



The Spectral City

Leanna Renee Hieber

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Solving crime isn't only for the living.

In turn-of-the century New York City, the police have an off-the-books spiritual go-to when it comes to solving puzzling corporeal crimes . . .

Her name is Eve Whitby, gifted medium and spearhead of The Ghost Precinct. When most women are traveling in a gilded society that promises only well-appointed marriage, the confident nineteen-year-old Eve navigates a social circle that carries a different kind of chill. Working with the diligent but skeptical Lieutenant Horowitz, as well as a group of fellow psychics and wayward ghosts, Eve holds her own against detractors and threats to solve New York's most disturbing crimes as only a medium of her ability can.

But as accustomed as Eve is to ghastly crimes and all matters of the uncanny, even she is unsettled by her department's latest mystery. Her ghostly conduits are starting to disappear one by one as though snatched away by some evil force determined to upset the balance between two realms, and most important—destroy the Ghost Precinct forever. Now Eve must brave the darkness to find the vanished souls. She has no choice. It's her job to make sure no one is ever left for dead.

The Spectral City Details

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From Reader Review The Spectral City for online ebook

Sophia says

I happened to see the blurb on this one and it checked off so many boxes for me: Gilded Age NYC, spiritualists and ghosts, detecting, disappearances, and something ominous happening. But, let's not forget a favorite narrator was doing the storytelling. It was sure to delight me.

The Spectral City opens with a prologue that had me riveted right from the opening sentences. A ghost heeds calls for help and finds herself trapped in a horrific way. Next, the scene shifts to a young woman, who as a powerful medium, sees, hears, and senses ghosts. She and her knew Ghost Precinct have been endorsed and launched by Governor Teddy Roosevelt himself. The fact that her staff are women and are spiritualists who admittedly work with ghost staff is a huge strike against them and there are constant barriers, but Eve and her people are dedicated to their work so they will stand firm hoping that some day tolerance and respect will catch up.

Eve becomes aware that one of her own own ghost friends is missing and the whole spirit world is unsettled about something really bad associated with Maggie's disappearance. Everyone searches for Maggie and then they get a new case of a missing girl which is quickly followed other cases that may or may not be unrelated. Eve's liaison to the regular police force, Lt. Horowitz, is a certain attractive skeptic who makes her heart zing, but he's open to any help he can get solving the crimes and notices her just as much as she does him. If her work life isn't already busy, her misguided parents are pushing her to step back into her traditional role to marry well in the upper class social circles to which they belong and leave her ghosts behind. They want nothing to do with the ghosts after their own trauma from their early acquaintance so she feels isolated and unappreciated in her own family.

Things do come to a head, but there are more questions than answers when the story ends.

The Spectral City was full to the brim of amazing worldbuilding and a vibrant premise that definitely had my attention. Ghosts and mediums solving crime, oh yes! I found this world of NYC in the Gilded Age, paranormal elements, mysteries and detectives, and all the fascinating backgrounds of the circle of Ghost Precinct staff as well as Eve's family quite incredible. Some very exciting and even moderately chilling story paths were begun in this book. A lovely camaraderie of diverse women who are more like sisters and this includes their ghosts was also a bright and shining part.

But, as fascinating as all that was, this book had the troubles a first book in a series, but (and this is a first) also the problems one can encounter if one dives into the middle of an existing series. It was the weirdest sensation to feel I was being inundated with too much going on and having things over-explained, but at the same time, a strong sense that a whole book worth of story line must have come before this one. I would have rather trimmed up the places that felt over-explained and definitely the places where I was treated to the same topic for the half-dozen time and taken all those extra pages to have gotten the parts in active voice present that the author chose to summarize in passive voice about how Eve and her Gran came up with the idea to use her ghosts and her ghost talent to solve crime, how the ghosts came to be tethered to her and the Precinct, and how the other mediums came to Eve and helped her solve cases so that Roosevelt backed them and gave them their own Precinct offices. There were references to past adventures and all those introductions that would have made a great first book or at least a prequel.

This sensation of feeling like I was missing stuff made me go back to investigate and, though there wasn't a prequel, there was an original series this one spun from- the author's Magic Most Foul trilogy. However, that series featured this heroine's parents and grandparents and their story wrapped up and had a very different plot that was utterly unconnected other than carryover characters.

