



The Magic Trick

Levi Stack

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SEQUEL to the award-winning novel, *The Silent Deal*.

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LAST YEAR Viktor and Romulus broke the *Silent Deal*. Can their town survive the backlash?

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STRANGE THINGS are happening in Aryk, almost as if history is repeating itself. New playing card graffiti sparks fear and rumors. There are whispers of a second rebellion—and of betrayers, assassins, and spies. And when a mysterious circus pitches their tents outside of town, Viktor is sure that he can't trust its Ringmaster ... or its Magician.

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BUT ALL THIS pales in comparison to the new curriculum imposed on Aryk's schoolhouse. A new Apprenticeship program is being created. Master Molotov is searching for students to aid in his experiments. The pool of applicants is widening, and if Viktor and his serf or Gypsy friends are chosen, they may end up facing terrors in the last place they want to revisit—Saryi Castle itself.

The Magic Trick Details

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Author : Levi Stack

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From Reader Review The Magic Trick for online ebook

Catherine says

I was lucky enough to receive a free ecopy of The Magic Trick thanks to the author, Levi Stack. This is just an honest review and I hope that my thoughts on the matter do not offend anyone! I'll try to keep this review as free from spoilers as possible.

To explain a little bit about the series so far... Intertwined in Russian history, The Card Game series tells the story of two boys. Viktor and Romulus live in Aryk, a town where cards are outlawed. In the last book, they dug deep into the past of the area and did what they thought was best to help their fellow citizens. In The Magic Trick, a sequel, they're still dealing with the problems that have arisen in Aryk. The boys, along with their friends, have to deal with new problems. Viktor has been called into an apprenticeship program that is being held at the castle. Though fearful, he chooses to act as a spy for their cause and it is not easy... Have a read and find out for yourself!

I think that the writing of the characters was incredible. I really enjoyed looking into the pasts of all sorts of people and finding out their motives for their actions. I thought it particularly interesting to see the past of the gypsy children and how they were brought up. I also enjoyed finding how the lives between each of the characters unfold, even how some characters have more of an influence in the lives of others. Though, after two books in the series, it still feels like Romulus is somewhat of an enigma. It seems that he deliberately keeps secrets, and he doesn't always seem to give the full story. Even Viktor is often suspicious or even upset that Romulus might not be telling the full story. I do kind of find my patience for Romulus running out; he's a good friend and obviously very brave, but there's just something about the way he goes about in the story makes him seem cocky and overconfident. He also kind of seems very arrogant because of the work his father had already done for the town, as if he expects people to respect him just based on that. I guess it's kind of difficult to explain my feelings on that matter. I felt particularly happy with Viktor's parts in the plot. He's obviously a very intelligent boy and, despite making some stupid decisions in certain points, I felt like he made a lot of practical actions in the attempt to help people. I don't think I'll go on about all of the characters, but there is just one I'd like to talk about. For a while, in the start of the book, I was concerned about Fredek's part to play. I don't generally like bully types in books and I often feel that they're not explained to the fullest extent. I sort of felt the same way while reading this. However, I was glad that his actions were later explained. I was quite pleased with the way his plotline turned out. Well, not pleased, but I felt like the author explained his part in the plot very well. In the last book, I felt that his actions were explained well as they fit the motives he had at the time. In this second novel, with all of his antics, I was worried that his actions were escalating with little reason. However, I'm pleased to say that I'm wrong. My main problem, like as with the last book, is that there is just too many characters. There are times when I felt like I was missing out on certain bits and misunderstanding because I didn't quite remember which characters were which.

