



The Gift of Illusion

Richard Brown

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An ancient evil has returned to continue the study it began over a century ago, and it's looking for volunteers. Isaac Winters is the perfect test subject. He's a detective with a damaged past, and something to prove.

On the night of his wife's murder sixteen years ago, which left him a single father, Isaac thought he had seen the worst mankind had to offer.

Until now.

It moves like a virus from person to person, carefully selecting its next host, and leaving a trail of incinerated bodies in its wake. There are no witnesses and no evidence except for a small statue of some unknown figure. Accompanied by a partner short on experience, Isaac must uncover and defeat this faceless villain before it takes from him the greatest reminder of his dead wife. Their daughter.

The Gift of Illusion Details

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From Reader Review The Gift of Illusion for online ebook

??™ says

"Illusion is the first of the pleasures." - Voltaire

when his wife Linda was murdered sixteen years ago, Isaac Winters was left with a daughter to raise and protect. as a detective for the Elmwood Police Department, he has seen his fair share of man's dark side as well. nothing prepares Isaac though for the biggest case of his career when bodies end up as piles of ashes all over his town.

surreal is one word to summarize how i generally feel about this book. bizaare events take place after a young girl finds a small stone statue in a park and i kept guessing as to how these could have been triggered. i thought the story was going to deal with the strange phenomena of spontaneous human combustion but i was proven wrong. it was more than that.

author Richard Brown's characters are battling with inner demons and emotional scars. i think these served as a catalyst for the evil to take root once more and claim its stronghold. the protagonists were like beacons attracting negative forces into their lives. unknowingly, they paid a price for it and i find this concept frightening.

the story rolls smoothly from its double-fisted opening to its dramatic conclusion. i found the latter, however, too abrupt and open-ended and somehow reminded me of Poe's House of Usher.

the Gothic elements that were included were unexpected but i loved how they were integrated into the story. overall, i liked the book despite the characters' too ready acceptance of the supernatural. i only wished that more detail was given to the Illusionist Lucius' life. his gift of illusion still boggles me but it is an offer that i would never ever want to accept.

Gmr says

My first taste of this book drew me right in. The opening scenes of a crime in progress committed against our lead character and his family is attention grabbing, no doubt....it's the next chapter that created a bit of confusion for this reader. There's this time jump...not futuristic as in Scifi-ish, but just "X" number of years...that left me feeling disconnected from the story. I wasn't certain who was who anymore and why we were learning about them...it was like the reception I get on my cell in the one building at work, interrupted to the point of extinction.

Now don't fret dear readers, that wasn't the end of my journey...have I ever given up before on a book I've started? Nope....so I plowed ahead, hoping for the best with a small sliver of fear of the worst stuck in my back pocket. What did I get? In the end, a story that fell somewhere in between the two extremes and you know what, that's A-okay. Issac Winters (our main character) proved to be a good father, an upstanding detective who would get the job done no matter what, and a good friend to those who needed one. All this was accomplished despite his past...a past that refuses to let him be; such is the case when dealing with unwanted emotions or situations and the death of a loved one is traumatic enough let alone the aftermath. The path is full of pitfalls for this character and shadowy at best as far as the final outcome of his actions, but you can count on it to be interesting. I like the fact that the author built him as a thinker as well as a doer; it

played well in many a scene.

The (for most of the book) unnamed terror is horrifying to say the least. If you harbor a fear of fire, you may want to read this one in good company because the victims tend to meet their end in the belly of that particular beast. The trail of carnage continues to grow as the story progresses until the big reveal in the final fourth of the book....and what a reveal it is. I don't want to spoil it for you, so I'll avoid any details but be prepared for a ghastly finish. That's not the only part to watch for though. As we learn about the town's history, we are exposed (hmm...interesting choice of words there that popped into my head considering the events I'm dancing around right now) to the macabre performances of a master illusionist...or psycho, take your pick. No, seriously...the "shows" that he'd put on usually involved mass bouts of nudity, torture and finally death....think Interview with a Vampire (the movie) where they basically end up with a group feeding on stage while the audience doesn't quite know what to think. O-O Suffice it to say this person wasn't exactly making friends in all the right places but he was making money at an astonishing rate (go figure, right?)allowing him to continue improving his show....the details of which are somewhat morbid but very intriguing, certainly a well thought out back story (which reminds me, I don't want to be in this author's head...~whistles~).

