

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming distinct geometric shapes like triangles and polygons. The overall aesthetic is modern and digital.

Magic for Liars

Written by Sarah Gailey

Published by cns-cabarete

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Magic for Liars

By Sarah Gailey

Magic For Liars By Sarah Gailey

Sharp, mainstream fantasy meets compelling thrills of investigative noir in this fantasy debut by rising star Sarah Gailey.

Magic For Liars Pin

Ivy Gamble has never wanted to be magic. She is perfectly happy with her life—she has an almost-sustainable career as a private investigator, and an empty apartment, and a slight drinking problem. It's a great life and she doesn't wish she was like her estranged sister, the magically gifted professor Tabitha.

Magic For Liars Review

But when Ivy is hired to investigate the gruesome murder of a faculty member at Tabitha's private academy, the stalwart detective starts to lose herself in the case, the life she could have had, and the answer to the mystery that seems just out of her reach.

4 stars!

It might take a little while to get there, but I'll tell you everything, and I'll tell you the truth. As best I can. I used to lie, but when I tell you the story, you'll understand why I had to lie. You'll understand that I didn't have a choice. I just wanted to do my job.

This was a fun read for me! 1. I got to read something that's completely out of my comfort zone - sci-fi and fantasy (with a bit of mystery) 2. I got to buddy read this with my husband!

Ivy is a detective but right now 4 stars!

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This was a fun read for me! 1. I got to read something that's completely out of my comfort zone - sci-fi and fantasy (with a bit of mystery) 2. I got to buddy read this with my husband!

Ivy is a detective but right now the extent of her work is only being hired to find out if someone's spouse is cheating on them. Ivy is like any normal person and she has a family but her sister is a little different than yours and mine. Ivy's sister Tabitha was born with magic powers and is able to make things happen with spells, etc.

One day, Ivy gets called in on a special case and it just so happens to be a murder at her sister's school who she hasn't seen in many years. She sets up to move there, and into the dead person's apartment no less, and has to stay on campus until she figures out what happened. She interviews students, staff and even tries to reconcile a bit with her sister. Through her interviews she starts to put the puzzle pieces together. She both is and isn't shocked at all the parties involved in the end but the reasoning behind it really hits home...

I gave this book a 4 star rating and my husband gave it a 3.5 star rating. We both enjoyed multiple aspects of this story such as the detective storyline and the sister relationship that somewhat evolved during the story. I also enjoyed the family story that came about within this book. The author touches on the family story throughout the book and you can see how Ivy and Tabitha's actions today translate to what has happened to them in the past.

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I'm glad I took the leap and decided to read something different from what I normally do again. I think the magic aspects of this book were still a little too outside the box for my liking (again just personal preference) but I actually came to enjoy most of the story and the meaning behind it while also opening my imagination.

This was a great debut by Sarah Gailey and if this sounds like something you'd enjoy then definitely pick it up! It releases June 4th!

Thanks to Tor Books for my ARC and finished copies of this book. ...more

Magic For Liars Goodreads

"The Magicians meets Tana French" so hey I haven't actually read either but both sound like My Shit(TM) so yeah this needs to release and be in my hands immediately please serve w morally black characters

Magic For Liars may be set at a school of magic, but we're on notice from the very first page that this is not THAT kind of school:

Now they were all downstairs at the welcome-back dinner, an all-staff-all-students meal that marked the end of the first week of classes. They'd joke there about house-elves and pumpkin juice -- or at least the freshmen would. By the time they were sophomores, that vein of humor was worn beyond use.

After a bloody murder at Osthorne Academy for Young Mages (located in Magic For Liars may be set at a school of magic, but we're on notice from the very first page that this is not THAT kind of school:

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After a bloody murder at Osthorne Academy for Young Mages (located in the vicinity of Sunol, California -- less than an hour's drive from San Francisco or Oakland), private investigator Ivy Gamble is called in to help solve the case. Magical authorities have deemed it an accidental death due to a spell gone bad, but the school's headmaster thinks there's more to be discovered... and since Ivy is the non-magical twin sister of a professor at the school, she seems to be the right choice to lead the investigation.

The assignment at Osthorne is fraught with tension and high emotional stakes for Ivy. She and sister Tabitha have been estranged for years, really since Tabitha was selected to go to an elite magic school when they were teens. Their paths diverged sharply from that point onward, and the two have never managed to reconnect, especially in the aftermath of their mother's death while Tabitha was away at school.

