

The Others: Book 1 in The Council Trilogy

Evette Davis

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An unintentional heroine comes into her supernatural own in the intriguing series-opening fantasy novel The Others.

In Evette Davis's fantasy novel *The Others*, a gifted woman navigates the hidden world of supernatural figures in San Francisco, hoping to claim her magical legacy.

Olivia is a successful political consultant in the Bay Area when mysterious events begin to derail her professional and personal lives. A panther haunts her dreams, appearing in real life as Elsa, a time-walker who offers Olivia training and assistance. And Olivia learns that she comes from a line of human empaths and that a demon is interfering with her life. Further, Olivia's friend Lily is revealed to be a fairy who is invested in Olivia's supernatural progress.

With Elsa's and Lily's help, Olivia begins to harness her powers. She also begins working for the Council, an organization of supernatural figures that includes witches and shape-shifters. The group monitors human politics in order to keep the world safe for their kinds. With the Council, Olivia helps to run a campaign for a progressive politician whose policies will nurture a tolerant atmosphere. But her former rival hinders the campaign as well. Meanwhile, supernatural criminals begin to target the locals, and Olivia begins dating a vampire with a complicated history.

In this story, many characters are keeping secrets, and some such secrets have the potential to devastate the fragile accord between humans and supernatural beings. There's more at stake than just Olivia's comfort. Still, the role of magic in the novel is limited; there are few depictions of supernatural activities beyond telepathy and empathy. As a result, those who (like Olivia) lead secret lives alongside humans remain mysterious, and the fantasy elements are dulled. Still, though Olivia's use of her supernatural skills is minimal, her confrontations with ethical issues do result in intriguing passages, as when she wonders whether it is permissible to gauge the reactions of voters to a political campaign.

The novel's setting is well fleshed out, thanks in part to realistic descriptions of San Francisco landmarks. But while the novel is vivid when it comes to its visuals, other sensory details are neglected. For example, when Olivia is treated to fine French dining, the food is named, though its tastes and effects on Olivia are not. Further straining credulity is the fact that Olivia's infatuation with William, her vampire paramour, progresses to love and plans of marriage in a timeline of mere weeks. And while Olivia changes and grows over the course of the novel, whose events force her to reconcile herself to the role of the supernatural in her life, few other characters do the same, leading to an overall sense of flatness in the book's characterizations. The cast's conversations are also quite direct and functional, though they feature occasional witty gems.

The Others is a beguiling fantasy novel that centers the inevitable conflicts between humans and otherworldly beings.

JEANA JORGENSEN (June 5, 2024)

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