The supporting characters all have their roles to play even if only for a short time. I do have to wonder though about one particular guy that is given a rather pivotal role towards books end, but we barely get to know him throughout the text. He seems very minor, almost an accessory but then POOF...big finish. Gotta say it left me wishing for more on that person's history even though the story didn't center on them...but it did well in showing how you never really know who will impact (there I go with the word choice again) your life.

Regarding the storyline, I have to say it...I saw many threads of a particular movie starring Denzel Washington throughout the story, but the twist at the end moves it away from that scenario just enough to allow it to be a close comparison but NOT a replica. Speaking of that twist, the mastermind behind the evil happenings was certainly the product of a vivid imagination. He was quite life like and while his reasoning was out there (to say the least) you could still see where he was coming from (just can't say I'd agree with him....nope, definitely not) and why everything fascinated him so. The human spirit is a funny thing; ever so fragile on the outside, but on the inside, a force to contend with. The limits of it are not specific to the human race, but rather the person and just what pushes our buttons too far varies much like our personalities. An interesting concept to explore....just not quite THIS way... O_O

A few random points to make, and I promise I'll draw this performance to a close. There are a few instances of foul language, but nothing too extreme or long playing. There is one particular choice in descriptive terms that could offend some readers around page 85...it just seemed like an ill fit when considering the rest of the text but if you gloss over it, the rest of your journey should leave you unscathed. One thing that did irk me just a bit...not enough to stop reading mind you but enough to mention....the way things were described in general, or rather not. Numerous times in the story there are elements of the current surroundings being described...the detail to which it reaches comes across almost like a schematic. For example, there's a scene that takes place in a theater and the entire room is described from the number of steps before the stage to how many boards the pews were made of. To me, it seemed unnecessary to lay things out quite so exact. It wasn't like it affected the events about to take place, or played a role in the plot later on...it simply was a case of good intentions (sharing everything with the reader) getting the better of the situation and running away with

the show.

On a lighter note, there were several areas where the authors turn of phrase worked remarkably well and it left me dog earring a page here and a page there. One particularly stunning point I'd like to make note of occurred on page 184...its a vivid description of a delapidated mansion belonging to...well, someone to note. Suffice it to say if it was on the market today, I doubt many of you would jump at the chance to move there. This is an instance where the author let his limited words speak for him thus allowing the readers imagination to take flight and create those shadowy scenes in their mind's eye...definitely a plus.

In the end, though I wasn't blown away, I was entertained even if it was tinged with morbidity and sometimes that's all you're looking for. There's nothing wrong with a scary story now and then, right? Just make sure it's not a dark and stormy night at home alone when you go for THIS one. Reading recommendation for me would go to older teens and adult readers due to some of the content mentioned (don't want to scare the impressionable little kiddos).

Sarah (Workaday Reads) says

Isaac is a police detective haunted by the murder of his wife sixteen years ago. When he catches a mysterious case involving a little girl who burned to death, things get serious. Isaac must figure out what evil is destroying lives before it takes the one he considers most precious: his daughter.

This was not really what I expected, but it was enjoyable in a sad and scary sort of way. The story opens with the story of the death of Isaac's wife. It is easy to see why Isaac is haunted by it. It's a heartbreaking story.

The story then jumps to Lori, a little girl who is being bullied at school. Her story is also heartbreaking. The worse part is that she is going through it alone. Then comes evil, and poor Lori's death.

I found Isaac's character to be one of the only fully developed ones in the book. Everyone else is secondary, and seemed to easily fade into the background. Even the villain, who I can only describe as evil, pales in comparison. I think that is mostly because the villain doesn't have a real identity until near the end, he is more like a case of demonic possession.

Overall, this was an intriguing horror story. I wouldn't suggest reading it at night by yourself, but it is enjoyable.

Paige Bradish says

So i won this e-book on Sunday. I started reading it Monday morning, and finished it around 8 PM last night. That's pretty quick for me considering im a slowish reader. Anyway I really loved this book, and i actually emailed the author telling him i loved it which was awesome. I could not put this book down the whole time i was reading it I could not put it down. When i first found out about the book it was on someone else's blog, and i read the description, and i was like wow this sounds really good. So when i got it i was so excited to read, a couple of times i almost cried there was a couple of sad parts. I'd have to say my favorite character

had to be Issac i loved that he had such a tragedy happen to him in the past, and he was still working and he still had like a smart alec tone to the way he talked to some people especially his partner Simmons. I was really sad that he died by the way because he was really starting to do good. But i'd rather him die then Amy, because you know that just would of crushed Issac. A part that really freaked me out was when Issac put the gun to himself. Oh man i knew that he really wasn't going to do it but it still made me nervous that he would. I'm glad that he didn't do it he's a great character, and a really really great dad. I can't wait to read more of Richard Brown's Work!!!

