



The Severed Streets

Paul Cornell

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Then there are more deaths. The bodies of rich, white men are found in circumstances similar to those that set the streets of London awash with fear during the late 1800s: the Whitechapel murders. Even with their abilities to see the supernatural, accepting that Jack the Ripper is back from the dead is a tough ask for Quill's team. As they try to get to grips with their abilities and a case that's spiralling out of control, Quill realizes that they have to understand more about this shadowy London, a world of underground meetings, bizarre and fantastical auctions, and objects that are 'get out of hell free' cards.

But the team's unlikely guide, a bestselling author, can't offer them much insight - and their other option, the Rat King, speaks only in riddles.

Relying on old-fashioned police work and improvising with their new skills only lands them in deeper water, and they soon realize that the investigation is going to hell - literally. And if they're not careful, they may be going with it . . .

The Severed Streets is the second urban fantasy by bestselling Doctor Who writer, Paul Cornell.

The Severed Streets Details

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Author : Paul Cornell

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From Reader Review The Severed Streets for online ebook

Lisa says

Overall I enjoyed this second installment in the shadow police series but I do have very mixed feelings about it - luckily the good outweighed the bad but this book certainly tested my loyalty.

The thing that keeps me reading is the characters - they are so well developed and believable in astonishing circumstances (understatement) and their uniqueness and 'warts & all' presentation has made me fall in love with them...and believe me this is quite some feat by Cornell as they are not really lovable people!!!

I just want them to live forever and group hug - wtf!!!???

Fab series but stop testing me - I want to love this but I'm so close to love / hate.

My next comments could be construed as SPOILERS so please don't read on if you want to read this blind

If you have strong feelings about God/Heaven/Hell you are going to find this very difficult to swallow and possibly find it quite offensive. It is actually quite bleak in outlook although I do feel the series has reached rock bottom and will maybe then try to claw its way back from there??!!

I am not a fan of long descriptions of dreams - I don't mind the inclusion of a 'dream land' if it's part of the story but I hate when a chunk of my time is taken by an advancement in plot only to find it was a dream and therefore not relevant to the real story (ok, so this is not strictly true in this case but I HATE DREAMS!!!)

More things that pissed me off but these are proper spoilers (view spoiler)

Otherwyrld says

Like the first one in this series, it took a while for this book to settle down. However, whilst book 1 took only 40 pages to do so, this one took well over half the book. The team dynamics seem all over the place here, as they try to investigate the "impossible" murder of a government minister in his car by an invisible assailant, set to the backdrop of riots and an impending police strike in the metropolis. As more bodies pile up and they flounder about trying to pick up clues (from Neil Gaiman of all people!), it seems as if Jack the Ripper has come back and is now murdering rich white men instead of prostitutes.

This was a 3 star book until 2/3 of the way through until it took a hard right into **holy crap!** territory, with the (view spoiler). I must admit that if I were Neil Gaiman, I might be reluctant to attach my name to this story, considering he is an accessory to murder and helps dispose of a body at one point, but it would seem he gave his approval for his inclusion here, and it's a brave move to include such a well-known living fantasy author in this book. On the whole I liked and enjoyed this part.

I did have reservations about other parts of this book though. Firstly is the use of Jack the Ripper as a leitmotif for murder on the streets of London. Ripper stories are overused on the whole when it comes the the capital, and it almost feels like a lazy piece of shorthand here. However, the whole Ripper thing turns out to be a bit of a red herring, and the real killer is a much older and darker being altogether (who is buried in the Blue Peter garden of all places). My second issue is with the whole summer of riots section of the story. I have no doubt that this was very topical in the authors mind when he was writing it in 2013, but having lived

in London at the time and being forced to watch the place burn, it felt too recent and raw to me and I didn't really want to have to read about it in a work of fiction so soon. I think that this story might have been better placed as number 3 in the series, which would give another year or two of distance to these real-life events.

Once the real villain is revealed, the story comes together in a satisfactory way, with a sub-plot about a rare artefact coming into play to bring the missing member of the team back in from the cold (or the hot actually). A section set in hell is interesting, given that it looks and smells like Victorian London, and I would like to see this area explored in future books (well, perhaps remotely). The thinly disguised V for Vendetta masks used by the rioters/protesters is also a nice touch, as well as giving a broad hint of the motivation of the main villain, if you think back to what V is protesting about.