I really quite enjoyed the plot of this book. There were quite a lot of bits and pieces throughout the novel to pay attention to, but I like the way that it all came together in the end. It kind of felt longwinded in some places because there were so many aspects, but I think that it worked well for the novel. I don't really know how to explain that, but the reason I think it works well is because it's not as easy as it could be. In many other books I've read, authors have led their characters down the easiest path to get to the solution. However, in The Magic Trick, the twists and turns are what makes it interesting. Stack keeps us guessing at pretty much every turn. The thing is that, because the characters only have a certain amount of information at each time, it also makes it interesting because we get to see the thought processes going through their minds and

the solutions they come up with. I was intrigued with the lessons that the students went through. I felt it quite interesting to see the learning process of the students. I actually felt kind of disappointed that we didn't get to see much into the lessons in general, but I can see why the author did such a thing; because it wasn't entirely relevant to the plot at hand. I guess it might have taken it a little too far away from the real plot. I'm pretty interested in seeing how the next book plays out. At the end of *The Magic Trick*, it leads into some new, interesting points and plot lines for the next novel. Despite many of the mysteries being solved, we're being led into some new curious areas.

I think that the author has set up the plot of this book well, clearly thinking the entire thing through and how each of the characters' actions might play out. I think it's definitely a five star book.

Camila Espinosa says

Levi Stack gave me a free copy of this book when I finished the first one. He had asked me to write a review for *The Silent Deal*, and now for *The Magic Trick* - which might be even better than the first one (I have to think hard about that one).

The story picks up where the first book ended: Romulus and Viktor are still trying to figure out the consequences of breaking *The Silent Deal*, and the implications it is causing on their lives. There is no getting out of the Leopard's mystery for either of them, and both boys are set on discovering their foe's history and weaknesses. As they dig deeper and deeper into the Leopard's past, it becomes clear that more is at stake than they could have ever imagined; their town, their families, their friends and even their past - it's all intertwined into a web of mystery and magic that Viktor and Romulus must unweave before it's too late to save anything from the Leopard's dark power.

And in the middle of all this, new challenges arise. A mysterious circus comes to Aryk; chock-full of dodgy and dangerous characters. Young boys and girls are being selected at school for a mysterious Apprenticeship: Viktor and the Crossbones Clan among them. Romulus steps away to join the Miners, leaving his blood brother to solve problems on his own. And new rumors start making their way through the town; rumors of rebellion...

The plot is definitely interesting, and the book sets a different perspective by having Romulus off scene for most of the story. We see Viktor start to develop and grow in his own shadow - not someone else's. I particularly liked this - Viktor having more importance as a main character. At the same time, other characters in the story come into light - some by revealing their previously unknown past, some by keeping it hidden. There is mystery and drama everywhere, but there is also a little bit of everything else: humor, action, magic, etc.

The Magic Trick is certainly a worthy addition to *The Card Game* series, giving the story even more depth and scope than *The Silent Deal* did. These books are becoming some of my favorite fantasy series, and I am really looking forward to the third part of the story. Congratulations again to Levi Stack for a great piece of writing!

Emmett says

I received a free ebook copy of this novel directly from the author, after showing interest in a giveaway of the novel in the Goodreads First Reads program.

The Magic Trick was every bit as good as Levi Stack's first entry in the series, *The Silent Deal*. Although it was not quite as captivating from the onset, the plot quickly escalated with many twists and turns. The novel is paced to be very exciting and keep the reader from becoming bored. It is chock-full of mystery, even maintaining the same level of mystery about one of the main characters, Romulus, as in the initial installment. I would venture to say that this entry is packed with even more mystery and intrigue than the first novel. The reader is kept guessing from one chapter to the next, definitely qualifying it as a page turner.

The novel is clearly focused on Viktor this time and does not seem to get confused whether he is the sidekick or the main hero, as seemed to be the case in *The Silent Deal*. The character has grown since the last novel and continues to do so throughout the course of the story. Secondary characters from the first novel are also further developed, making the cast even more interesting. Rose, Roksana, and Andrei particularly come to mind when discussing character development in the novels. Every piece of the plot and the characters seems to be expertly tied together, giving the choice of title of the novel some extra reinforcement. The story is also somewhat darker than the initial volume, but definitely in a good way. The author is not afraid to leave some characters behind or bring in new ones to further develop the story and he does not shy away from violence.

The novel feels more grown-up than its predecessor and the danger the characters face feels more threatening. The Leopard still appears very little, but is an interesting villain, as the entire town fears him and yet he rarely deigns to present himself to anyone. The idea of the Seven and the Ghosts was very entertaining and made it fun to figure out what was going to happen next. Also, the fact that some characters traveled to locations other than the town to gain more knowledge of their foe helped to diversify the story a bit.