Darlene says

I received this e-book for review from Bewitching Book Tours as part of the author's virtual book tour. I did not receive any compensation for my review, and the views expressed herein are my own.

Isaac Winters is a police officer, whose wife was brutally murdered in their home. Although Isaac was shot, he survived the incident that claimed his wife and their infant daughter was left unscathed.

Sixteen years later, local residents in Elmwood are dying in a mysterious fashion: The bodies are completely incinerated and turned to ash. As the pieces of the strange puzzle come together and Isaac's daughter disappears, he realizes that the past has come back to haunt him.

Brown does a great job in bringing the "creep" factor to the story, which is certainly frightening.

****SPOILER WARNING****

A malevolent evil invades a person's body and takes over them. After the evil has transferred into another host, the previous one dies gruesomely by a fire burning from the inside which I gather is like spontaneous human combustion. This evil is known as Lucius, an illusionist whose "gift" is death.

Back in the day, Lucius held "shows" in an underground chamber of his mansion, to which people flocked for entertainment. Lucius kept people imprisoned in cells and would torture them, and the audience would often participate in these morbid shows. At some point, members of the audience invariably became the ones being tortured and the vicious cycle went around and around. Didn't the townsfolk wonder where all the people were going and what was happening? How is it that Lucius was able to get away with these shows for so long? Did he brainwash the audience into not speaking or revealing what took place?

I found the history of Lucius interesting, although dark. He truly is twisted and sadistic, but I'm not sure if I really grasp an understanding of how Lucius's "spirit" so-to-speak has been able to survive for so many years. The only clue seems to be this small statue that is found at each of the crime scenes. I may have missed it, but I didn't understand how the statue seemed to disappear from each crime scene and then re-appear and new ones only to disappear again. And how is the statue tied to Lucius?

Brown does a nice job building the story, but I felt as though the ending was a little too abrupt. I still have unanswered questions about the story, and I'm left scratching my head wondering at the parts that weren't neatly tied up.

MY RATING: 3 stars!

S. Burke says

Author, Richard Brown opens this his debut novel with a sharp kick.

Detective Isaac Winters... relives the memory of the night 16 years before when his beloved wife Linda was murdered by an intruder. The intruder shoots and almost kills Isaac... before shooting Isaac's wife Linda four times in the chest. Isaac manages to save his baby daughter, and kill the intruder: then spends the ensuing 16 years punishing himself for not being able to save his wife.

The author has a gift for description, which he utilizes to full effect in these opening scenes.

We are then taken on a journey into the bazaar, where nothing and no one is what they appear to be. The characterization of Isaac Winter is well fleshed out, his guilt and his attempts to continue protecting his now teenage daughter are made clear.

This is a man you care about enough to want him to not merely survive, but to do so happily.

The apparent murder of a young girl by fire, and the subsequent death of her mother and her father send Detective Isaac Winters and his reluctant partner Daniel Simmons into a world of confusion and doubt.

The deaths appear to be 'Spontaneous Human Combustion' with no accelerants or any other form of fire implements being found at any of the scenes. A pile of ash, and a remaining limb or part of a body is all that remains. That and the same small, carved statue found at each of the scenes are all they have to go on.

More disappearances, more incinerated bodies and the reader is given an insight into the evil force controlling the entire situation. The body count grows.

Enter Veronica Maples an author of a non-fiction work titled "The Illusionist." Ms Maples sees a sketch of the statue in a newspaper and is stunned to find it matches a photograph used in her book.

She brings the book to the attention of Isaac and his partner. I found the ability to suspend disbelief a little strained at this point...the plot is very good, however the calm acceptance shown by the Detectives at the writers claims seemed out of character for the men. Especially given the cynical point of view attributed by the central character of Isaac up to this point.

Apart from that small jolt, the story moves along at a good pace, a few instances of less than pristine investigative techniques displayed by the seasoned cop and his not so young partner don't distract the reader sufficiently to spoil the remainder of the book.

It is a good read; the author has a command of description and dialogue that hold it together well. The horror scenes are well handled and not over the top, the paranormal elements are skillfully crafted.

