

The Gift: Book 2 in The Council Trilogy

Evette Davis

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(288pp)

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A talented woman works to understand the strange new world she's entered—and solve the mystery of her mother's death—in the paranormal novel The Gift.

In Evette Davis's paranormal thriller *The Gift*, a woman works to understand her newfound powers and the paranormal world she's now a part of.

Olivia, after seeking the advice of a fortune teller, receives a cryptic warning about a powerful enemy. Before she can untangle this warning, she encounters her estranged father, Gabriel. He brings news that her mother, India, died by apparent suicide in Paris. What follows is a thrilling global mystery: Olivia; her vampire lover, William; and his brother, Josef, join with allies who command magic and paranormal powers, seeking to prove that India's death was the fault of a mysterious vampire, Nikola.

Olivia and William's romance drives much of the plot. Their interactions are charged because of their mutual attraction, and their banter is involving. In an early scene, they, with Josef, debate the risks and rewards of going to a vampire ball hosted by Nikola, revealing much about their dynamic and about who Olivia is beyond the book's immediate intrigue. Her desire to understand the strange world she's entered and to prove herself capable is endearing. In the book's quiet moments, her spirit shines.

However, quiet moments are few in this story that moves at a near-constant sprint. Indeed, Olivia often has little time to react to new information before the next twist or revelation arrives, forcing her to jet off to new locations. There's never a lull in the book's action, but this means that Olivia is also denied the chance to stop and think, limiting her growth. She is often forced to act without considering her actions, making some developments feel sudden. With no room for mistakes, she pushes forward, hoping that her choices are the correct ones.

Also because of the book's speed, the characterizations do not receive sufficient attention. In her thoughts, Olivia makes note of surface details about the world around her, connecting them to her childhood and her mother, but much is implied without being fleshed out, leaving the audience in the dark. Surrounded by beauty, Olivia is invited to process her grief but refuses the invitation. Emotions and interiority are sacrificed. Still, the novel's eroticism is well attended to; though Olivia and William are underdeveloped, their intimate moments are still vibrant. The novel maintains intrigue as they hunt Nikola and the truth across the globe, surrounded by Gothic elements and hints at a rich history. Enough is revealed to satisfy the audience's curiosity, even if the characters are often rendered secondary to the mysteries themselves.

In the fantastical thriller *The Gift*, a woman in a rich paranormal world works to understand her mother's death.

AUSTIN MITCHELL (December 30, 2024)

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