I guess my point about that tug o' war of too much and too little is that the reader needs to be patient through to the second half of the book because it takes a while to get rolling. But, when it does, it makes up for the sluggish start.

Nineteen year old Eve was an interesting blend of someone who acted exactly her age and someone I could barely believe was only that age. She's in charge of the Ghost Precinct and she is not reticent about having that control and responsibility. She micro-manages and constantly has to be reminded to be a team player and pace herself. She's driven and is like a bloodhound on the scent who is oblivious to anything but what has her focus. She tends to insist on people seeing things her way, but at the same time tries to be patient about 'bringing them along' She can get the 'woe is me' going, but doesn't wallow in it. She has inner strength and a deep capacity as a caregiver and protector. I enjoyed her character and particularly when she is around Lt. Horowitz who flusters her and around her Gran who is her mentor and friend offering unconditional love and support when her parents cannot though they do love her.

I should probably mention that this one ends on a cliffie. Things start to get mighty interesting and Eve and the other's are just realizing what they are up against and all the danger when it closes out to be continued.

I listened to this one and I chose to because the talented Tavia Gilbert was narrating. Her voices of both genders and many ages were superb. I found her accents both a few regional and also the International accents fun. This was a large cast of characters and there was so much going on that I credit Ms. Gilbert for me not getting confused and able to stay in step with this book.

All in all, I came through to the end feeling pleased to have experienced the book- particularly the author's colorful and creative world- and look forward to what will come next. This one crosses so many genres (historical, urban fantasy, mystery, thriller) that I'll just say that if that sort of mash up tickles your fancy give it a try.

My thanks to Tantor Audio for the opportunity to listen to this book in exchange for an honest review.

Anna Szabó says

When I think about ghost stories what comes to mind are horror stories with ghosts haunting people or houses. But The spectral City by Leanna Renee Hieber is not that kind of ghost story. It's something else. I LOVED it!

There is this sentence that caught my attention. " There are protocols, paperwork, one can't just barge in and begin levitating family belongings." I just knew this is going to be fun and totally different from any other ghost related books I've ever read.

Eve Whitby is a medium, an especially gifted one. She talks to ghosts. And she uses this gift to help the police solve crimes or try and prevent them. And she cares about said ghosts very much. So when one of them disappears she is desperate to find out what happened. What could harm something that is already dead?

And the other mediums as well, I very much like all of them which is rare for me. They all have the gift but use different way to converse with the dead.

The plot was interesting although it seemed a little chaotic sometimes. I was sometimes lost between all the cases they handled simultaneously. But everything connects with everything.

The ending is not satisfying. Almost all the questions are left unanswered so I hope the next book is out soon.

This is my first book by her but won't be the last.

There is a thing that I think might be a mistake in Chapter 9, when Eve is talking to a guy and he calls her Miss Whitby but then he asks for her name a couple of sentences later.

Thank you NetGalley and Rebel Base Books for this advanced copy.

Em B says

The Spectral City is a really interesting concept - historical urban fantasy with ghosts and female detectives in a time when prejudice is rife but attitudes are changing. There are some pretty badass characters in this story and I was intrigued right from the start as to what the mystery was and how it would be solved.

I would say it perhaps needed a firmer hand in the editing process - the pacing is off and at times dragged, in part because it feels like every single character is introduced with a lengthy backstory, overloading the reader at times with information. Given that this is the first in a series, I felt that secondary characters could have their backstories introduced and explored in later stories when they became relevant.

The book explores a lot of themes and issues, and at times it felt like it was trying to do too much when I'd rather it would have focused on the plot to keep the story moving. However, it is still an enjoyable read and I imagine the series will pick up in the next instalment.

Thanks to NetGalley for my ARC

Stephanie says

The Spectral City

Actual Rating: 3.5 stars

Overall I enjoyed this novel. I liked the characters and I found the plot to be adequately intriguing. I had some issues with the story but for the most part I enjoyed it.

Characters

Eve: Eve was an amazing character. She was most definitely before her time. Her dedication to her job and her dedication to those who were seeking her help was admirable, her love for all was beautiful, and her willingness to do anything in her power was refreshing. Eve was a very unique character. Her supernatural abilities and her connection to the dead made for an interesting character who was enjoyable to read about. As for Eve's personal life I loved all the interactions between Eve and her colleagues and her family. I especially loved her interactions with her grandmother and detective Horowitz. Eve was a beautiful character who I truly enjoyed reading about.