Now arriving at Osthorne, Ivy sets out to solve the murder while also trying to understand who Tabitha is now, and who she herself might have been if she'd had magic too. Ivy's journey is painful to witness, as she drinks herself through her tumultuous feelings every night and lets herself become consumed by the mysterious death and the suspicious undercurrents at the school

I love Sarah Gailey's writing -- I loved it in the American Hippo books, and she's totally on point here as well, conveying the otherworldliness of the magical world while rooting it in a grim and grimy reality that has more than a shade of noir to it. What magical school doesn't have a library with weird and dangerous sections? Here at Osthorne, Ivy hears:

... the books murmuring to each other like a scandalized congregation of origami Presbyterians. Isn't that delicious?

Some other choice bits:

Across the bay, San Francisco bled money like an unzipped artery.

Magic for Liars

.... and

The drive through the Sunol hills was as beautiful as the novocaine that comes before the drill. Certain magic school tropes makes appearances too -- there's a Prophecy and a Chosen One, for starters, as well as the more mundane clique of popular girls who flutter around the central Mean Girl and all sorts of relationship drama, both appropriate and not.

The plot zooms along quickly, and sometimes reality can be a slippery thing. Ivy's investigations are often clouded by the magical elements around her, but even so, she applies her skills and street smarts to get to the shocking truth. The resolution is pitch-perfect, and even though I guessed at the outcome ahead of time, that did not detract at all from the impact and the shock when the answers are finally revealed.

Magic For Liars is, plain and simple, a terrific read. Don't miss it!

Review copy courtesy of the publisher via NetGalley. Full review at Bookshelf Fantasies. ...more

Magic For Liars Amazon

Magic for Liars isn't what I expected it to be. I had impressions from other early readers that it would be along the lines of a murder-mystery in Hogwarts, which turned out to be less-than-accurate. Instead, Magic for Liars is about the lies we tell ourselves, and each other. It is about the disastrous things that result from these lies, no matter how well-meaning they were, or how innocent they seemed.

It begins with the gruesome death of a staff member at The Osthorpe Academy for Young Mages. Magic for Liars isn't what I expected it to be. I had impressions from other early readers that it would be along the lines of a murder-mystery in Hogwarts, which turned out to be less-than-accurate. Instead, Magic for Liars is about the lies we tell ourselves, and each other. It is about the disastrous things that result from these lies, no matter how well-meaning they were, or how innocent they seemed.

It begins with the gruesome death of a staff member at The Osthorpe Academy for Young Mages. After an investigation by the authorities concludes the death a suicide, the heads of the Academy are unsatisfied. Enter Ivy Gamble, PI. Ivy isn't like her sister- she isn't magic and she doesn't want to be. Though she spends most of her days following cheating spouses or investigating insurance fraud, she is reluctantly convinced (namely, by a large sum of cash) to re-investigate the death at Osthorpe.

Ivy Gamble is a hot mess and an absolutely fascinating character. She is morally grey from head to toe and maybe a little bit out of her depth, but at her core intelligent and trying her best. The story unfolds entirely from her perspective as she sleuths around Osthorpe, allowing herself to slip in to Tabitha's world. There is some time given to the magic in this world as Ivy peeks into classroom and gets to know staff, but there isn't a deep dive into its limits and intricacies. This seemed to be a sticking point for some readers, but I never found myself bothered by it. The narrator of this story is non-magical, so it felt right that we only had topical glances at the various subjects via Ivy's encounters with them. Their relationships and interactions drive this plot forward without losing any of the atmospheric tension you'd hope for in a good mystery. It beckons you forward page after page and doesn't let go until the very end. I found myself hanging on as I came approached to the conclusion thinking there was no way it was possible, skimming through previous pages making sure I hadn't misread the the final discoveries because I couldn't fathom how it could be. This book doesn't give you that feeling of satisfaction that comes at the end of a typical mystery novel: the evil-doer unmasked, justice is served, our grizzled protagonist reflects with contentment on another case solved. No, the end of Magic for Liars is fucking devastating. It is devastating and brilliant.

