

The Perfect Tenant: In Nob Hill

Rosanna Brand

AuthorHouse (Mar 13, 2015)

Softcover \$19.95 (324pp)

978-1-4969-7396-2

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Rosanna Brand's *The Perfect Tenant* is an epic, multifaceted thriller that explores the mind of a serial killer, and rides along with those who work to bring him to justice.

The story takes place from the late 1960s to the early 1970s in a San Francisco populated by hippies. Cassandra is a young woman attempting to find her place in the big city, but her plans are shattered when she finds her roommate raped and killed. She seeks refuge in a small town outside of the city's bounds.

An investigation begins, but the Nob Hill Killer continues to terrorize the women of the city. Cassandra proves to be an asset to the lead detective, Dan, by providing a composite sketch of the murderer. Her life is put in danger when the murderer traces her to her new home with something sinister in mind. He spins a web of lies in an attempt to make himself look innocent when brought before a jury.

Elegant imagery and characterization bring the story to life, with the streets of San Francisco carefully described. Diverse, distinct characters contribute to the story's readability. New perspectives are introduced that help to hold interest, though these frequent switches in point of view also have the effect of making it difficult to distinguish who is speaking at times, especially with such a large cast.

Accurate details about the criminal justice process add realism. The investigation unfolds in a believable time frame, with details around the collection of forensic evidence and witness statements emerging with accuracy, if anachronistically—many of the techniques were not yet available during the novel's time period. The trial scenes, however, employ believable legal jargon and procedures.

Beyond the murderer and his pursuit of Cassandra, distracting subplots wind in. Scenes exploring Cassandra's love life do not contribute to the conflict, particularly those outside of her relationship with Dan, who is her most influential love interest. Multiple rape scenes are included; they are off-putting and gratuitously brutal.

A tone of chauvinism further diminishes the book's appeal. Throughout the story, men put women down for expressing their opinions. Cassandra herself often acts hostile toward other women, and makes confusing choices such as sacrificing personal security in hopes of impressing a man. Interestingly, the murderer himself is an intriguing and complex character; he constantly switches his strategies and tactics in order to keep his freedom.

The Perfect Tenant is a colorful crime novel full of drama and suspense.

EMILY KUBAL (October 16, 2017)

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