The ending is a little rushed for me, however not enough to spoil a good read. All in all a debut novel that shows descriptive skill, and a talent for storytelling. I will be interested to read more of Author Richard Browns work...I believe he shows real talent here.

Mir says

I wanted to like this book more because of the good beginning but even though I got drawn in from the start, the excitement slowly went away.

Now, I'm totally on board with things supernatural mixed in with the "normal" contemporary world but in this story it did not reach its full potential.

The beginning didn't seem to have much to do with the rest of the story besides sucking us in, the tragedy being described so well. Sure, the trauma shaped Isaac but not really to the point that it would have helped him with the investigation nor did the killing and killer have ties to the rest of the story - not enough in my mind at least, not enough to make Isaac behave differently from most other people in the situations that he found himself in.

The villain of the story left me wanting more. Richard Brown created the beginnings of a really evil psychopath with so much potential, described some things in great detail (the maze of a mansion, the underground "office" etc.) but could have done more with the bigger picture, adding some more explanations, back-story and depth to the utterly sick human (and ghostly) being that Lucius was.

I do love the way Richard Brown writes though. The book was easy to read, which for me is a must for good thrillers that are page-turners you simply can't finish fast enough (in a good way!).

Read2review says

**** For the full review please check out www.read2review.com ****

The story starts with Isaac witnessing the death of his wife and saving his daughter Amy. Not much more detail is given in the opening part of the book so I was left wondering what is going on and what will happen next.

The next chapter is set 16 years on when a series of horrifying deaths take place, each person dying the same exact way as the one before. The death like virus transfers to a different person through touch and the previous host then dies.

The only thing that is left as a clue is a stone statue. Once Virginia is introduced you are pulled in to the disturbing and horrifying world of Lucius. Until this point I was quite happily reading the book and was getting into it. However when the graphic details were introduced I had to put this book down as I started to have some really nasty nightmares.

I managed to finish the book and was happy that it ended the way it did, if it was a little too sudden. They are fighting their way out then bam the story ends.

In my opinion Richard Brown writes horror that is scarier than the likes of Stephen King.

As a massive fan of Stephen King, I own pretty much all of his books, I was looking forward to seeing how Brown would do with his work. I wouldn't recommend this book to the faint at heart as I struggled with it and I can normally handle books like The Gift Of Illusion.

I would give The Gift Of Illusion 3.5/5

****Read More At :** <http://read2review.com/our-reviews/r/...>

Jessica Bronder says

Isaac Winters is a troubled man. Sixteen years prior, a man broke into his house, shot him in the chest and his wife four times in the chest. Luckily Isaac was able to stop the gunman before he finished the job on Isaac's daughter, Amy. Now Isaac is a detective that is looking into the strange case. A little girl was found burned in her bed, but it is a strange burning with no accelerant and part of a foot left intact. It resembles photographs of spontaneous human combustion.

Then the mother is found later in the day at a local motel in the same condition. Afterwards a traffic accident is reported where a semi and the father hit a stopped car and kill a couple police officers. The father is found burnt too. Just as Isaac is starting to feel confused, a local author contacts him with some strange information that he has to read.

Virginia wrote The Immortal, about a local illusionist that performed horrific shows and kept people, that he tortured, locked in cells below his house. Somehow his spirit is causing the burned bodies. In the mean time, Amy is then kidnapped. Now Isaac, his partner Simmons, and Virginia are on a race against time to find Amy and destroy the illusionist's spirit.

I admit that I was a little lost at the beginning of the book. The story started out with a bang then kind of wandered around from there until Virginia showed up and pointed it in the right direction. The story also hinted at why the illusionist was doing the things he was but didn't really finish that though. Don't get me wrong. I did like the book and thought it was worth the read.

I received this book from Bewitching Book Tours for review.

Laurie says

I started reading this book then literally could not put it down. The characters were drawn well and with outstanding emotional depth. The story was thrilling from start to finish. The action was intense – the inexplicable deaths, mysterious. At first, there were a few rather disconcerting changes in POV, but, honestly, I got so caught up in the characters and the story, that I became almost totally oblivious to any flaws after just a few pages. The author has an exceptionally engaging way of conveying his thoughts through the characters that I found quite compelling and exhilarating.

