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London 1925: a grisly discovery in a ladies' rooming house sets ex-boxer Harry Stubbs on a new mission. An insidious alien force is at work, and the quest takes Harry from the lowest dives to high society, delving for occult secrets buried in the Horniman Museum and battling bare-knuckle with ferocious opponents. Harry's fighting skills and deductive prowess are put to the test, but telling friend from enemy is increasingly difficult and time is running out...a thrilling adventure where ancient mystery collides with 1920s science to the background of the Cthulhu Mythos,

Alien Stars: A Harry Stubbs Adventure Details

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Author : David Hambling

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From Reader Review Alien Stars: A Harry Stubbs Adventure for online ebook

Matthew says

This is another Harry Stubbs novel from Hambling that does a wonderful job of blending the horror of H.P. Lovecraft with a post-First World War London. If Cthulhu meets Peaky Blinders sounds like your cuppa, give Alien Stars a go; you'll be happy you did.

Philip Hemplow says

I think one of the things I like most about Harry Stubbs is that he's a character we wouldn't normally get to hear from: the hired muscle; an ex-boxer; a henchman who gets called on when things get confrontational. Most stories like this would be told from the perspective of Skinner, his pal, with the lumbering heavy reduced to a 2D caricature. It's very refreshing to be told things from the perspective of the bodyguard and enforcer, and a welcome departure from the ruthless averaging, common to too much fiction, per which anyone with physical skills must be a lunkhead, and anyone with insight or knowledge must be a bit of a weed.

Which isn't to say Stubbs is omniscient or infallible--far from it. He spends most of this story playing catch-up, tussling with anomalies and puzzles which will also intrigue the reader. Hambling plays his cards close to his chest, and even those with a good background knowledge of the Mythos will take a while to figure out what's going on. As other reviewers have noted, it eventually becomes apparent that the Mythos background to Alien Stars lies in an HPL story that has been rather under-utilised by contemporary writers, and is all the more welcome for that.

Another reason I like the Stubbs stories is that the protagonist isn't trapped in amber: he changes jobs and circumstances, maintains relationships with characters from previous books, and develops throughout the series. This time, for the first time, there is even a tantalising hint of romance in the air for Harry. This is offset against the action, which is more frequent here than in the previous novels, particularly as the story reaches its macabre and violent climax.

Overall, a very satisfactory third outing for Harry and friends. These books deserve to be read (or listened to, for the audiobookers) in sequence, but when you get to this one you can be sure you'll enjoy it as much as the previous two--I certainly did.

C.T. Phipps says

HARRY STUBBS is back and fighting the Great Od Ones again! The adventures of a early 20th century London boxer and amateur detective remains one of my favorite Cthulhu spin-offs. It's a series of well-researched detective stories which are more interested in the occult secret societies, weird history of London, and cultists versus the actual supernatural weirdness so many other stories deal with. In simple terms, it's more The 9th Gate versus Friday the Thirteenth in how it compares to most stories.

ALIEN STARS opens with Harry having lost his job with legitimate firms and having been reduced to doing

criminal work with a corrupt partner. They now serve as thieves and black marketeers who acquire antiques with occult significance then sell them to their patrons. It's a pretty big shift for the normally honest and forthright Harry so I found this change a bit jarring. This time, his latest job results in a death of a young woman who is involved in a conspiracy to deal with an unnatural plague that can destroy the world.

Alien Stars isn't quite as enjoyable as the other two volumes of the series due to the fact Harry doesn't quite work as a professional criminal and I felt the more "aware" cultists helping him investigate the occult was less interesting than the protagonist stumbling around on his own. On the plus side, I liked the larger role of women in the story. There's more in this book and they play a more central role than usual.

I also appreciate all the references to the Colour of Outer Space, which is my favorite of HPL's work.

8/10

Thomas says

Book 3 finds Harry working with a partner and employed by a wealthy but twitchy benefactor. Bizarre deaths follow. Another possible benefactor appears. Possible romantic entanglements occur. And a potential ally or enemy shows. Harry's good nature, honor, and tenacity, as well as a little luck get Harry into and out of trouble. Check it out.

Andrew Lawrenson says

This latest novel from Hambling once more features protagonist Harry Stubbs, and ex-boxer and now budding-detective, with a sharper mind than your average hired muscle.

Together with another veteran of WW1 he is hired by a secretive employer Randolph Stafford, and sent on a mission to confront a woman and retrieve an artefact - and elusive and all too dangerous "beetle" with which their employer has an unhealthy obsession.

This is an adventure of a cosmic horror that has the power to consume those that get too close to it, both mentally and physically, and Stubbs will need to use all of his wits as much as his muscle in order to succeed.

Set in 1925 Norwood, the same real-world area of London as the previous Harry Stubbs adventures, the writing employs a nice blend of old settings and new ideas. Hambling puts his knowledge of science and occult to good use, invoking the atmosphere of Lovecraft without ever becoming a pastiche

As enjoyable as the previous to Harry Stubs adventures, and just as highly recommended.

Matthew Davenport says

Our modest hero, Harry Stubbs, returns in another great adventure!

He's still reading his science fiction novels, working the jobs only an ex-boxer can get, and working on a correspondence course in investigations that has me super excited for future installments.

In this book, he's investigating a weird type of meteorite that might have abstract properties, making it dangerous for the owner.

My favorite parts of this book were the parts that define any Harry Stubbs adventure. Specifically, the investigation into the museum, the library research, and the very interesting characters, specifically, his employer in this book and the sultry American visitor.

Harry Stubbs is one of my favorite characters and always a great adventure. David fails to disappoint, bringing an intelligent and intrigue-driven story to a character that could so easily be written as a dumb stereotype. Instead, he's a smart man, who I would describe as more wise than intelligent, in that he's always seeking to learn and better himself.