While this book sits firmly in both the realms of mystery and fantasy, it subverts both. The evil in this book does not manifest in the form of a sadistic killer, nor is it a dragon to be slain. Ivy Gamble is not our hero, nor is this the story of her redemption. She arrives at Osthorpe Academy as a deeply flawed person, and eventually departs in similar form. We don't get to see her redemption. The choices she

Magic for Liars

makes throughout her investigation are not always good, sometimes even amoral, and some of them will even make you uncomfortable. You might even see a little of yourself in their choices.Â

I received a copy of Magic for Liars from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. ...more

This time was going to be different. This time was going to be better. This time, I was going to be enough.

Like so many of us readers, Ivy Gamble never had the chance to go to magic school and experience a magical fix for everything wrong in her life. Unlike most of us, she's not really allowed to put the dream aside and move on with life - her twin sister does get that, from her teenage perspective, and when this story begins years later, she's now a hard drinking, hard living PI, who resolute This time was going to be different. This time was going to be better. This time, I was going to be enough.

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And of course, it's not long before that world comes knocking on her door - in the best of traditions, there's been a murder, and it doesn't take long before the shimmering promise of a perfect, magical, life is within Ivy's reach once more.

Of course, it's not that easy, life is messy no matter who you are, or which laws of physics you can temporarily suspend. But it's the way that Sarah Gailey deconstructs the dream that makes this such a great book - she's realistic but not uncaring with her characters. Illusions aren't ripped away, but instead gradually removed - it still hurts, but they're given time to not be altogether unprepared. Each and every character feels real - flaws ranging from the mild to the serious, but mixed with the positive in a way that rings with authenticity.

All in all, a great idea, executed masterfully, and a very good book. ...more

Magic For Liars Epub

Books that are billed as "like The Magicians" are never like The Magicians in the right ways for me, but this is both like The Magicians in that "magic is actually kind of weird and gross and real" way, and it's a compelling whodunnit besides. The solution was perhaps a tad obvious, but the emotional weight with which the mystery is treated "it is deeply rooted in the characters' past traumas and dysfunctions and insecurities" made that matter less. The narrative voice is arresting, and the noir atmosphere is well-handled. In short, a pretty darn good debut, and significantly better than the similarly pitched *An Unkindness of Magicians*. ...more

Ahoy there me mateys! I received this fantasy eARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. So here be me honest musings . . .

I was excited to read this full-length novel from the author who brought us hippo cowboys. This is a murder mystery set in a magical school. Ivy is a professional PI that spends her time investigating cheaters and such. She has always been upset that her twin sister got the magic and glory and she got the grit and mundane. But this murder mystery could be the step that takes her to the next level. Ahoy there me mateys! I received this fantasy eARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. So here be me honest musings . . .

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The positive things that made me finish the book were:

- I loved the hippo books so much for their characters and world-building that I gave the author the benefit of the doubt.
- It had a very nice set-up. I was highly engaged by the premise. I expected the overall journey to be worth it.
- I liked some of the practical magic on display. I particularly liked how healing magic worked.
- I enjoyed the characters Rahul and Mrs. Webb.
- There is good use of romantic consent in this book.
- There is some nice diversity in the book.

Magic for Liars

While those things keep me reading, the world-building and plot made it harder and harder to finish the book. Unfortunately, there were major issues that made this an unlikable read for me.

- The Main Character - Ivy is a woe-is-me drunk who makes bad choices all the time. The sympathy from the beginning is destroyed by her desperate and slightly pathetic choices. She makes ridiculous decisions and then tries to justify how they work within the investigation. She also uses the investigation as an attempt to play-act her life as a magician. Someone was murdered and she wants to play make-believe. It was odd.

- The Other Characters - I didn't really love any of the characters besides Rahul and Mrs. Webb. And those two weren't particularly unique despite their enjoyability. After the hippo books, I frankly expected more.

- The Magic - I liked the practical, if silly, uses for some of the magic (like all the magic of Rahul) but how it works is never actually explained. Also there is no real indication of what adults do with their magic other than teach. Why do the magicians hide it from the world? Is it used for the greater good ever? It seems from this book that magic seems to be used for things like protecting the coffee machine from students and for the students to pass notes to each other. I wanted more insight into the rules of magic and the uses that were only hinted at.

- The World-Building - I feel like neither Ivy's life in the "real" world or the school are truly set up as actual places. They felt kinda like a two-dimensional film set only without the visual clues. The suggestion of parts taking place in Oakland or Sunol seemed irrelevant to the story.

- The Chosen One trope - This felt shoe-horned in. There is never a good explanation of what being the Chosen One actually means or what the consequences are going to be.

