

***The Color of Trauma* by Hollie Smurthwaite**

Kiera Brayleigh is what is known as a memory surgeon. She's able to take away painful memories from other people, but the process can take a toll on her. Chicago detective Dean Matthson needs Kiera's help with tracking down a serial killer who left his last victim in a coma.

The Color of Trauma was the 2020 winner of the Soon to be Famous Illinois Author Project, and it's very clear why. Hollie Smurthwaite has created a spectacular world in the pages of this novel. Even though she has this extraordinary supernatural ability, Kiera is one of the most relatable characters I've come across recently. She's so empathetic and wants to help people heal, yet she is very broken herself. The story moves along at a very quick pace, with alternating point-of-view between Kiera and Dean, and it has a very satisfying conclusion.

The book can be difficult to read at times and the author does offer a content warning for: "explicit sex scenes, references and depictions of physical and sexual violence (NOT between the protagonists), PTSD reactions, minor drug use, profanity and not just a little." While I did have to momentarily put it down a couple of times due to how intense some of the scenes were, I came back to it quickly because it is an absolutely fantastic story. The premise of being able to extract a person's traumatic memories is so intriguing and handled incredibly well. I was very glad to find out that this is the first book in a planned series, so I will patiently wait for the author to finish writing and publishing more!

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