The end of the book sees the team triumphant, but its a pyrrhic victory. The cost that they have all paid has been very high indeed and it will be interesting to see what the author does with this series next.

3 1/2 stars

Mark says

This book is a must read for all readers of fantasy, horror and also for police fiction, the authors brilliant original imagination shines through this book. Expecially with his view of hell. One thing which knocked me off my feet was the way he used a certain author in a hellish diabolical way which you will not believe.

The characters really mature in this book, especially in that we get to know there weaknesses and there loves.

Lady*M says

3.5 stars

Is this a bad novel? Absolutely not. Is it as good as *London Falling*? Absolutely not. My very, very high expectations are a part of the problem, but Cornell drops a few balls as well.

The most important part of the first book, for me, was formation of the team and how these very different people learned to work together. In this book, the team is pulled apart partially by outside forces, but mainly by their own secrets (It seems that only Quill doesn't hold anything back). By the end, they are truly broken and (horrific) sacrifices they make to achieve their individual goals are in vain. The slim hope we are given in the end by Quill's conversation with the Smiling Man is insufficient to counterbalance the bleak tone of the novel. If I bemoan something more than anything else that is the loss of Quill's dark, dry humor.

I see the book as *The Empire Strikes Back* of the series, though I would have to read it again to see how well that worked overall. The pace was somewhat uneven and I am uncertain that bringing real life person as a character added anything significant to the narration and how would real life events read with the passage of time.

What I liked is that we learned more about supernatural community, though some of it was somewhat less organic than in the first book and that we got more insight into the characters some of whom are significantly more damaged than I suspected. We also got some new, intriguing characters (Rat King).

In the end, I liked the book well enough and I am happy to see that Cornell has just started the third. I am curious to see how will he heal the team and strike back at the Smiling Man.

This morning I started writing the third Shadow Police novel. Phew!

— Paul_Cornell (@Paul_Cornell) June 2, 2014

Dudleysmith says

As usual, it's interesting to compare and contrast with Ben Aaronovich's Peter Grant series (which I love). They start from the same basic premise - magic cops - but do very different things with the concept. Aaronovich is all about the mythology of London - the gods, creatures and history, whereas Cornell doesn't need any gods or myths, since it's all about people being horrible to each other. I do imagine how the concepts from one series might appear in the other though. How would the BBC or Jack the Ripper appear in the Peter Grant series? How would the spirit of the tube or the London Jazz scene appear in the Quill series?

I'm never truly prepared for how nastily Cornell treats his characters. He's very much of the "oh no he has to survive - he needs to suffer more" school of pulling the legs off his characters. The main quartet are just so dour all the time - there is not much joy in their lives (Quill and Sefton's mostly happy domestic arrangements notwithstanding). There's nothing cool or exhilarating about the team's interaction with magic. Their lives are essentially spent plugging holes in the Titanic as it inexorably sinks. They aren't angsty about it or anything, they're not even raging against the dying of the light, just a slow empty trudge against the tide.

But it's a powerful and well-written book, and if you liked LF, you'll also like this.

Wanda says

I read this book to fill the 'Darkest London' square of my 2017 Halloween Book Bingo card.

I really must give Neil Gaiman credit for being a very good sport—I am not sure how I would feel about becoming a character in someone else's fiction, especially if that author gave me some rather dodgy motives, as Cornell does.

I liked this second book in the series considerably more than the first one. It's like the majority of the world-building has been settled now and Cornell can get on with telling us the dark and twisted tale of what's going on under the surface of London!

There is a walking tour of Jack the Ripper sites, where two of our coppers see ghosts of each of the victims, there is an auction of supernatural items, and a mysterious Ripper-like murderer at work in the great city. Our team of Shadow Police get ripped apart in several ways and kind of patched back together eventually. I've got to get to the third book, *Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?*, as soon as I can arrange, to see if their team can survive these upheavals.