I definitely feel like the writing became stronger since the first entry as well. There were less grammar or formatting mistakes and the writing itself felt more refined and less juvenile. Overall, I would say the novel is an improvement upon the first and an excellent story in its own right. I would recommend it to any historical fiction or fantasy enthusiast, even if they typically avoid the "young adult" genre. I am excited to read to the end of the series and can't wait to see what Mr. Stack comes up with next!

Caroline says

After waiting for this book for so long, it definitely didn't disappoint! The setting is just as, or maybe more, alive and detailed than the first. Romulus, Viktor, and the Gypsies go through much more dangerous adventures and trials than the first book. All the characters, even minor ones, didn't fail to catch my attention. Some even broke my heart. The Magic Trick has so many surprises and moments that kept me on the edge, I can't wait for the next!

Lindsay says

What a stupendous continuation of the first book in the series. I have very mixed feelings about being at the end of book two. It was great and I'm glad I read it, but BOOK THREE ISN'T FINISHED YET.

The first book was tumultuous, meticulously detailed in the most plot-relevant way, and about as cohesive as a happy reader could hope for (here's my full review of *The Silent Deal*) and *The Magic Trick* only built more on that solid foundation. People, places, and things from the first book that didn't seem as though they would ever matter again came straight to the forefront of the main story in the sequel. New people, places, and things were explored and knit seamlessly into the established plot. The convolution and undeniable logic of the whole thing was, again, intellectually engrossing and full of eyebrow-raising, sometimes hilarious, action and peril to set the pace. There were more homemade explosives, not one but two rhinoceros rampages, a blood-feud showdown, an instance of heartstring-tugging self-sacrifice, and much, much more.

The story as a whole took a turn I never would have expected, but somehow fit remarkably well with the tone of the story as a whole. As the high-stakes game of smoke, daggers, and questionable sanity expanded to encompass more than just the lives of Viktor and Romulus, everyone's identity was questioned, friend and foe alike. It was an interesting and entertaining way of delivering character development.

And the implication-heavy reveal towards the end (which I would rather die than spoil) that changed everything and avoided all sense of an overdone deus ex machina? I have no words, other than WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

What's the deal with Romulus' potentially magical past?

How are Viktor and his friends going to survive their Apprenticeships?

Is Ivan the Terrible's monster foe actually descending from the Urals to terrorize the town of Aryk?

What is the Leopard actually working to achieve in Saryi Castle?

All of these questions still need to be answered, and I have no doubt that the answers to all of them will fit as neatly together as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, along with some other pieces I probably don't yet know how to look for. I have some theories, but...

Bring on book three!

Sarah Wilson says

To see my original review on my blog, please click here: <http://sarahthomasbooks.blogspot.co.uk...>

After finishing and thoroughly enjoying *The Silent Deal*, the first book in the Card Game series, I was

extremely happy to receive an ebook copy of The Magic Trick from the author, Levi Stack, in exchange for an honest review.

I didn't think it would be possible for Stack to match the fantastic storyline and plot twists of the first book but he managed to do that and far more in the sequel to The Silent Deal. I absolutely loved the direction Stack took with the story. The characters developed even further and felt so realistic to me. They made the mistakes that any person makes and their assumptions often led them into more trouble.

The Russian setting is perfect for this book and the adventure and mystery is so alluring to the reader. Stack's research into this early-mid 1800's Russia is immense and creates such a vivid location for the reader. Again, Stack has a fantastic writing style and uses it to create plot twists and mysteries I could never have thought of. I loved the idea of the Trials and I found the classes an incredibly refreshing part of the story. Stack has a way of ending a novel, not on a cliffhanger like many rely on to draw readers back, but in such a way that leaves the reader wanting more.

I have to say that the introduction of new characters was very interesting whilst the older character remained as witty and brilliant as ever. While I found part of the ending quite sad, I still really enjoyed the story.

I am so excited for the next book and I will most certainly be getting it as soon as it comes out! I am loving this series.

