The Psychic Barista

Author Interview with Tim Trott

Ten questions and answers

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1. Where did The Psychic Barista begin?

Tim Trott: It started small. I wrote a few short pieces I called Coffee Plots, built around a barista who notices things other people miss. My fellow writer Chris Holmes in the Daytona Beach writers' group read them and suggested I expand them into a collection. Once Samantha had a coffee shop, a reporter friend, and a detective willing to listen, the stories kept coming.

2. Who is Samantha Wilson, and what makes her a good heroine for a cozy mystery?

Tim Trott: Sam is a barista in her mid-twenties with hazel eyes and a messy bun, working the counter at the Brown Bean Coffee Shoppe. She is curious and empathetic, which is exactly what a good barista needs, and it turns out to be exactly what a psychic needs too. She isn't a cop or a professional investigator. She is an ordinary person who keeps getting glimpses of things she can't explain, and she decides she can't ignore them.

3. Her abilities seem to grow over the course of the book. Was that planned?

Tim Trott: Yes. In the first story she dreams someone else's nightmare. After that she sees a kidnapping victim's face in the cream swirling in her coffee, picks up impressions by touching objects, senses a missing man like a compass in her head, and on Halloween she shuts a cash drawer on a robber without laying a finger on it. I wanted readers to discover her gift along with her, one surprise at a time, rather than handing her a full set of powers on page one.

4. Why set the series in a coffee shop?

Tim Trott: A coffee shop is a crossroads. Everyone comes through the door: reporters, detectives, college students, con men, grieving widowers, famous authors. That gives Sam a steady stream of strangers to read, and it gives the reader a warm, familiar place to come back to after each mystery. The Brown Bean has dark woodwork, an old tin ceiling, antique coffee pots on the shelves, and cool jazz on the radio. I wanted it to feel like a place you would actually want to spend a morning.

5. Tell us about Georgiana and Detective Johnson.

Tim Trott: Georgiana Phillips is a field reporter for Channel 27 who wants to become a studio anchor. She meets Sam in the very first chapter, when Sam realizes Georgiana is being stalked. Detective Ronald Johnson is a veteran investigator who is open-minded about Sam's abilities but keeps her as his secret resource, since he would rather not explain her to his superiors. Between the two of them, Sam has a way to get information out and a way to get justice done.

6. The stories range from lighthearted to quite serious. How do you balance that?

Tim Trott: The cozy tone comes from the setting and the friendships, so the cases themselves can carry real weight. There are stories about human trafficking, coffee plantation labor, a homeless girl who witnessed a crime, and a jogger whose case was inspired by a real one. There is also a Halloween robbery foiled by a haunted cash drawer and an author who borrowed a little too much from real life. I let each story find its own temperature, and the Brown Bean is where everyone comes back to warm up.

7. Which chapter would you hand to a new reader first?

Tim Trott: I often point people to "Black Gold." Sam finds a ghost standing behind a shipment of coffee bags in the stockroom. He tells her his name and asks for help, and that thread leads all the way to a plantation in Colombia. It has everything the book does well: a small, eerie moment in an everyday place that turns out to matter a great deal to someone far away.

8. Who helped you along the way?

Tim Trott: The book is dedicated to the members of the Daytona Beach writers' group, especially Veronica Helen Hart, who challenged me to write fiction in the first place, and Chris Holmes, who pushed me to grow the short stories into a collection. It is also dedicated to my wife, Marianne, who has always believed in my writing.

9. The book states that it is 100% human-authored. Why was that important to you?

Tim Trott: Because it's true, and readers deserve to know. I used AI tools to help with the cover and interior illustrations, and the book says so. But every story, every character, and every cup of coffee was drafted by hand. Being upfront about that felt like part of keeping faith with readers.

10. What's next for Samantha?

Tim Trott: The end of the book includes a preview of the next one, The Mentor. A calm, observant woman named Celeste orders a green tea, touches Sam's hand, and tells her she has the gift. Celeste is a practicing psychic who offers to become Sam's mentor. For the first time, Sam may have someone who understands what she is going through, and that opens up a lot of new possibilities for both of them.

11. You've written an entire series set in a coffee shop. Are you a big coffee drinker yourself?

Tim Trott: Here's something I probably shouldn't admit: I don't even like coffee, but I love the culture of coffee shops, from the interaction of regular patrons to the special personalities of the people who work there.