- The Romance - While Rahul was my favourite character, the romance subplot stalled the action and was pointless. It did not need to exist at all.

- The Murder-Mystery - I knew immediately who-dun-it so it came down to wanting to know the whys and wherefores. And I found those to be lackluster and stupid. I get why the characters made those emotional choices but frankly didn't care. It just all seemed so melodramatic and pointless for no reason. And how the solution was exposed was silly.

- The Ending - One of the worst endings ever. Ivy made two horrible and ridiculous choices. The author decided to leave the ramifications of the case and the effects on the students and staff are not discussed. The book ends in such an odd fashion that I thought there might another book coming. Nope. This be a standalone.

The author includes lots of dark topics in this book and then never explores any of the actual life consequences of such choices. She ends the book with no closure or realistic ramifications. Instead

Magic for Liars

the entire plot felt more like a facade for Ivy to realize that a) her problem is herself; and b) for her to fall in lust.Â Shame because I wanted to like this one.Â Unfortunately it must walk the plank!Â Arrrr!

So lastly . . .

Thank you Macmillian-Tor/Forge! ...more

Magic For Liars Audiobook

Thank you NetGalley and Macmillan/Tor-Forge for this arc.

I wish I enjoyed this read more than I did. It sounded like it would be right up my alley. But it just missed out for me. I was so irritated with Ivy's self pity through out the book, that I was tempted to give up by 37%. I found it to be a slow read as it lacked the tension I usually find in murder mysteries and I had a tough time connecting to any of the characters. There was plenty of teenage angst and drama (as expected for a story set Thank you NetGalley and Macmillan/Tor-Forge for this arc.

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2.5 stars rounded up. ...more

This review can also be found on my blog!

I received an ARC from BookishFirst in exchange for an honest review!

CW: murder, abortion, cancer, alcohol abuse, and bullying

For me, this was a case of coverly love that turned into more intrigue when I read the First Look that BookishFirst gave.

Ivy Gamble is a private investigator. Usually, she looks for cheating spouses and other little things like that. But, one day, someone comes knocking on her door. Thereâ€™s been a murder at a magic school that her This review can also be found on my blog!

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Magic for Liars

that. But, one day, someone comes knocking on her door. There's been a murder at a magic school that her twin sister, Tabitha, teaches at. Despite her reservations about magic and the tense relationship the sisters have, Ivy decides to take it.

Let me tell you, this was a fun ride. I haven't been so absorbed in a mystery in a while! Ivy was a very fun, flawed main character to read from. I loved that there was such a deep past for her that developed more as the story went on. I also loved that it showed a difficult family relationship with so many complicating factors included.

The mystery was also spectacularly woven. There were so many twists and characters that could have done it that I wasn't sure where to focus my attention on. In the end, I was pleased with what it turned out to be. It was the last thing I expected, too! While I think that some might feel it's a bit of a lackluster ending, I thought that it really worked for the story. It was hard to read, but it was still something that I enjoyed.

One thing I wish was clear in the book is that it deals with cancer. I might have avoided the book or done a few extra things to mentally guard myself if I had known that. It wasn't terribly described, but having a family member pass from cancer a month ago, it would have been nice to have that as a warning. It's a minor critique, but I want it to be clear in my review since I didn't see it anywhere else.

There are also queer characters in this book! While they're not exactly main characters, they're there and I loved reading how seamlessly they were included by the author into the story. No fuss about it, either. It just was the way it was and no one found it odd, which is what I love my queer content as.

Basically, y'all need to pick this book up! It was a very enjoyable read with beautifully flawed characters and a mystery that kept me hooked the whole time. I can't wait to see what comes from this author next and if these characters will be revisited anytime! ...more

Magic For Liars Barnes And Noble

A thrilling, thoughtful, funny, cutting, and heartbreaking mystery. Like Harry Potter meets Mean Girls by way of Broadchurch.

3.5 out of 5 stars

I received this copy from the publisher via Netgalley in an exchange for an honest review.

Ivy Gamble is a small time private investigator who deals with mostly, disability fraud and spouse cheating cases. Today, however, the local school of magic has approached her to investigate the death of a teacher, first ruled an accident. The principle of the school suspects that it was actually murder, and she can't sleep until she gets a second opinion.