Jennifer Gaarder says

Read my reviews at <http://www.jenchaosreviews.com>

The Severed Streets By Paul Cornell
Tor Fantasy, Tom Dougherty and Associates, May 20, 2014

416 Pages, Hardcover Edition

Synopsis of the Severed Streets:
How do you capture a killer who is invisible?

"Summer in London: a city in turmoil. The vicious murder of a well-known MP is like a match to tinder, but Detective Inspector James Quill and his team know that it's not a run-of-the-mill homicide. Still coming to terms with their new-found second sight, they soon discover that what is invisible to others - the killer - is visible to them-even if they have no idea who it is.

Then there are more deaths. The bodies of rich, white men are found in the circumstances similar to those that set the streets of London awash with fear during the late 1800s: the Whitechapel murders. Even with their abilities to see the supernatural, accepting that Jack the Ripper is back from the dead is a tough ask for Quill's team. As they try to get to grips with their abilities and a case that's spiraling out of control, Quill realizes that they have to understand more about this shadowy London, a world of underground meetings, bizarre and fantastical auctions, and objects that are 'get out of hell free' cards.

But the team's unlikely guide, a bestselling author, can't offer them much insight - and their other option, the Rat King, speaks only in riddles.

Relying on old-fashioned police work and improvising with their new skills only lands them in deeper water, and they soon realize that the investigation is going to hell - literally. And if they're not careful, they may be going with it . . ."

Goodreads Rating: 3.99/My Rating 5.00

Recap of the Series So Far:

From London Falling (Shadow Police #1): 4 police officers are trying to bust the most significant drug and gang boss of London, Rob Toshack when they discover he's been working with someone who claims she is a witch, Mora Losely. Going to her house, they find out occult items of gruesome nature and child sacrifice of the worst sort. Detective Quill comes into contact with a strange artifact, and they all end up with the second sight-the ability to see the underlayers of a world the no one else can see. The witch, they discover, can bend space and time, alter memory and kill without hesitation with the wave of her hand.

Using police methods and their newfound ability, they hunt this witch down to put an end to her bloody sacrificial ways and her magic, which is dark and horrifying.

This book was an A+. Left at a cliffhanger, it leads us to book 2, The Severed Streets.

Review of The Severed Streets:

The book opens up with a protest in the streets and a murder. This is no ordinary murder. The killer is extraordinary and can bend space, things, and can walk through walls to get their victim where they sit. The victim is a cabinet member, someone special also, someone who holds a principal office. The driver sees nothing, but looks back and sees the dead body of his employer.

Detective Quill's special team is called on the case where they interview the driver, and they reassure him that they will believe anything he says no matter how mad it sounds. It does seem crazy, insane, how can a person be hacked up by an invisible assailant?

With the second sight, the team can see the CCTV footage of a person, the presumably "invisible person" coming and going from the car and a strange silver residue all over the car and the body of the victim.

This murder escalates into more-but only white privileged men. While the media and the public have turned this onto its head, the team finds itself once again investigating the occult underworld as they did in the Losely case (Book 1).

Through whispers and undercover work, they find themselves in a secret pub that only sighted people can go. There Ross, one of the team, learns of a secret auction where she may buy an artifact through means of barter that she may be able to free her father from Hell. Keeping this to herself, she leaves with the team, but not before catastrophe and an unfortunate number of deaths. Costain, also one of the group, watches as she places the card given to her, in her dress and thinks she is up to something and forms a plan to get her on his side. He knows something is up, but he doesn't know what.

No one seems to know anything about this killer, who is now known as the Jack the Ripper killer. Though he is only killing men, the signatures are the same, and a media tycoon seemed to have placed them on the chase after the lore of this particular legend.

Ross, going to the auction to get her artifact, sacrifices a precious commodity only to become disappointed in the end, finds herself at odds when she is double-crossed at 90% of the book.

Quill is double-crossed and by an unlikely person, though I should have seen that coming, this twist was surprising. It is also well and good that the double cross results in a lovely ending.

The deception was something I should have seen but did not. This was an unpredictable story. It seemed like everyone was deceiving everyone else. They all seemed to have something they wanted from someone else.

