I missed some of the nuances of this story and probably did not have the same appreciation for the setting that others, who do know it, will have.

Having said that...

First things first~

... what I liked most about Beach Reading WAS the real sense of community it portrayed. The friendliness, the chance meetings (which I will talk about more in a sec) and the fact that people look out for one another, were all aspects about Castro that came through clearly to the reader and, as I understand from the little bit of research I did, are 'true' characteristics of this part of San Francisco.

I, like the main character Tim, also enjoyed the glimpses of the history of the area and the history of gay activism, which were told through some of the secondary characters. I think this added to the reader's understanding of Castro and provided links between the past and the present storyline.

So, what about chance meetings? Beach Reading in many ways was all about chances, coincidences, connections and interactions; some brief and some long, but all of them meaningful in different ways. This was a theme that the author deliberately played with in the book. Although I admit a few didn't work as well for me as others, it was an interesting approach and integral to the progress of the story.

A couple of issues/warnings~

Beach Reading made me feel like I was ambling right alongside of Tim. There were times I had absolutely no idea where the heck we were heading and I wanted to pull him back on track, and there were other times I felt like I'd been smoking pot with him. I think this was done to give the reader a sense of Tim's character, but I didn't always like this style and there were occasions where I wanted to get out a red pen.

I came to the end of Beach Reading still not being sure who Tim was and left with the feeling that I knew more about the secondary characters than I did him. This may be because the author intends to explore his character in future books of the series. \*shrugs\*

Regardless, I do wish I'd found out more about Tim - more detail about the impact his past has had on him, his motivations, his expectations, etc - as he is certainly more complex than he appears to be. Given my curiosity, no doubt I'll be getting the next book, Cold Serial Murder, to see what else can be learned about him. (Utterly hopeless, am I. \*g\*)

My recommendation~

Although there are elements, this is not a romance or a crime/mystery per se. Instead it is a light-hearted bit of a romp through San Francisco's alternative and gay communities, which I'm sure some readers will really enjoy.

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### **Neet says**

This is a real easy read though not much of a mystery. The MC is Tim Snow a young gay man who now resides in San Francisco and is a waiter. Tim is trying to get over a broken heart from the break up with a fellow waiter at the restaurant where he works at. The owners of the restaurant also happen to be the landlords of the building resides in and also friends. Tim is also indebted to his Aunt Ruth, who saved him when he was tossed out of his home by his religious parents when they discovered he was gay (from a scandalous event). We meet different friends and people run into. It was an east read but as I said before no mystery. Tim seems to go through life in a marijuana induced haze with moments of lucid dreams which might be from the wacky weed, his so called psychic abilities, or his HIV medication. I will see if the second book in this series is any better.

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### **Sarah says**

Beach read? The bronzed naked torso on the cover suggests a little sun, sand and sex, but this was anything but. For me, the cover and the title are more than a little misleading. This was more of a drug fueled Kerouac-style wander around San Francisco's Castro neighbourhood than an erotic summer romp.

Tim, our protagonist is an HIV positive waiter who might be psychic but is more often just stoned. He wanders the town meeting random people and enjoying hook-ups with tourists and flight attendants. But while readers are treated to rambling psychedelic brain farts from the stoned Tim, we don't get any sexy details.

At the start of the book, Tim is anticipating some sort of dance/rave (maybe readers need to live in San Francisco to understand?) and the arrival of a homophobic preacher for some sort of Promise Keepers convention. And this is where the story becomes more of a moral lesson than a novel. Lines are drawn. Anyone gay, enjoying an alternative lifestyle and/or stoned is good. Anyone religious, or not living in San Francisco full time is suspect and most likely bad.

Even though this was published in 2008, it feels incredibly dated. Tim's insular, judgemental gay community doesn't belong to an era where a gay man runs Apple and married gay couples litter suburbia with their spoiled, gluten-free offspring. Tim's seemingly cavalier approach to casual sex as an HIV positive man is positively ice age. This feels like a 60 year old man writing in a 20 year old's voice and not understanding how much the world has changed in the elapsed forty years.

I haven't mentioned plot as I'm not sure there was one as such. Tim wants to go to the party and he wants to stop the hate preacher. Fate, new friends and his own personal links to someone in the preacher's entourage help him on his way.