Ivy need the money, and the notoriety 3.5 out of 5 stars

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Ivy need the money, and the notoriety. The problem is, she'll have to confront her estranged sister. The sister she's been jealous of for a lifetime, for getting to be magic while Ivy was just ordinary. It's not just her sister she'll have to contend with though, it's a whole league of people she doesn't know how to interact with. People born to magic, who use it for such trivial reasons. She'll have to manage her anger, on top of solving her first murder case.

Sarah Gailey's strength is definitely in characters and their development. Ivy's internal struggles are deeply relateable. Her interactions with people she's uncomfortable with, and her attempts to hide her own magic inability, make for a fascinating look into the human psyche. The plot was fairly straightforward for a murder mystery. Gailey dabbles with a couple of red herrings but in all honesty, I had the mystery figured out far before our awkward PI did.

I'm left wondering, does Rahul give her a chance to explain? We'll never know though as this is a stand alone novel. Some mysteries never get solved. ...more

Magic For Liars Enamel Pin

I gobbled this up in a day and that readability and the premise are definitely the strongest pieces here. It's a mystery set at a magic school, I mean come on. I was sold immediately. The overall experience was good, but not great.

Because our protagonist was non-magic, it allowed Gailey to handwave over some of her world-building and some of the rules of magic. I was mostly okay with that while reading-- Ivy didn't understand things so we didn't understand things. After reading, I was more aware

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The story was also super repetitive. We follow the main character Ivy closely, and get a lot of her thoughts about being a fish out of water inside the magic school. It could've been tightened up a lot. I liked her reflections on her decisions-- on the way that she was acting out a part with a confidence she didn't feel. I didn't think we needed to hear over and over the specifics of her feelings toward her sister or her resentment etc. Once established, the reader can carry that and connect the dots for themselves. Overall, I did like Ivy, though.

I don't think the identity of the murderer was particularly shocking. I did think it was a nice gray area motivation, however.

That said, I wanted to warn against some representation/content things. There are two queer couples in this story. (view spoiler)[The first are teens who serve as minor background characters. Then, the murdered woman is a lesbian. And the murderer is her partner, though again it was an accident. I just figured it was worth mentioning that the prominently feature lesbian couple are murdered and murderer. (hide spoiler)]

I'm sad to leave behind the potential of this world and this premise, to be honest. I enjoyed it while it lasted but I'm not sure how much will be memorable. ...more

The book opens with a graphic murder scene where Sylvia, a professor at Osthorpe Academy whose body lies in two separate pieces on a blood stained carpet.

Ivy Gamble is a private investigator that usually specializes in typical cases like cheating spouses and

disability fraud. Everything changes when Ivy is called to investigate the death of a professor at the local magic school. The death was ruled as an accident, but the headmistress (who prefers to be called headmaster) is convinced that foul play is at hand and seeks out Ivy for a second consult. The book opens with a graphic murder scene where Sylvia, a professor at Osthorne Academy whose body lies in two separate pieces on a blood stained carpet.

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While Ivy is a bit hesitant about pursuing the case, the money and the potential exposure is too good to pass up even if her estranged sister Tabitha is one of the professors on staff as well. Tabitha may have been off studying magic instead of trying to save their mother who was dying of cancer, but Ivy would have to look past her anger and resentment in order to crack this case—her first murder case.

The first half of this book had me hooked. I was drawn to the idea of solving a murder mystery at a magical academy, especially when this book was compared to *The Magicians*, which is one of my all-time favorites. While I enjoyed watching Ivy immerse herself into the investigation and build rapport with the other characters in the book, I definitely found her character to be a bit trying at times since she tends to adopt the “woe is me” mentality. However, watching the animosity and mistrust between Ivy and Tabitha slowly start to peel away was refreshing, since I love siblings trying to come together especially after tragic circumstances.

One thing that I wish this book focused more on was the magic. The magic tends to be more in the background of the story rather than at the forefront. I would say that the murder mystery is definitely the main focus of the story, but the author had the opportunity to really build the magic element more. There’s definitely some in this book, but I wanted more.

As Ivy delves further into the investigation, the twists and turns in the case definitely kept me interested. But what made this book 3.5 stars instead of higher was the ending. I just felt that this story had a lot of potential and was the tension had the perfect build, but the ending felt rushed and was a bit of a let down for me.

Thank you Bookish First and Tor Books for the ARC. This did not influence my review. All opinions are my own. ...more