Selina says

I received this ebook directly from the author, Levi Stack in return for an honest review. It is the sequel to The Silent Deal, following on from Viktor and Romulus' adventures trying to thwart the Leopards evil reign over Aryk and it didn't disappoint. This was another well written, fast paced and exciting book which answered as many questions with the plot from The Silent Deal left me with as it gave me new questions about this one. I especially loved the gypsies in this book, and the added back story to each of their characters, as well as developing on Viktor and Romulus'. This is definitely a book to be adding to your "to read list". I hope there are many more books to follow from this author

Stephanie says

I received an ecopy of this and the first book from the author in exchange for an honest review.

I really enjoyed book one, but with so much action and mystery I liked this one a little better. This book picked up nicely where the last left off and dived right back into the mystery that even now after 2 books I still can't figure out, it is such a tangled web of secrets and deception that I feel bad for these two (Romulus and Viktor) they are left on their own to figure it all out, I just wish one adult would balls up and tell them the truth or at least help them.

Both boys grew and changed a lot from book one to the end of this one and I hate to say it but I'm becoming a little suspicious of Romulus, I can't put my finger on what it is exactly but I feel like he is hiding something he is just acting a little strange, he has a ton to deal with and maybe this is just his way of dealing but I'm worried and I hope I get some answers in book 3. Viktor grew up a lot and it was nice to see him think things through a little better, he is still very young so nothings perfect but it was fun to watch him discover how to deal with life's big problems in a more rational manor. I really enjoyed getting more insight on the Gypsy

characters they had a much bigger role in the story than I had expected and it was great how it all tied together and how it affected everything, I enjoyed them so much in book one that I was really glad for their bigger role in this book.

I love the writing and the way the author weaves this tale of secrets and lies and I'm really excited to see where things go from here, trouble is brewing and I know these boys and their friends can defeat this evil.

Dawn says

The author kindly sent me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.

I started reading this book thinking "I really hope it's as good as the first one"... It isn't - it's better!!

"The Magic Trick" follows on from "The Silent Deal". While this second instalment of "The Card Game" series is darker, there is still plenty of humour, and I defy anyone not to have a few tears in their eyes nearer the end.

Mr Stack's writing is just as good in his second offering to us, and there was already a feeling a familiarity with his style that I don't usually get with the second book.

I'm hoping for many, many more books from this author.

Hannah says

I received a copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Just like the first in the series, The Magic Trick kept you engaged and enthralled. It is a worthy sequel to The Silent Deal.

I'm not sure how to start this review, so I'm just going to jump in.

First of all, it was fantastic. However, I ought to tell you more than just that.

After Victor broke the Silent Deal in the previous book, a contract binding everyone in the town to secrecy, it causes some problems. To add to Victor's problems the Leopard sends out a decree that certain children, whether serfs, gypsies, and nobles are to report to Staryi Castle, to undergo training for a year's time. At the end of the year, Apprentices will be chosen. This later proves to be an incredibly difficult and dangerous task. For each of the seven subjects, excluding one, there will be a Trial given to prove your worth. There is no promise that you will survive.

Oh, and Romulus and Victor plan to raid Staryi Castle and free the prisoners held there.

One of the things that this author does very well is plot twists. These books are just full of them, some are minor and some have a great deal of impact, and I'm not sure that you can always tell which is which.

I don't get to experience plot twists very often, for one of two reasons. Either because my friends unintentionally spoil things for me, or because I guess the plot twist.

Needless to say, that doesn't happen with these. I may think I know the answer, but then it surprises me. It's great!

Also, I've realized that since the book is written from Victor's perspective, we only know as much as he does. So if he is assuming something, so are we. Even if it is spoken about as fact.

The novel is pretty fast moving, as is the previous one. There are chases and battle scenes, such as when they raided the castle, and the author did a marvelous job describing them; it really painted a picture in your mind.

It's not only chases and battles that are well described, its the entire story.

As I reached the end of this book, I realized that it has not yet truly been revealed to us what the Leopard's goal is.

And I only just noticed!