There were plenty of twists and curve balls throughout. I was kept guessing the entire ride. This supernatural thriller is an impressive debut that explores a wide range of human emotions and gives an up-close and personal view of evil that will haunt your dreams. Lucius has surely forsaken any chance of redemption – if anyone holds the title “evil incarnate” it would have to be him. Isaac Winters, the lead detective, is unwavering in his determination to follow the investigation, to see behind the illusion, and to protect those for whom he feels responsible. He is a man driven to unveil the truth at any cost and to accept nothing less than success.

This book was provided to me by the author in return for my honest review.

Reviewed by Laurie-J
Laurie's Thoughts & Reviews

Wendy Hines says

For sixteen years, Detective Isaac Winters hasn't found peace. He blames himself for the murder of his wife Linda. He has raised their daughter Amy alone ever since.

His new partner, Daniel Simmons, is a bit of a green-horn, but Isaac takes him under his wing. When a young girl dies, Isaac and Daniel are on the case. She burned to death on her bed, there is nothing left but ashes. All of her surroundings are untouched. Isaac is sure the parents did it, and pursues his investigation in that direction.

However, the parents die soon after, in the same way. Then other bodies turn up, and Isaac and Daniel are confounded. It is surreal and nothing like they have ever seen before. When Virginia Maples contacts Isaac, with informatino she feels may help him, he is ready for anything.

But what she reveals tests the boundaries of everything he has ever known. And while the body count rises, it comes closer and closer to all Isaac holds dear, his daughter Amy.

The Gift of Illusion is a paranormal thriller. I was instantly drawn to Isaac, Amy and Daniel. Their characters are likabe, even though I would have liked to know more about Daniel and from whence he came. Isaac carries the world on his shoulders and my heart grieved for him. The Illusionist is horrifying and the author really adds just the right details to bring authenticity to the horrors he gifts. The pace is steady, keeping me turning the pages until the heart-pumping end. If you enjoy a touch of the paranormal or a great thrilling suspense, pick up The Gift of Illusion. I can't wait to see what the author writes next!

Wendy Cantu says

Hmm. What did I think? What did I think?

I actually spent a good deal of time pondering over how I would review this book even before I was finished reading it. I really, really wanted to like it. I thought it would've been an interesting concept -- a mysterious illusionist resurrecting his powers to wreck havoc in modern-day society. I love paranormal detective novels. The first chapter was gripping. A mysterious statue! Spontaneous human combustion! What next?

Sadly, the only illusion was how this book could take such an interesting idea and fail to deliver.

I really wanted to like it. I did.

The story doesn't totally make sense. The words "illusion" and "gift" are thrown around to describe what the "illusionist" is supposedly giving to his victims. Perhaps I should've looked in the dictionary for some

arbitrary use of those words that would've made more sense, but this wasn't the type of book I should have to dig that hard to enjoy.

The author was descriptive, but sometimes it was painful to wade through paragraphs of insignificant observations and tangents -- especially when they did little to evolve the characters or the plot.

The history behind the illusionist was grotesque but not insightful.

Gina says

Goodreads Description- An ancient evil has returned to continue the study it began over a century ago, and it's looking for volunteers. Isaac Winters is the perfect test subject. He's a detective with a damaged past, and something to prove.

On the night of his wife's murder sixteen years ago, which left him a single father, Isaac thought he had seen the worst mankind had to offer.

Until now.

It moves like a virus from person to person, carefully selecting its next host, and leaving a trail of incinerated bodies in its wake. There are no witnesses and no evidence except for a small statue of some unknown figure. Accompanied by a partner short on experience, Isaac must uncover and defeat this faceless villain before it takes from him the greatest reminder of his dead wife. Their daughter.

16 years ago, a criminal who Detective Isaac Winters helped put in prison, is released and comes to seek his revenge. In the middle of the night this man enters Isaac's home and kills his young wife Linda and shoots Isaac leaving him for dead. All the while, baby Amy is left crying in her crib. Fast forward to the present, and Isaac is put on the case of a young girl who seemingly combusted in her bed. Her body is nothing but ash and nothing else in her room seems to be burned or harmed. This is something Isaac or is inexperienced partner, Simmons, has ever seen. Of course they immediately suspect the parents, but the night after Lori died, her mother is found burned in their hotel room with the father missing. Now Isaac really suspects the dad until he too is found burned in a semi-truck that has crashed and killed the driver and 2 policeman, leaving no witnesses. Isaac is really at a loss. He has no idea how this could even be happening and the only clue is a small statue that was found in the little girls room. The strange thing is that the statue keeps going missing and popping up in different places. As these deaths multiply, Isaac feels the pressure to solve the case. Then a mysterious woman leaves a book at the police station for Isaac with a message saying that she can help. She tells a bizarre story of Lucifer the Illusionist who lived in the late 19th century. The statue is the same statue that sits atop his grave. Lucifer started out as a small time magician and illusionist but he craved more and he wanted to get it in evil ways. Somehow the statue is a portal that has let his spirit out and now he is preying on the weak, for he used to torture people to see just how much a human could take before giving up. This has now become personal to Isaac and he realizes he needs to face Lucifer himself to stop his reign of terror.