There are some great character descriptions in this story, and I'm sure readers who belong to the groups and places Abramson writes about will be pleased with this homage to the Castro. But if the cover had you

expecting a sexy beach read, this is not it.

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Jon says**

While (anxiously) awaiting the fifth installment of the series, "Wedding Season" - I thought I'd go back and read the first, Beach Reading, which I never read before starting out with Cold Serial Murder and I'm certainly glad I did. It was nice to finally read how Tim Snow, Aunt Ruth and all the gang at Arts came together. I enjoyed the thrill of this book very much, especially the last 30 or so pages; again - just like all the rest in this series, Mark Abramson offers up a cast of characters and their antics without apologies - they are fun, silly, alluring, whimsical, engaging, reflective - just like normal people; but the, what's normal about life in the Castro of San Francisco? A fun, delightful read...

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### **jules0623 says**

It just didn't seem to go anywhere. Dull characters, rambling paragraphs that lead nowhere. I gave up at 40%.

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### **GothicGuru says**

Read the first three books in one week. Well plotted mystery, but really excels in character development including making San Francisco live and breath.

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### **Murphy says**

Great book, great mystery.

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### **Lee says**

Great story, wonderful writing, interesting characters, all set in one of my favorite cities, San Francisco, CA. What more could I want? How about a series of book all about San Francisco and everyone's favorite waiter, Tim Snow. Done, four in print and three more coming down the pike. I'm a happy boy!

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### **Don Bradshaw says**

This book was a nice piece of easy reading fluff. We all need a light book after reading some heavier books and this first book in the Beach Reading series provided it. The descriptions of San Francisco made me feel like I was there. The characters of Artie, Tim and Harley were well done and very likable. The ending left

the reader hanging just enough to look forward to the next book. Pick this lightly entertaining book after you've read something heavy.

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### **Shawn says**

A book claiming to be a mystery should really have a mystery at some point in the story.

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### **Chris says**

2.5 stars. Ok m/m mystery about a waiter in the Castro who spends a lot of time wandering around stoned and picking up guys. I did enjoy being able to picture the various locations mentioned. I didn't enjoy the rambling brain dumps from everyone in the story.

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### **Tom Ratliff says**

This is kind of an updated "Tales of the City"...new stories about San Francisco in the era of AIDS being treatable and never mentioning safe sex...a little scary. But a fun read, and there are supposed to be sequels...

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### **Jimmy says**

This was a fun and quick get away that I enjoyed just as much as the *Tales of the City* series by Armistead Maupin. Mark Abramson (M.A.) is able to make you feel, see, and hear San Francisco, as if you have always lived there. Tim is a HIV-positive (although he does not let that define him) waiter, psychic, and just getting over a relationship. But, with the help of his great friends, landlords, and bosses Artie and Arturo, they keep him supported. A helicopter is flying around with a giant disco ball advertising the celebration of a famous birthday party, but a sadistic and twisted evangelist has a powerful protest that same night. A courteous coincidence will lead two fantastic people into Tim's life. With the connection of his first love, his high school track coach, events are set in motion for Tim to do more than just hold a protest sign and shouting slogans. A wonderful discovery of Tim's is that younger men are not all bad, and with the pop-in of his French steward f\*!@-buddy, things stay steamy and hot, even as the fog rolls into the bay. (M.A. is smart to not describe every detail of the lovemaking. Your imagination is always so much better!) The truth of the book is realizing not only who and where you belong, but also where home is.

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### **Chuck Rankin says**

Finally I have come across a new author where the characters were not coming of age.

I enjoyed Abramson first in a series of historical story telling of the migration of gay men and women to the West Coast Oz. I have never visited San Francisco but tend to think that I have definitely "been there" with the various collection of books that have emerged to tell the story of why men have migrated and seek

"asylum" in the more normal world that was created around Castro Street.

Thanks for another version of San Fran history.

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### **Jim McCauley says**

I had high hopes of this book but unfortunately, nothing in it resonated as true or interesting. I found that I did not care about any of the characters and I was never so involved with the story that I had any investment in the outcome. Just not my cup of tea, I guess.

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