There are so many questions that you have as you read, that keep you plowing through the book, needing to know the answer, but as you go along, you only find that for every question that it answered, another arises. I still don't know all the answers as I have finished it, and I'm looking forward to reading the next installment. You continue to learn more about each character's back story, and a good deal of it was surprising.

Some of the characters died this time around, and it only goes to remind you that you really can't predict or expect anything.

To recap:

The Magic Trick is a fantastic and worthy sequel to its predecessor, The Silent Deal. It keeps you on your toes, and I eagerly await the next installment.

Jonathan says

Where to begin? This sequel is even better than the first. I love how Viktor grew up more in this book. I love how the story matured more than the first book. I love how dark the story turns while never giving up looking for the light.

Viktor and Romulus faced a lot in this story, but they never lose faith in each other. Nor do they lose faith in their friends. That's another thing I enjoy about this little adventure, it teaches the reader that people may let you down, they may stab you in the back, but never do you need to give up on someone. If you do, you will miss all the good. Because of their friendships, they are able to face the darkness that is Saryi Castle and the mines of Aryk. But it comes at a cost. And Madame Nutrix's predictions unfold themselves in unseen ways... I look forward to the next installment of this series, and will be recommending this series to anyone who will stop long enough to listen.

For the Popsugar Reading Challenge, this my book by an author under 30.

Lauren Maxey says

I was really excited to read book two and was not disappointed ! I love that the world is so detailed and unlike so many new authors these days Stack doesn't feel the need to end each book in a cliffhanger to keep readers coming back. I can appreciate the planning of the series because there are no plot holes and the story flows well.

One phrase I felt like was overused just a tad was "blood brothers" , and I would love to see some maps in the next book, the layout of the castle and the surrounding area of Aryk. I loved the cover art and can't wait to see what the next book has in store for us!

Andrew Rose says

In the second book of The Card Game, Victor and Romulus have broken the Silent Deal but not the Leopard's hold on their town. While Romulus joins the Miners to gain support Victor plays a deadly game by

going inside the castle to continue his education and attempt to find the 7 ghosts. The book is a little Ender's Game and a bit Hogwarts run by Voldemort but with a deeper tension and less humor than in the Potter Books. The villains are dastardly but the heroes can never seem to overcome the doubts they have about each other in order to work together to win. Like an onion, or a Parfait there are many layers to this deck. I can't wait until the next game!

Andrew says

I received this novel directly from the author, in exchange for an honest review.

“No substance has a more contagious nature than fear,” whispered Miss Madulina. “It builds upon itself. It casts a magnified shadow, choking out the light.”

The heroes of The Silent Deal, Romulus and Viktor, return for a second outing in The Card Game series. Having discovered the secret of the cards in the first novel, they seek more answers on the origins of their enemy, The Leopard. Viktor has unfortunately been estranged from his family following his decision to advertise his exposure of The Silent Deal around Aryk. The family home having been burned to the ground by The Leopard's henchmen, they now live in squalor in a deprived area of town and want nothing more to do with Viktor.

The blood brothers travel on horseback to Great Perm with Romulus' faithful wolf guardian Blizzard, to inspect Saint Demetrius Academy. Before he became The Leopard, the boy Nockatyl attended the school, and it is here that the fate of some of his unfortunate classmates appears to have been death by his hands, so the rumours and Nockatyl's own hidden notes say at least; they became Ghosts. It points to the very early stages in what would become the boy's descent into madness and murder, ultimately becoming The Leopard.

The academy is housed in a dilapidated mansion, and the boys pose as prospective students in order to gain access. Headmaster Antipov himself appears to have descended into madness; seeing enemies round every corner, and blaming the disappearance of the students on the dwindling reputation and crumbling condition of the school.

“‘Leo Pardus means to lock us away forever,’ ‘to turn us into true Ghosts,’ ‘the Seven come to take us.’”

The dusty secretary Miss Madulina allows the boys access to see part of a document she sequestered pertaining to the investigation into the disappearance of the three classmates, sending the boys on another quest for information. Who or what are The Seven? And what part did they play in the legend of The Leopard?