I was really looking forward to reading this book and it was more than I could ever want. The story started out a little slow because the reader really has no idea where the story is going but it soon picks up the pace. With characters who are written fully and a writing style that literally feels like the slow ride up the big hill on a roller coaster, nothing is better than how Brown takes you over the hill plunging down into twists and

turns that really make you want to yell because you can't read fast enough. I know many reviewers, myself included, say a book keeps you on the edge of your seat but this is the book that so far really matches that feeling. I just could not read it fast enough. I read it in one sitting because I couldn't stop and finished it in about 2 hours. I can't really think of a reason not to give it 5 stars so.....5 stars it is!! This is a must read for lovers of the paranormal!

Jenn says

RECEIVED FROM: Bewitching Book Tours For Review

NOTE MY REVIEWS OFTEN CONTAIN SPOILERS

Isaac Winters is a single father and veteran police detective in the city of Elmwood. At the top of his game, even Isaac can't explain why citizens of his city are dying from mysterious fires that originate inside their bodies and leave little else damaged besides the victim. When he learns his killer was dead before the spree began and is now focusing on Isaac and his loved ones Isaac must learn how to battle the dead. But will he discover the impossible before it's too late?

I had initially intended to give this book a lower rating, however as the book progressed it did get a lot better. The bigger writing issues started to smooth out and there's no denying Brown has a talent for vivid descriptions, therefore I decided to give it a three stars.

I had a lot of trouble getting into this book, while I found the idea interesting it was basically a case of a good book ruined by poor editing. There is more to writing a good book than having a good idea then stringing words together. And while from the sections of verse included in the novel you can easily see the writer excels at poetry, each type of writing is an entirely different ball game where you need to learn the rules of the game before jumping in. For example, a playwright or script writer wouldn't add long passages of description to the middle of their text. What would it be used for there? It's not like the actor is going to tell viewers that the hall was long and dark. While these directions might be given it won't be in the same manner as a scene in a novel. Many novelists don't know the first thing about journalism and should I mention the term inverted pyramid they wouldn't think I was talking about writing. While the term writer describes many types of people who put together words to create something, each section of writing has its own terminology and rules which need to be learned before transitioning.

Had Brown paired with a good editor, they could have guided him through the rules of writing novels and I think the result would have been a book readers couldn't put down. It's clear from his work he has a talent for stringing together words, but it's also clear he didn't learn the rules of the game. The book is definitely copy edited - meaning free from typos, misspelled words and grammar mistakes, but it's got major issues outside of that.

The largest issue of this novel is a complete lack of understanding of how point of view works. In the first two chapters I've seen four different types of point of view used. You just don't do that in novels, you pick one style and stick with it. The book opens with the rarely used second person - meaning speaking directly to the reader with words like you. This is followed by a mix of distant narrative style third person and a normal close third person with a lot of head hopping. One small section is written in first person before going back to the mix of third person again.

The book would have worked best in a close third person narrative, understanding that even though it's being told from outside of the character's head you can still only look through the eyes of one character at a time. It does allow you to switch from character to character, but not all on the same page. For the most part it's usually paired with one character per scene, though some authors can use two or even three for longer scenes successfully. The reason they can do so successfully is that even though they have gone from character to character it's not flipping back and forth from sentence to sentence, more each character conveys a different part of the scene. Often times they will include "I" thoughts by marking the thought with italicized fonts.

Using this point of view would have considerably helped with the crass jarring language used in some of the descriptions. If we're viewing the scene through Isaac's eyes and a building is described as piss yellow it's better received because that is just a part of Isaac's personality. The character is abrasive and not the type to fit in comfortably at a society ball.