Detective Horowitz: Detective Horowitz was a open minded man willing to give new things a try without

unprecedented biases towards them. This made for a man who was unique for his time and somewhat shunned in the police society. I loved his willingness to give new things a try. In fact his willingness helped to further along the cases that he was assigned throughout the story. Overall I enjoyed Horowitz as a character. My one regret was that I didn't get to see more of him throughout the progression of the plot. My hope is that in the next book I will have the opportunity to read more about him.

Gran: I absolutely adored Gran. I loved her spunk, her personality, and her blatant disregard for societies restrictions. In some ways Gran reminds me of my own grandmothers. Gran's interactions and worries for her granddaughter (Eve) were genuine and beautifully crafted. The one thing I would wish for when it comes to Gran's character would be that I wish I could have learned a little bit about her history and life story. Throughout the novel we get little glances and peeks into her life before but nothing concrete or solid. I hope that in the next book we get to learn a little bit more of her backstory.

Secondary Character: I found all the secondary characters in this book to be unique and fairly fleshed out. I loved Cora, Jenny, Antonia, Eve's parents, and all the spirits that helped them during their case. I sometimes wished that I could have seen more personal interactions between Eve and the secondary characters. I felt that a great deal of the interactions they shared were more in a work related setting and this made their relationships seem more formal and less like a blended family.

Plot

The plot of this novel was at times difficult to follow. I struggled at first to get into the plot line but once I did I was in. Once the story picked up momentum it very rarely slowed down. Even though I enjoy a fast paced plot I sometimes felt emotionally drained after this novel for an extended period of time. I found that while the novel made sense at the basic level I struggled to make some of the connections between the different cases and I struggled to see how they were related. The biggest issue I had with the plot of this story is the fact that it was not resolved for the most part by the end of the novel. This however is a personal preference and other readers may enjoy the cliff hanger. Overall the plot was adequate. The thing that made this novel worth reading however was not the plot the characters and their individual personalities.

I would recommend this book to anybody who loves the supernatural, a mystery, and a hint of romance.

Anna Szabó says

When I think about ghost stories what comes to mind are horror stories with ghosts haunting people or houses. But The spectral City by Leanna Renee Hieber is not that kind of ghost story. It's something else. I LOVED it!

Eve Whitby is a medium, an especially gifted one. She talks to ghosts. And she uses this gift to help the police solve crimes or try and prevent them. And she cares about said ghosts very much. So when one of them disappears she is desperate to find out what happened. What could harm something that is already dead?

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There is a thing that I think might be a mistake in Chapter 9, when Eve is talking to a guy and he calls her Miss Whitby but then he asks for her name a couple of sentences later.

Thank you NetGalley and Rebel Base Books for this advanced copy.

Lauren Stoolfire says

I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

The Spectral City is a promising series opener. Leanna Renee Hieber does a brilliant job of bringing the historical fantasy paranormal world of early 1900s NYC to life. I love the level of real life historical detail that she's inserted into the story. I also particularly enjoyed the paranormal elements with the ghosts, mediums, physics, and of course the mystery element of The Ghost Precinct. Basically, Eve and her team solve crimes with the help of the dead. The cast of characters, though, is what really makes the story in the long run - the main cast and supporting characters. Eve is brilliant - I love her dedication, willingness to do whatever it takes, and her abilities of course - and it doesn't hurt that she's ahead of her time. Detective Horowitz, though, is a real scene stealer and I wish we got to see a little more of him throughout. Hopefully, we'll get to see more of all of these great characters in the upcoming sequel. Finally, there's so much to love about this historical fantasy series opener and I'm really looking forward to seeing what's next for these characters. Until then I'll need to look into more of Hieber's works starting with *The Eterna Files*.

Carrie says

The Spectral City by Leanna Renee Hieber is the first book in the new series by the same name. This one is perhaps one of those books that may be easier to tell what it is than what it isn't being a bit of book soup. First you take a bit of historical fiction, set in 1899, and mix it with the paranormal, ghosts, bringing fantasy to the story then let those ghosts help solve some mysteries and perhaps even add a dash of romance.