Even if those efforts and his current line of work might drive him mad.
5 out of 5!

BERNARD ANDREWS says

Pleasure to read, nice addition to the mythos

I am enjoying the further adventures of Harry Stubbs with the cosmic monsters and influences inspired by the Cthulhu mythos and looking forward to seeing more

Timy says

Actual rating: 4.5 stars

Full review with some extra add ons can be found on my blog!

First of all, look at the cover. I love it so much! Okay, I might be a bit too much in love in purple...

After the Roslyn D'Onston case, Harry finds himself employed by a rich man called Safford, and working closely with Skinner. They tasks are doing anything Stafford asks from them be it following people, leading an investigation, capture a gardener gone wild or finding an artifact Stafford seeks. The latter turns into a murder investigation pretty fast and Harry will need his intelligence more than his physical strength to solve the case. Which not means he doesn't end up giving a punch or two of course. Our dear old Harry always finds himself in a situation where he has to fight wether to save his life or to help out a youngster. But Harry, being a simple, however not unintelligent man, needs some help if he wants to get to the end of things.

For starters he has Skinner as a partner, who is even more simple than Harry. Being an ex-soldier who is quite sour about his past, finds reading a total waste of time, thinks he is a Don Juan and has a cunning, cynical personality. Personally I found him quite unpleasant and insufferable for some reasons. Perhaps because of the way he has seen the world, dismissing things he thought were unnecessary, like reading or questioning his employer's actions or orders. He is a soldier through and through who follows order and don't ask questions, a bit narrow-minded and strongly believing in hierarchy. As Harry says about him:

“He had no very great interest in the wider considerations, whereas I believed that only by a careful accumulation of knowledge could we make sense of things.”

His biggest help turns out to be a librarian, named Mr. Hoade, who obviously loves his job and is pretty proud of the Dewey Decimal System – everyone who spent long hours in a library trying to find relevant books knows what a blessing it can be that libraries actually have a system which is easy to navigate and you don't have to use those cards anymore. Regardless, one of my favorite lines came from Mr. Hoade:

“Reference is the great, universal engine of the library, the powerhouse of raw knowledge. But literature—what you call imaginative fiction—is the embodiment of our wildest dreams. What is life for if you can't dream? How can a man discover anything without imagination to draw on?”

Hoade is quite fond of crosswords and puzzles, so he happily indulges himself in finding information for Harry be it about significant stones in different mythologies or any connection between Harry's murder investigation and the Horniman Museum. One of my favorite parts in this book is where different cultures' mythologies are mentioned and Hambling draws up a parallel between Astarte's cultus, the stone in Mecca and Jacob who sleeps on a stone and gets a vision. A stone like that pops up in history from time to time and every culture has a different name for it, but in this book it is called baetyl, a greek word, which refers to a sacred stone thrown from heaven. Probably more like a meteorite – this gets a significant role in the story, so I'm not going to say more. Suffice to say, this story has an interesting scientific undertone to it. I'll get back to this in a bit.

We also have an old-new friend as side character, Sally, who helps Harry and Skinner out where a sensitive, smart woman can be more effective than two rough men. Plus Sally feels obliged to help Harry after all the things he did for her in Broken Meats. I liked Sally, and I am curious how her story will continue – if we meet her at all later. I also have to mention Stafford, who although a prominent figure in the story, gets minimal role and only shows up when he feels like giving some information or needs Harry and Skinner's help to solve a certain problem. He comes out as a spoiled rich man with an obsession for stars and something he calls his Saint Grail, and also paranoid. He hardly shares any more information than necessary to keep the investigation going on. My other favorite part is where he tries to explain how many stars are out there and how big the Universe really is while using an analogy with a broomshed, where the said shed is the Earth and as the person ventures outside realises how big the world – and the Universe – really is. And this leaves Harry in an awe:

“I scanned from horizon to horizon and tried to think what a million stars would look like. Even that many would not quite fill the heavens, but they would look like the sparkles on a sunny sea, all packed close together.”

Back when I read The Elder Ice, I found the language hard to digest for some reasons. Now that I've read the third book in the series I somehow grew to love not only the language but Hambling's writing style too. It reminds me a bit of Ed McBain (okay, it really reminds me of the hungarian translation) from my teenage years when my dad introduced his mystery novels to me. Under his pen South London comes alive and you find yourself transported back in time. The scene with the fair really made me wish I was walking alongside Harry and Skinner, eating toffee apples, looking at the booths, enjoying the nice summer day. Hell, I'd like to go to a fair right now if we had any nearby.

And while the writing style and characters are spot on, I struggled a bit to wrap my mind around all the scientific explanations going on regarding the meteorite and why exactly did everyone want to get their hands on it. At some places explanations were a bit too cryptic or non-existent – for example I still don't know how did Madam Hester got into the picture in the first place, or why did Stafford wanted this peculiar artifact. Although in the end we get an explanation for that, but it comes from out of the blue and it totally caught me off guard. The problem might have been that so many things were going on, that there wasn't

enough space for everything to get in place. 50 pages or more would have done some good in this case. Honestly, I'm still amazed Hambling can write such complex stories in such short books. Also, the info dumps never feel like info dumps. Hambling can write them in a way that they are rather interesting and it never even cross your mind that they are what they are.

Alien Stars while keeping to the historical fiction genre, ventures deeper into Science Fiction. It also draws more from different mythologies and waves them together nicely. Alien Stars still has that unique atmosphere the other books also had: the prose is flowing, the characters are alive, and London leaps off the pages. If you are looking for a mystery, a historical fiction or even a science fiction novel, you'll get all three in one. If you haven't already checked out Harry Stubb's adventures, I really don't know what are you waiting for!

Lulu says

Love this series.
