

# San Francisco Book Review

## A Man of Genius

By Lynn Rosen

Lynn Rosen, Price??, 365 pages, Format: Trade

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*A Man of Genius* is the story of Samuel Grafton-Hall, a complicated and supposedly ingenious architect, and the lives irrevocably damaged by him. Arthur Dolinger, his life-long legal counsel, pieces this story together after Grafton-Hall's death, while Dolinger is overseeing an unusual request in Grafton-Hall's final codicil. Through Dolinger, Lynn Rosen reveals how the all-consuming cult of personality surrounding Grafton-Hall leads to the fiery murder at the center of the novel which forever changes the lives of his two wives and a young woman.

Rosen has written a wonderful story reminiscent of Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca* in tone. She has an exceptional eye for architectural detail, and uses it to its full advantage in setting her scenes. Both Upuna Rose and Hesperus' Walk remain etched in the reader's mind. Furthermore, Rosen has clearly given ample thought to the complex psychology behind each of her characters. Grafton-Hall has depth. While he appears self-assured and flamboyant, Rosen also reveals the real fragility which underlies his immense ego. Rosen thoughtfully sketches pasts for each of the three female main characters which plausibly predispose them to be irresistibly drawn to Grafton-Hall. Even the secondary characters of Carlyle Richards and Peter Brent are drawn with care so that the reader wants to know what happens to them. Finally, Rosen is a masterful storyteller, grabbing the reader's attention by the end of the prologue, then slowly revealing the story out of chronological order and in distinct stages, making this novel difficult to put aside until its suspenseful conclusion.

If this novel has a weakness, it would be that some of Dolinger's lengthy asides seem almost superfluous, given the strength of the plot. However, this weakness can be forgiven because it indicates the depth of thought behind this work, and the asides add to the gothic tone. Overall, this novel is a delight to read, and I hope more will follow.