A good editor could have also helped to guide Brown's research and how it was included in the novel. It's clear he did some research as evidenced in info dumps about forensics testing which aren't really needed in the scene where they're used and actually slow down the pacing of the novel. However it's also clear that he didn't do enough research to accurately portray a police detective. This is shown where the character makes assumptions without evidence then shares those with a witness being interviewed, pockets evidence from a crime scene as a souvenir, and repeatedly puts his bare hands all over a crime scene before they've been investigated by the forensics team I guess you'd say. What I'm trying to say is he's touching things before he guys who dust for prints and take photos get there. The character is supposed to have around two decades of crime scene experience and be the best in the department at his job, if this were the case none of those behaviors would occur. While I think many of the behaviors such as punching the car window to break it and get in were designed to make Isaac look cool, all they managed to do was to make the scene and character less believable. For one, a car window broke from being punched would have never passed safety testing or made it to be sold or owned by a customer. Secondly, the character is supposed to be an experienced cop and he just destroyed evidence.

The book is written to an adult reader and those readers want believability so scenes should focus less on trying to make the character into Bruce Willis action hero and more on creating a realistic scene.

The point of view issues smooth out as you move further into the book almost as if Brown began to learn his craft more the further he went into the novel. It does pick up in pacing and about the last quarter of the novel it becomes a book that's hard to walk away from.

Before I go further into this review I'll warn readers that this is not a book for a reader who's faint of heart or with a weak stomach. As the reader finally begins to learn about Lucius the villain and the things he's done there are scenes so graphic and gruesome I had to set the book down long enough for my stomach to stop churning because I really thought I might be sick. Beyond macabre descriptions of carving bodies the author even crosses into scenes of necrophilia. Brown has created a villain so depraved that it literally churns the stomach. Obviously if a scene in a book has the ability to make me start gagging the writer has a definite talent for writing vivid descriptions.

While I found many of the plot points extremely interesting, I also felt they were under-explained. For example, I never understood how the killer came back from death or how he killed his victim. Yes I get that they burned up, but how? I didn't understand how Lucius was an illusionist because he seemed to me more like you're above average psychotic mass murderer. I didn't understand how Virginia would connect the dots between a long dead psycho and recent killing. I also found it hard to believe the cops would instantly buy into her story. It was also never really clear on what the Gift was. I mean I got the impression that the Gift

was death but that doesn't seem like much of a gift to me. I loved the idea behind these plot points. The scenes where he starts bringing Lucius to the forefront and building this heinous villain for us are some of my favorites, however Brown fails to answer the how and why as well as some of the what for his readers. Especially considering this is a stand alone title readers really needed the answers to these questions to feel fulfilled when finishing the book.

As far as the characters went while Isaac was fairly fleshed out many of the other characters remained fairly one dimensional. While I would have liked to see the characters get more body to them, especially Lucius, Isaac himself needed a bit more work to be a believable character. I might have been able to work with this if Isaac was just some guy pulled into a murder investigation because it somehow targeted or revolved around him, but because of all the obvious police mistakes Isaac makes in this novel it makes him completely unbelievable as a veteran detective. If Lucius had been a modern day criminal he would have been acquitted on a technicality because of how police handled the evidence. Isaac was the most unbelievable cop I've ever read. I can easily picture the character as a man, but he doesn't come across as a cop.

Overall I can't really recommend or not recommend this book. It has potential and if you're prepared to deal with the books flaws you might enjoy it. However many readers will have difficulty wading through the flaws to the intriguing story within.

Annette M Guerriero Nishimoto says

Today's review is on *The Gift of Illusion* by Richard Brown

The Gift of Illusion was an intricately written thriller that keeps the reader guessing "who done it?"

You find yourself instantly concerned with the main characters Issac and his daughter Amy after the very first chapter, hoping that nothing bad will come to them as the book continues. However, the book is not left without flaws.

You enter the story line as Issac's home is invaded and his wife is brutally murdered, leaving Issac to care for their newborn daughter Amy. Though he is able to kill the intruder, we never really find out why the intruder wanted to "take everything away" from Issac. There didn't seem to be enough back information on the case previously involving the perp.

Issac never really gets over the horrifying event of that night and blames himself for his wife's death, but somehow sixteen years later when a mysterious string of bizarre deaths occur he is forced to face pain he carries inside of himself.

The authors use of chapters within chapters became irritating quite quickly as I felt they were not necessary. And I never quite understood exactly what "The Gift" really was. Even the ending left me feeling flat.

2.5 of 5 stars
