



The Invention of Everything Else

By Samantha Hunt

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New York City thrums with energy, wonder, and possibility in this magical novel about the life of Nikola Tesla.

It is 1943, and the renowned inventor Nikola Tesla occupies a forbidden room on the 33rd floor of the Hotel New Yorker, stealing electricity. Louisa, a young maid at the hotel determined to befriend him, wins his attention through a shared love of pigeons; with her we hear his tragic and tremendous life story unfold. Meanwhile, Louisa discovers that her father—and her handsome, enigmatic love interest, Arthur Vaughan—are on an unlikely mission to travel back in time and find his beloved late wife. A masterful hybrid of history, biography, and science fiction, *The Invention of Everything Else* is an absorbing story about love and death and a wonderfully imagined homage to one of history's most visionary scientists.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In Hunt's (*The Seas*) overstuffed and uneven novel set in New York, circa 1943, an aging Nikola Tesla lives at the Hotel New Yorker and cares for (and chats with) pigeons while planning what could be his boldest invention yet. He forges an unlikely friendship with Louisa Dewell, a 24-year-old chambermaid at the hotel who also keeps a pigeon coop. The book alternates between Niko's reminiscences of turn-of-the century Manhattan and Louisa's current domestic dramas; Niko revisits old grievances concerning the usurpation or dismissal of his many inventions, and Louisa gets ensnared in her zany father's mission to travel back in time and reconnect with his dead wife via a time machine built by his lifelong friend Azor Carter. Assisting in the scheme is Louisa's mysterious beau, Arthur Vaughn, who may or may not be from the future. Although many events are drawn from Tesla's life, he and his peers, including Thomas Edison and John Muir, are cartoonish. Likewise, the city backdrop is drenched in rosy nostalgia (even Hell's Kitchen is a quaint neighborhood). Each individual plot thread has potential, but the cumulative effect is dulled by an unwieldy structure. (Feb.)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In this surreal historical novel, the aged and forgotten scientist Nikola Tesla is eking out his last days at the Hotel New Yorker in 1943, communing with pigeons and the ghost of Mark Twain. His ruminations on his career (he was exploited by Edison, cheated by Marconi) and on an unrealized love intersect with the inchoate aspirations of a chambermaid whose father wants to use a time machine to be reunited with his dead wife. Hunt is adept at entering the mind of a rudderless young woman, but she is less convincing with the brilliant and possibly crazed eighty-six-year-old Tesla. Still, her vision of punch-drunk, teetering-on-modernity Manhattan dazzles in the details: a vast hotel with its own hospital and ice-skating rink; a Poverty Ball attended by millionaires in rags.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Hunt's sophomore novel entranced most critics. Hunt (*The Seas*, 2006), who received the National Book Foundation's first "5 under 35" Award for gifted young writers, weaves together the unbelievable facts of Tesla's life with some unbelievable fictions of her own creation. The result is a gripping, outlandish, and, at times, tragic story. A few critics found the plot clumsy and the language overly precious, but the majority praised Hunt for her articulate, even poetic, portrayal of a fascinating genius and the times in which he lived. Tesla, who invented radio, florescent lighting, X-rays, radar, and much more, is a man to whom the modern world owes a great debt that was not repaid during his lifetime. *The Invention of Everything Else* does this great man justice.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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