



New Tricks

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Former enforcer Mason would normally be concerned with finding ghosts and vampires stalking the Castro section of San Francisco. Fortunately, Halloween provides the perfect explanation for the abundance of ghouls. But someone is trying to possess his old flame, Sarah. Now, with the help of his magical dog Louie, Mason must uncover the black magician responsible.

New Tricks Details

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From Reader Review New Tricks for online ebook

Cathy says

I really like this author. He was a cop for 7 years and is a musician, and his experiences clearly inform the novel. I found Mason, the lead, to be very appealing both in this book and in the first in the series Dog Days. Those who know me will be unsurprised to know that I enjoy having a dog as a character! The magical premise is tight and believable. I would call it an urban fantasy, but it's not dark or depressing. I did find this book a bit more, um, simplistically? plotted than the previous novel, but still an enjoyable mystery and resolution. I would easily recommend this book.

Anita says

I liked the Harry Dresden vibe of the first book in this series, enough that I was excited to read this sequel. I was very disappointed. The plot seems recycled from the last book, and all the interesting characters get killed off. Why introduce so many new characters just to kill them all? At least keep a few alive to explore further in later volumes. Also, the hero, Mason, doesn't seem to grow much in this book. I'll still probably read book 3 to see if this series improves, but if the first book hadn't been a whole lot better, I'd be finished with this series.

Practitioners are dying, and a black arts guy is suspected. An old friend and his sister come to town to help track down the culprit, and as the investigation continues, the attacks escalate. Mason fails at romance, again. Yawn....

Stonemagpie says

This book is a little better than the first, but not by much.

I do love Lou, Mason's Ifrit, but he is by far the most interesting character... and he's the dog.

The biggest problem with this series is that there is nothing really new here and the characters are hard to connect with.

It's not a terrible book, in fact it's quite good in places, it's just very forgettable, I only read it a couple of weeks ago and I can hardly remember what happened.

James says

This was another solid addition to a series that is shaping up nicely. It is a bit slower, and more mundane in regards to magic in comparison to, say, Dresden, but it is a pleasurable read that doesn't fail to captivate.

It may not be an original or overly compelling plot, but it was well written, explored and presented and made

for a good read. These series so far (okay, I'm only on the second one) seem to be more stand-alone novels than as a part of a series. Yes, there is plot points that go through them both (i.e the barbed wired tattoo) but in general there seemed to be very little connection between the two bar the characters and locations.

There was a part where I struggled to keep going with the novel, but I will put that down to my tiredness rather than lack of skill in the book. On top of that though, I also found the 'final climactic battle' to be rather bland, and to be honest Mason doesn't seem like much of a fighter or magician - he did nothing noteworthy at all - and seems to survive on the antagonists lack of ability and judgement and his allies support.

This all seems as if I am disparaging the series, but despite what I have said this book still made for an entertaining read. I wouldn't specifically suggest you read it, but I will say that you won't be let down if you do.

Have fun reading.

Angela says

I was hoping that John Levitt's Dog Days novels would sharpen up their act with Book 2, and I am pleased to say that I wasn't disappointed. One of the biggest beefs I had with Book 1--our hero Mason's friends' annoying propensity to harp on him about what a slacker he is--was pretty much absent from this book. And there's nice mileage with Mason making music here, and of course, plenty of cute not-really-a-dog mileage with his Ifrit, Lou.

In this installment the crime that has to be solved is the mysterious draining of life essence out of San Francisco practitioners--one of whom is one of Mason's old girlfriends, Sarah. Mason and his colleagues Eli and Victor must figure out who's responsible, and the fact that a known dark practitioner from Portland has recently moved into the city seems like a suspect on a silver platter. This is of course Too Easy. A suitably alert reader won't have trouble figuring out who the perpetrator actually is, but a good bit of the substance of that revelation comes from Mason's own reaction to it, so it's okay.

Some of the side plots were the ones that were more interesting to me, though. Campbell, the healer from Book 1, makes another appearance here--and while I was initially disappointed to see her described as Mason's ex at this point, things are clearly not really over between them, so I'm pleased on that account. There's mileage with Victor having a potential steady love interest who actually contributes a bit to the plot, and it's pretty neat just to see the most competent and badass of Mason's colleagues being a gay guy. There are new theories thrown around about where Ifrits come from, and in fact, there are intriguing attempts to make new Ifrits that go horribly, horribly wrong and which have ramifications clear into Book 3.

Good fun overall. Four stars.

William says

I have enjoyed all the books in this well written series so far. It could be compared to the Dresden books by Bucher in some respects, though it doesn't have the heavy-handed firepower of a super powerful paladin, but it does have the added 'Man and his Dog' element, along with the main character's desire to get serious with

his music career, and a reluctance to get involved with his magic-user's group once again.

The character has a history that precedes the start of first novel, giving him some depth from the get-go. The novels have involved and detailed plots with interesting interpersonal interactions.

Leilani says

I'd like to give it 3.5 stars, but can't. Though I enjoyed spending time with these characters again, watching Mason be a musician and wander around San Francisco, and of course enjoying the company of Lou the Ifrit, it did get a little frustrating watching everyone keep their faces resolutely turned away from the blindingly obvious answer. The ending was still dramatic and interesting, and I was entertained all the way through. A good and quick read.

I noticed in reviews for the 4th that apparently that will be the last. Rats. I thought this setting had lots of promise, and really like the way magic works slightly differently for each practitioner based on their strengths & personalities.