Meanwhile back in Aryk, a mysterious circus – the Bizarre Bazaar - appears, and at the same time some new Brass Art graffiti appears on the door of the town hall: “The betrayer of cards is in our midst”. The House of Cards – the headquarters of the Cards from the first novel - fell on the eve of the revolution, due to a spy betraying the four kings, the betrayer mentioned in the graffiti. Just who is the betrayer, and what does he/she want? And is the circus part of The Leopards plans or something much more sinister?

The serf children of Aryk face new dangers, as a new “Apprenticeship” program is created by Master Molotov to replace the school. It could lead to Viktor and his friends – if chosen - facing the nightmarish prospect of returning to Staryi Castle to receive tutorship ahead of a series of secret trials. This could be a

great opportunity for Viktor to get back inside the castle to find answers on the fate of the Ghosts, or it could be part of one elaborate trap set by The Leopard. The stakes just keep getting higher and higher.

The book is yet another masterful tale by Levi Stack in The Card Game series, as it appears that the high standard of the first novel will be maintained throughout the series. Like its predecessor, I read this book in one lengthy sitting, mainly because I couldn't stop once I had started! In spite of Viktor and Romulus' breaking of the deal in book one, there was no dilution of the tale and the series continues to gain momentum heading into book three.

The Crossbones Clan reveal more of their origins, and we see a different side to Charlotta, who was not so strong a character in the first novel. With Romulus heading down the mines to gather information and seeking allies among his father's cards, the blood brothers are largely separated, and the book slightly misses their previously great chemistry.

This doesn't hamper the book really; it allows Viktor to step out of Romulus' shadow, though he doesn't always feel overly comfortable in being isolated from his blood brother. It also allows for fringe characters to take more page time as they carve out their own story in the series. We encounter some new frightening enemies, and yet more intriguing set locations.

Stack has a real knack for creating vibrant and colourful, as well as grim and creepy scenes. This time around it is the Bizarre Bazaar and Saint Demetrius Academy stealing the show, as well as the return and further exploration of Staryi Castle. With it being so easy with Stack's flowing prose to really visualise each scene, it makes me wonder if the series has a future on the big screen at some point down the line.

Emily says

I received my copy of this book from the author in an exchange for an honest review. This review contains spoilers for the first book in the series, *The Silent Deal*, but not for *The Magic Trick*.

I gave *The Silent Deal* five stars, but now I'm wishing for something higher than five stars; *The Magic Trick* succeeds in upping the stakes for the fate of Aryk and our main characters. After breaking *The Silent Deal*, the contract keeping everyone in Aryk silent about the history of the town, Victor is in fear for his life. He is terrified that the Leopard has learnt of his and Romulus' identities, and those of his family who now live in the slums of Aryk after their house was burnt to the ground by the Leopard's men.

Their fears are further fuelled by new graffiti appearing on the walls of the town hall, declaring "the betrayer of cards is in our midst". The appearance of the graffiti coincides with the arrival of The Bizarre Bazaar — a circus shrouded in mystery — and Viktor and Romulus begin to question how the circus intertwines with the history of Aryk and the Leopard's plans.

However, school resumes for both Viktor and the members of the Crossbones Clan who are newly appointed as students, whilst Romulus begins work at the mines. Everyday life seems to resume for the majority of Aryk's citizens despite the heavier presence of the Leopard's men keeping a watchful eye over the town, and whispers about the breaking of the *Silent Deal* and the new graffiti.

Romulus and Viktor begin to search further afield in their efforts to discover more about the Leopard's past. They travel to previous locations the Leopard spent time at as a boy and young man; finding them stifled by

the Leopard's presence despite his long absence.

This book has a far darker atmosphere than the first, with Viktor and Romulus' activities feeling far riskier now the Leopard and the Seven are keeping a tighter reign on the town. We are led along more twists and turns in search of answers, which are equally as clever in their execution as in *The Silent Deal*. Despite the increased tension, Stack has balanced the narrative well with surprising light touches of humour and naivety, making the tale much more human, and the characters easier to empathise with.

This series is most definitely one of the most engrossing I have read in the last year, and I am eagerly awaiting the third book!