Writing:

The writing was fantastic. It was written casually keeping to the tone of London speak. Because this story relies heavily on the power of London magic, it made sense that the characters spoke in the way that Londoners speak, that things are described in the way people from London describe them. It was difficult at first in the first book. However, it made sense by the time I got to the second book. The story was written consistently and succinctly.

Plot:

The plot, while it was strange, was simple. However, in the last book, the plot point of Ross rescuing her father from Hell was introduced, and this came up again in this book. This did not take the front seat here. This was a subplot and did not overshadow the main story. In the way the story was written, the plot and subplots all came together to form a beautiful and solid end. There was no cliffhanger this time.

What I liked:

I liked the way the author wrote the story and enjoyed the casual nature of the writing. Furthermore, I have read many books from British writers and they hardly ever write with British colloquialisms in mind. This sort of bothers me. I like the realism of this series. I like knowing how people really talk in their respective countries. For example, if I am reading a book from Texas, I want to understand the accented language, the words they use for things (not northern terms or politically correct terms) and slang. I want to know really what I am seeing.

What I Didn't Like:

This is a HUGE pet peeve of mine in any story. When the bad guy gets cornered for whatever reason, they spill all of their plans, tell the good guys EVERYTHING. What they did, why and what they plan to do and why. I hate this. In real life, does this happen? My father was a police officer for over 25 years, and he said confessions like that NEVER happen. Corner someone and they blame the next guy. I was a little irritated. While I had no idea who the bad guy was until they got to him, I was mad that he spilled the beans when they did catch up to him.

Carol. says

Gah! I don't know what to think! Can. Not. Rate.

Imagine you are reading a developed, dark mystery series, tracking a killer brutally slashing his victims until they die. Say you are following around Matthew Scudder as he walks the streets of New York City, questioning prostitutes, greasing a palm or two and generally throwing back a whiskey whenever able. Then imagine Scudder gets a lead, goes to the meet in a dark alley, and discovers the informant is James Patterson. Worse, Patterson lurks in the corner of the alley, watching while some toughs beat the stuffing out of Scudder.

Cornell did something similar in *The Severed Streets*, and for the life of me, I cannot let it go. It's a messy, fourth-wall-breaking action that destroys the both the atmosphere of danger and the serious emotional tone of the story. Even worse, the guest star reappears not one but twice later, with an implication of involvement in future events.

Until that appearance, *The Severed Streets* was shaping up to be a notable improvement over the first book, *London Falling* (my review). It begins when London's supernatural police team hears about a messy locked-car murder of a prominent politician and is sure the details fit one of their special cases. Investigation of the scene proves they are right, but as they start to make extensions into the hidden world of London's occult practitioners, another message leads them to consider Jack the Ripper as prime suspect. The team will have to go undercover chasing leads from seedy bars to Parliament in order to find the cause of the killings, and the increase in London's unrest.

Narrative is limited third person, switching primarily between the four members of the team: lead Detective Inspector James Quill, undercover specialists Kev Sefton and Tony Costain, and support from intelligence analyst Ross, but occasionally including viewpoints from victims, informants and suspects. As a device, I

generally dislike it, feeling it's a cheap technique to develop tension and provide information in one easy shot, but Cornell does it better here. Congruity is obtained by focusing primarily on Quill and Ross, and by limiting the non-team viewpoints to a few pages.

“So today was going to be a bit different and he was now in the mental space he associated with being undercover, lightly wearing a role which could basically be described as ‘definitely not a policeman.’”

The writing stood out this time. At one point early on I had thought of taking notes, as several phrases impressed me, but talked myself out of it on the theory I would re-read. Since re-reading is most definitely out, I'll have to resort to skimming. Such a good job of developing atmosphere, complexity of emotion and the London setting. Sigh. There is a sense of humor in the mix, but it is the dark humor of someone who sees too much of the callous, selfish side of humanity. I certainly smiled at points, but as I'm a practitioner of that school of humor, it appeals. I did think it avoided being in poor taste, such as victim-mocking.

“A few of them were, even now, giving each other high fives and laughing. But most of them looked grim. Quill looked at their emotion and again felt distant copper annoyance at bloody people. He used to joke that without people his job would be a lot easier. But now he supposed he couldn't even say that.”