Ian Cockerill says

I didn't enjoy this quite as much as the first in the series, but it is an entertaining read nonetheless. The 'hero' is an underachieving practitioner/guitar player, but is a nice take on an 'everyman' so easy to identify with, the magic is nicely written and this, overall, is a decent read.

On the downside the culprit is a bit too obvious to the reader (but no one in the book).

Still, I enjoyed the book and will definitely stick with the series.

Amber says

Unfortunately, this book was a bit of a disappointment.

First off, you should know the author uses "faster" and "quicker" as if they do not mean the same thing. As in Person A is faster but Person B is quicker. Which is annoying the both times he does it. I'm just saying..

Moving on, it was clear to me Jo was the mystery baddie back in chapter seventeen, a full two chapters before Mason acknowledge it. I wouldn't be surprised if more people caught on even sooner, as there were only two real suspects to choose from. After Mason realized there was no evidence supporting Bryon's guilt, I was confused whenever he continued treating Byron as a suspect. Nothing the author did painted him suspicious.

Later Mason decides Rolando's guilty even though (like the siblings with Bryon) Mason has practically no evidence. The hypocrisy actually ruled out Rolando as a suspect way before the big reveal, and while funny on a meta level it made every scene that Mason was convinced of his guilt slow and frustrating to read.

There is a lot of filler in this book as well. Several pages dedicated to two separate jam sessions with two different bands. I feel like Mason has been well established as a musician so spending pages describing him

going to work seems like a waste. Nothing important actually happens in those scenes. Also the whole ifrit subplot is not explain very well, and it frustrates me that Mason, who is well established as being ignorant to magical theory, happened to work out the origins of ifrits during an evening stroll. This is something people have supposedly been trying to figure out for centuries.

Also, though this is minor, this is the second book that mentions Mason's very important, very magical tattoo yet never even hints at its purpose/history. As of right now I believe it is a deus ex machina spell because that's what it was used for in this book. It is only mentioned two or three times, and I feel like the author doesn't even know what it is.

I thought the first book in the series had some interesting world building and I hoped this one would expand on that, but I was wrong. 2/5

Felicity says

I couldn't really tell you why I like these - they're straightforward formulaic urban fantasy without much in the way of bells and whistles - but I do. They're unpretentious, somehow and it doesn't hurt that the hero is likable without being smug or superhuman, the magic is well thought out, the characters are more or less believable and the whole is firmly rooted in a well evoked San Francisco and couched in straightforward prose with no bells or whistles. No, they're not great art, but they're not half bad for what they are.

Robert 'Rev. Bob' says

The first book in this series set up an interesting twist on the usual style of urban fantasy magic, and this sequel did a nice job of deepening that mythos without also falling prey to the mistake of ramping up the power levels. It's also refreshing to see a modern fantasy series that doesn't revolve around romance, although that did form an important aspect of this book.

All in all, I regret taking so long to get around to this book, but at least that means I've got two sequels waiting for me...

Rae says

Unlike the other book I started recently. I felt like this book held on its own. I haven't read Book 1 yet, and for once I didn't feel like I had to read it to enjoy it. Oh, sure - I probably missed subtle clues and references to the last book - but it worked out just fine.

Hopefully this means that it is a well-written book and not that if you read them in order, you'd be annoyed by repetition.

Interesting premise, interesting characters, not too-predicable plot twisting. A fun read all around.

Anne says

The main character was blind to a situation that was pretty obvious to the reader. Really annoying when it seems like a main character is too dumb to deserve surviving the final conflict. Plus not even the character is convinced that he is truly talented, not a shining endorsement.

I'll read the next one in the hopes that he recaptures that edgy, interesting feel of the first book.

Stan says

After reading the first book in this series, I was truly disappointed by this book.. First the spitual connection between Mason and Lou that was in the first book was missing in this book. Lou seemed more like comic relief. Second the book felt like it was written from an outline and there was little floe between sections. Third the bad guy was very obvious to everyone but the characters. If this was a first book I would have written off the series.

Josh says

A good followup to the first adventure of Mason and his not-exactly dog Louie, this one delves a little deeper into the magic and the world of "practitioners", which is Levitt's endlessly repeated term for wizards, witches, sorcerers, or whatever other term you can think of for a magic-user. (I found it a little overused, can you tell?)

Mason is a good lead character, generally, bringing an everyman sort of perspective to the whole thing. He's not the smartest or most talented practitioner in the world, but he's got a good heart, some serious musical talent, and most importantly he's got an Ifrit (Louie). It lets him screw up, get in over his head, and ask a lot of same questions the reader has, which is fairly helpful.

The major plotline is...ok? There's supposed to be a strong detective aspect to this one, but I spotted the whodunit fairly easily this time, and I'm not usually the best at it. Probably the bigger issue is that the entire cast are also pretty oblivious and as a result there's quite a few unnecessary deaths, which people feel bad about but don't really take a lot of responsibility for. The whole scenario is enough to drop the grade a little.

Still, it's fairly fun and there's a little more exploration into this world and one of the best aspects is several people trying to figure out why some people get an Ifrit and others wouldn't, along with whether someone can create one rather than just hope one appears for you. That asks a lot of interesting questions and explores what makes this world a little different from other urban fantasies. Plus, Levitt never lets Mason drift too far away from the music, which really helps keep the character a unique and interesting personality.

I'll keep an eye out for book three.
