



The Rule of Four

By Ian Caldwell, Dustin Thomason

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An ivy league murder, a mysterious coded manuscript, and the secrets of a Renaissance prince collide memorably in **The Rule of Four**—a brilliant work of fiction that weaves together suspense and scholarship, high art and unimaginable treachery.

It's Easter at Princeton. Seniors are scrambling to finish their theses. And two students, Tom Sullivan and Paul Harris, are a hair's breadth from solving the mysteries of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili—a renowned text attributed to an Italian nobleman, a work that has baffled scholars since its publication in 1499. For Tom, their research has been a link to his family's past—and an obstacle to the woman he loves. For Paul, it has become an obsession, the very reason for living. But as their deadline looms, research has stalled—until a long-lost diary surfaces with a vital clue. And when a fellow researcher is murdered just hours later, Tom and Paul realize that they are not the first to glimpse the Hypnerotomachia's secrets.

Suddenly the stakes are raised, and as the two friends sift through the codes and riddles at the heart of the text, they are beginning to see the manuscript in a new light—not simply as a story of faith, eroticism and pedantry, but as a bizarre, coded mathematical maze. And as they come closer and closer to deciphering the final puzzle of a book that has shattered careers, friendships and families, they know that their own lives are in mortal danger. Because at least one person has been killed for knowing too much. And they know even more.

From the streets of fifteenth-century Rome to the rarified realm of the Ivy League, from a shocking 500 year-old murder scene to the drama of a young man's coming of age, **The Rule of Four** takes us on an entertaining, illuminating tour of history—as it builds to a pinnacle of nearly unbearable suspense.

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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 *The Da 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:

Richard Glass:

This *The Rule of Four* are generally reliable for you who want to be a successful person, why. The reason of this *The Rule of Four* can be one of several great books you must have is giving you more than just simple reading through food but feed an individual with information that perhaps will shock your prior knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it everywhere you go and whenever your conditions in the e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this *The Rule of Four* giving you an enormous of experience including rich vocabulary, giving you trial run of critical thinking that we understand it useful in your day exercise. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

Peter Tesch:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to perform! A lot of people spent their free time with their family, or their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book is usually option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the e-book untitled *The Rule of Four* can be excellent book to read. May be it is usually best activity to you.

Donald Gullett:

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Kathy Norvell:

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