There's political undertones in the setting, with masked protestors appearing in flash mobs throughout the city. Quite a bit of the vernacular is British slang and British police speech, so it takes a little extra though process if you are an ignorant American. It wasn't incomprehensible, however.

So, do I recommend it? I don't know. Besides breaking that fourth wall, there's a bit that was an emotional shocker. I guess that's a compliment, right, an author that can evoke that kind of emotion? It really was a four star plus read until that guest came along and ruined the world-building. I can't imagine what Cornell was thinking, except perhaps that he could treat a two-book UF mystery series like a Dr. Who special? I don't know, but can attest that it didn't work.

a gimmick for a gimmick:

Eleanor With Cats says

[
Okay.

Some authors in the scifi/fantasy world amuse themselves (and their audience) by making references to other scifi/fantasy authors and/or their characters. Sometimes this is done by description - I'm looking at you, Barbara Hambly (and you are awesome). (This is common when referring to characters currently under copyright, such as Doctor Who - see Diane Duane, Simon R. Green, and yes, Barbara Hambly.) Sometimes t

Wealththeow says

The four Sighted police officers of London are faced with another case only they can solve: Jack the Ripper is back, and he's killing rich white guys this time.

In the last book, the writing and pacing were plodding until about halfway through, when the book switched into high gear and became clever and enjoyable. Sadly, this book is a return to the plodding. There's something about the characters' inner monologues that feels both realistic and deeply annoying and boring. And then it all ends with the bad guy literally monologuing about How He Did It for several pages. Bah!

I was also annoyed by the Gaiman subplot. The cops see Neil Gaiman hanging out at a magic bar and realize he's part of magical London. Cute, I thought. But then he becomes a minor character! That's creepy enough, but it's not even well done--he doesn't talk or act anything like Gaiman does in his numerous public appearances or on his blog, and his writing never comes up. He's completely generic. If you're going to turn a real person into a fictional (view spoiler), you'd better have a reason for it, and keep that person consistent with what we know about them. Otherwise, just make someone up!

All that said, I do like some of Cornell's ideas about where magic comes from and the sacrifices necessary to use it. Just once I'd like the Sight or magic to be kinda nice, though. Thus far it's been wholly grim and dark and horrible. Surely EVERYTHING magical isn't awful, right?

edifanob says

As I said in my comment to the first book in the series I'm not a big fan of urban fantasy but what Paul Cornell delivers with his Shadows Police series is excellent. The Severed Streets is even a bit better than London Falling.

The main characters have to go through a lot. I do not always agree with their methods and decisions but there is mostly nothing without a reason behind. New parties enter the greater game. The mix of police procedural and the "dark side" of London is excellent. And there is still the question of Lofthouse's secret. Beside Jack the Ripper you meet author Neil Gaiman who plays a certain role which makes sense in case you read his book Neverwhere.

I can't wait to read the next book in the series.

WHO KILLED SHERLOCK HOLMES will be published in May 2016

Hallie says

Wow, it almost pains me to say anything is darker than the first (in which babies were boiled alive in a cauldron) but I think this was. This is a very personal reaction, and it has to do with something which is a big spoiler - and part of that is my ending up angry because someone had done something which is an absolute deal-breaker for me and yet it was the 'right thing' to do because everything was LITERALLY going to HELL. What I didn't mind - which puts me in a small minority, I think - was the role Neil Gaiman played as a fairly significant character in the book. Possibly if I liked Neil Gaiman I might have cared more, but don't and didn't.

What stopped the grimness of the first from being overwhelming was the way Quill and his team gradually

started working together as a team, despite severe lack of trust and even disgust in some cases, and they went up against extremely powerful, probably undefeatable supernatural forces, as "coppers". And Quill kept bringing it back to that, while struggling with what had been done to him personally, and with his own need and inability to trust the others. I loved Lofthouse's tentative, very partial joining their group at the end too - hope we'll get her story some point soon.