What we also have with The Spectral City is this is sort of a spin off of some of the author's other work but she assures readers it's fine to be read as a standalone. Eve Whitby who is the nineteen year old medium and star of this story is the daughter of Natalie Stewart-Whitby and Jonathon Whitby, Lord Denbury, the stars of the Magic Most Foul series.

In this series Eve works as a medium and can communicate with ghosts. Eve is a part of The Ghost Precinct in which ladies like herself use their gifts to help solve different mysteries even working with the police to solve cases. Eve teams up with the skeptical Lieutenant Horowitz to help with his case all the while trying to figure out what is happening with the ghosts around The Ghost Precinct.

The opener of this series certainly started off as a slow burn read so that did not gets things off to the best start for someone like myself that prefers a faster pace. However, things do pick up a bit later on in the story but dare I say it can also get a tad confusing with a lot going on there too. I would also warn that the end is a bit up in the air being the first of a series to carry over into the next read. So when adding all these things

together I decided to rate this first book at three stars in the end, it's a nice enough start but hopefully will improve in book two.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

Leanna Hieber says

Dear Readers, I'm not reviewing my own book here but instead offering a bit of insight into THE SPECTRAL CITY. This is not your average ghost story. As many of you know, my worlds are parallel and characters cross over from one series to the next. (Don't worry, new readers, you can start with this fresh!) But I am thrilled to return to several of my most beloved friends. Eve Whitby stars as a 19th year old medium who, alongside her favorite friendly ghosts, helps solve weird crime in 1899 NYC. She is the daughter of Natalie Stewart-Whitby and Jonathon Whitby, Lord Denbury, the stars of my Magic Most Foul saga beginning with DARKER STILL. Eve's best friend is "Gran", her namesake, Evelyn Northe-Stewart. Together these two help navigate the difficult spectral world, trying to make sense of it as the 19th century draws to a close. There's so much heart and soul in this book. There's so much love. There's so much to make one shiver. There's so much life amidst so many spirits. There's a delicious slow-burn romance that I'm having such fun developing as the series continues. There's a wonderful group of unique individuals that come together in a found-family full of humor and purpose. I cannot wait for you to meet new friends and greet familiar faces. I cannot wait to meet new readers and celebrate with my wondrous life-long readers who have continued to be the reason I do what I do. I hope you'll enjoy this series and in its honor, I hope you'll seek out a friend, an elder, a mentor, a family member, a spirit, a stranger, and have a meaningful, life-affirming and spiritually enriching encounter.

If anyone has any questions about the series, you're welcome to ask them, I'm not here often (find me on Twitter @leannarenee) but I'll try to respond.

Cheers, blessings and Happy Haunting!

The Lit Bitch says

I discovered Leanna Renee Hieber way back in 2011 when I read one of her early books. I saw it in a local used book store and randomly picked it up. When I got home I started reading and couldn't put it down.

I loved the romance and the paranormal and her overall storytelling and because of that first book in the Strangely Beautiful series, I fell in love with this author. She writes a spicy romance with great brooding heroes so I was thrilled to read this new book.

Ok so this book is a strong start to what will hopefully be a promising new series. I loved the idea that this book is built on—detectives (women) solving crimes with ghosts. It's different and interesting and I think will give fans of supernatural lit a lot to enjoy.

Eve is so like-able. I loved her determination to solve crimes and she is dedicated to her job but what I loved the most was her abilities and how she connects to the ghosts. I loved discovering her character and getting to know her in this book. I think she will be a character that appeals to a wide variety of readers. She's ahead

of her time and quirky but yet so like-able that you can't help but be excited to read more.

Let's talk about Detective Horowitz for a minute. I loved him. Every time he was in the story I was like swoon city. He was progressive and interesting and I loved that chemistry that he brought. My only bit of disappointment was that we didn't get to see more of him in this story. I get that it's supposed to be more about Eve, but I wanted more of Detective Horowitz.

I think this book was a promising start. You can tell that Hieber has written a number of paranormal books because her world building was excellent. I loved the amount of historical research and facts she added into this story. I recently read *The Alienist* this year which featured Teddy Roosevelt and this book also featured him and I loved how she brought TDRs police background into this book.

The only thing that I felt like was wanting in this book was the fact that not everything was resolved in this book. I am sure some of the lingering questions will be wrapped up in future books but for me I needed a little more closure and resolution. I read a few other reviews on this book as well and many said the same thing, more closure.

