

The Rule of Four: A Novel

By Ian Caldwell, Dustin Thomason

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"One part *The Da Vinci Code,* one part *The Name of the Rose* and one part *A Separate Peace* . . . a smart, swift, multitextured tale that both entertains and informs."—*San Francisco Chronicle*

***NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER**

Princeton. Good Friday, 1999. On the eve of graduation, two friends are a hairsbreadth from solving the mysteries of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a Renaissance text that has baffled scholars for centuries. Famous for its hypnotic power over those who study it, the five-hundred-year-old *Hypnerotomachia* may finally reveal its secrets—to Tom Sullivan, whose father was obsessed with the book, and Paul Harris, whose future depends on it.

As the deadline looms, research has stalled—until a vital clue is unearthed: a long-lost diary that may prove to be the key to deciphering the ancient text. But when a longtime student of the book is murdered just hours later, a chilling cycle of deaths and revelations begins—one that will force Tom and Paul into a fiery drama, spun from a book whose power and meaning have long been misunderstood.

"Profoundly erudite . . . the ultimate puzzle-book."—*The New York Times Book Review*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Caldwell and Thomason's intriguing intellectual suspense novel stars four brainy roommates at Princeton, two of whom have links to a mysterious 15th-century manuscript, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. This rare text (a real book) contains embedded codes revealing the location of a buried Roman treasure. Comparisons to *The Da Vinci Code* are inevitable, but Caldwell and Thomason's book is the more cerebral-and better written-of the two: think Dan Brown by way of Donna Tartt and Umberto Eco. The four seniors are Tom Sullivan, Paul Harris, Charlie Freeman and Gil Rankin. Tom, the narrator, is the son of a Renaissance scholar who spent his life studying the ancient book, "an encyclopedia masquerading as a novel, a dissertation on everything from architecture to zoology." The manuscript is also an endless source of fascination for Paul, who sees it as "a siren, a fetching song on a distant shore, all claws and clutches in person. You court her at your risk." This debut novel's range of topics almost rivals the *Hypnerotomachia*'s itself, including etymology, Renaissance art and architecture, Princeton eating clubs, friendship, steganography (riddles) and self-interpreting manuscripts. It's a complicated, intricate and sometimes difficult read, but that's the point and the pleasure. There are murders, romances, dangers and detection, and by the end the heroes are in a race not only to solve the puzzle, but also to stay alive. Readers might be tempted to buy their own copy of the *Hypnerotomachia* and have a go at the puzzle. After all, Caldwell and Thomason have done most of the heavy deciphering-all that's left is to solve the final riddle, head for Rome and start digging.
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From School Library Journal
Adult/High School–A compelling modern thriller that cleverly combines history and mystery. When four Princeton seniors begin the Easter weekend, they are more concerned with their plans for the next year and an upcoming dance than with a 500-year-old literary mystery. But by the end of the holiday, two people are dead, two of the students are injured, and one has disappeared. These events, blended with Renaissance history, code breaking, acrostics, sleuthing, and personal discovery, move the story along at a rapid pace. Tom Sullivan, the narrator, tells of his late father's and then a roommate's obsession with the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, a 15th-century "novel" that has long puzzled scholars. Paul has built his senior thesis on an unpopular theory posited by Tom's father–that the author was an upper-class Roman rather than a monk–and has come close to proving it. While much of the material on the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is arcane and specialized, it is clearly explained and its puzzles are truly puzzling, while the present-day action is compelling enough to keep teens reading. There is a love interest for Tom and a lively portrayal of Princeton life. This novel will appeal to readers of Dan Brown's *TheDa Vinci Code* (Doubleday, 2003) but it supplies a lot more food for thought, even including some salacious woodcuts from the original book as well as coded excerpts and their solutions.–*Susan H. Woodcock, Fairfax County Public Library, Chantilly, VA*
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From The New Yorker
A Princeton student has only twenty-four hours to complete his senior thesis—hardly the nail-biting stuff of thrillers, except that the thesis in question purports to solve the mystery of an erotic fifteenth-century allegory littered with ciphers and algorithms. (In the wake of the immensely popular "The Da Vinci Code," there appears to be no shortage of medieval codes waiting to be cracked by intrepid scholar-detectives.) As the student races to meet his deadline, mayhem engulfs the campus: a chase through steam tunnels beneath the grassy quads, an inferno at the school's toniest eating club, and nude frolics in the snow (this last not fiction but a real Princeton tradition). The authors, two recent Ivy League grads, keep up a frantic, somewhat

exhausting pace, but the most riveting action sequences take place inside the mind, as the hero wrestles with the manuscript.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Latrice Miller:

This The Rule of Four: A Novel book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book will be information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. This kind of The Rule of Four: A Novel without we understand teach the one who reading through it become critical in contemplating and analyzing. Don't end up being worry The Rule of Four: A Novel can bring any time you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even mobile phone. This The Rule of Four: A Novel having very good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not really feel uninterested in reading.

Gracie Thomas:

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Catherine Acevedo:

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