I still love the way the real London is mixed with the supernatural one, with odd and unexpected twists and turns (the Blue Peter garden as a site of ancient horror, for example!). I'm less happy with the nature of magic - or perhaps that's specifically with magic *in London* - as it involves the kind of 'sacrifice' that's all about taking on pain and how much you're willing to harm yourself to get something you want in return. That has already become very clear, even before there's an auction of London stuff at the Tate Modern - only for those who are sighted, of course. (view spoiler)

The "racist newspaper mogul", the riots in London - a few things like that seemed a bit *too* on the nose, but I loved Quill's final return to form. When he tells the Smiling Man he's not going to do what he's expected to do (view spoiler), but instead is going to "find a way to heal my unit. I'm going to wait until I'm sure they're able to cope with what I know. Then we're going to find some way to change it" I was - warily - back on board. I might wait just a while after book 3 comes out, and if I see a lot of people saying it's darker than the first two, it's bailing time.

Andy says

I enjoyed the first in the series mostly but found the character development could have been better (a lot better), felt they were all a little bit cold..... I wanted to give the second book a go as found the premise of the story of interest..... so how'd it turn out??

40 pages in & i'm really not enamoured at all, likely would end up being a 1 or 2 rated for me but as under 50 pages I cant really rate it - I stopped as I could jus not identify with any of the characters who were jus cold & lifeless

NOTE to self: Thats the third fantasy book ive DNF this year..... genre starting to wane on me, methinks

Alex Sarll says

Any book which opens with the brutal, lovingly-detailed murder of a thinly disguised* Danny Alexander is going to win plenty of readers over straight away. Not that this is clunky Pat Mills agitprop, by any means - but it is a little angry with the state of modern London, as who wouldn't be? There's an intricate, gritty dance played out as Cornell uses fantasy for one of the things it does best - making the metaphorical concrete. So London's memory and its subcultures are at loggerheads with the new influx of money, but this is not about either side being right or wrong, for they both have plenty of blood on their hands and ugliness in their plans. And then, of course, you get the further interrogation even of that set-up, because (as per a persistent refrain), anything can mean anything these days - and what does that do to magic, an art which is all about signifiers?

One quote on the jacket says that if Ben Aaronovitch's occult police books are *The Bill*, Cornell's are *The Sweeney*. This is bullshit, in that it implies Aaronovitch is simply not very good, and Cornell is good,

unreconstructed fun. Neither is remotely true. Far closer to say that Aaronovitch is *Brooklyn Nine Nine*, where even the murder cases are mostly funny, while Cornell is *The Shield*, bad decisions and the reek of corruption hanging over even the lightest moments. This is a book to give any Londoner nightmares if read in bed, and uneasy moments even in daylight (though perhaps reading it on the site of one of the Ripper murders was asking for trouble). It's a book which comes up with a supernatural depression metaphor to rival Rowling, then twists the knife even further with what happens once that price is paid. It is, though page-turning, also bloody hard going in places, though mostly in the best possible way.

*Rupert Murdoch and protestors' V masks also put in veiled appearances; in the latter case, I think a slightly too-thorough masking of the mask slightly harms the impact of the tale. Interestingly, though, no disguise is needed for Frankie Boyle or Neil Gaiman, the latter of whom has a fairly major role to play. If nothing else, it confirms him as a good sport.

Tim Hicks says

Lookit, if books were drinks, this would be a Pan-Galactic Gargle Blaster.

It's an excellent extension of the first book, and Cornell cannot be accused of being too careful in scoping the action. There are several "he did WHAT?" moments.

Let's address the use of Neil Gaiman as a character. Go and read Gaiman's "Neverwhere" and come back, and THEN we can talk about it. You can't really talk about the under-London, the things only some people can see, without acknowledging "Neverwhere," and what an interesting way this was to do that.

I even wondered whether the - er, the place Quill goes near the end - is possibly a tribute to Miéville's "Un Lun Dun."

Anyway ... good police procedural, lots of action, some heavy-duty magic/horror, some interesting discussion of the nature of London, some good lines, some amazing character development ... and the promise that in ONE of these books we'll find out what Lofthouse is up to.

I've read quite a lot of urban fantasy, and this is one of the better ones. Top level, in fact.

I'm looking forward to the next one.