Overall I would say this was a four star book for me. It was good but there was room for improvement with the ending. If you are looking for a new paranormal or para-romance style book then you should consider picking this one up. Hieber is an excellent writer with lots of stories in her arsenal. This author is one to watch!

see my full review here

Tamara says

Copy won through the Goodreads First Reads Giveaway Program.
Review to come soon.

Janine says

Solving cases with the help of the dead? It certainly sounded quite interesting to me hence why I chose to read this book.

And it was. The author made art out of spiritualism, that is for sure. I have been fascinated and wanted to know more. I think it is in human nature to ask what may come after death. I liked the sensitive way answers to that questions are given here while still maintaining some of the mystery.

The story takes place at the end of the 19th century. Women still had to fight for independency. Eve is a good example as are her female coworkers. Admirably, they have managed to get their own precinct, the so-called Ghost Precinct. One can only imagine how hard it is for them to be taken seriously even without their gifts. With them it is even more difficult. But no matter the obstacle they have to face, they stay strong because they never are alone. I felt so proud of them.

The cases Eve and her ladies are working on were intriguing to read. Over time you get to see that they must all be connected somehow and I really wanted to know what was going on. There still are a lot of open questions that need answers and I would love to find them.

Eve and the sceptical detective Jacob Horowitz. They are so cute. I enjoyed them interacting a lot. Very slow-burn, just as I like it. Can't wait to see more of it in the next installment of the series.

The only thing I didn't like was how hard it was for me to get into the story. At first I needed to get used to

the style of writing. It fits the time period but I still had trouble with the talking around things. The introductory part has been quite long as well, at least it felt that way. It took about a third of the book until I started to feel at home.

All in all, I liked reading this book. I can recommend it to those who love paranormal mystery books. Count me in for the sequel.

L. Anne Thornberry says

Great read

Love this author. I can't wait for the next book in this series. This is a must read. Great book.

Melise says

I enjoyed this book very much. The story of a young woman named Eve, in New York around the turn of the 20th century, who is able to speak to ghosts who help her solve crimes. She has a benefactor in Teddy Roosevelt, who actually forms a division of the NYPD based around her ability to solve crimes. The book has a nice level of historical detail, with a main character who feels very contemporary in her thinking—something which normally feels jarring to me, but worked well in this book.

I was a bit worried that this book would fall within the paranormal romance/mystery genre of books like Charmaine Harris' Sookie Stackhouse novels—which I simply do not enjoy very much. But this book did not feel like that series to me, instead reminding me more of Connie Willis' Blackout.

The only issue that I had was the abrupt nature of the ending, which raises another immediate mystery for Eve to pursue. As I was reading an advanced reading copy not due for release for another two months, I am very frustrated by the prospective wait for the next book to find out what happens to Eve and her companions.

I received an advanced reading copy from Kensington Books via NetGalley. Thanks!

Julia O'Connell says

For Eve Whitby, a connection to the supernatural seems to run in the family. A talented medium like her grandmother Evelyn, Eve has decided to turn her ghost-related abilities into a career. With the support of New York City governor Teddy Roosevelt, she quietly forms a Ghost Precinct within the NYPD to solve cold cases via otherworldly means. Their specialty is finding missing children, but when one of their own ghost operatives goes missing, Eve realizes that they may be dealing with something bigger than she's ever faced before. Meanwhile, a troubling thread of strange coincidences seems to be running through all of their cases: poison, the powerful Prenze family, and the ominous warning "Don't let anything in." Eve will need to call on all her allies—from her grandmother to the long-time veteran of psychic battles, Clara Bishop, and the handsome Detective Horowitz—in order to get to the bottom of this mystery.

Read my full review at <https://www.thegothiclibrary.com/revi...>

Kristine says

The Spectral City by Leanna Renee Hieber is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in late November.

Post-victorian New York detective work (usually having to do with murder or kidnapping) with Eve, other mediums, spirit guides, and the Ghost Precinct. It's all kind of like a third-person-narrated Ghostbusters with a perspective from the ghosts themselves during a post-Alienist timeframe and the spooky concept that ghosts/spirits can be lost even further into the afterlife than where the Ghost Precinct can access. Eve approaches her work and fellow mediums with such grace and gratitude, even when she encounters people or communities who don't believe or understand, though she struggles to cope with mean-spirited wails from the other side that distract and play with her emotions & fears.
