



# Johannes Cabal the Detective

*Jonathan L. Howard*

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**Johannes Cabal the Detective** Jonathan L. Howard

**Johannes Cabal, necromancer of some little infamy, returns in this riotously clever and terrifically twisted tale of murder and international intrigue.**

In this genre-twisting novel, infamous necromancer Johannes Cabal, after beating the Devil and being reunited with his soul, leads us on another raucous journey in a little-known corner of the world. This time he's on the run from the local government.

Stealing the identity of a minor bureaucrat, Cabal takes passage on the *Princess Hortense*, a passenger aership that is leaving the country. The deception seems perfect, and Cabal looks forward to a quiet trip and a clean escape, until he comes face-to-face with Leonie Barrow, an enemy from the old days who could blow his cover. But when a fellow passenger throws himself to his death, or at least that is how it appears, Cabal begins to investigate out of curiosity. His minor efforts result in a vicious attempt on his own life—and then the gloves come off.

Cabal and Leonie—the only woman to ever match wits with him—reluctantly team up to discover the murderer. Before they are done, there will be more narrow escapes, involving sword fighting and newfangled flying machines. There will be massive destruction, not to mention resurrected dead . . .

Steampunk meets the classic Sherlockian mystery in this rip-roaring adventure where anything could happen . . . and does.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## Johannes Cabal the Detective Details

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Author : Jonathan L. Howard

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# From Reader Review Johannes Cabal the Detective for online ebook

## Lea says

Funny story about this book -- I picked it up a couple of weeks ago, thinking it was the FIRST Cabal book. I read the first page, and was immediately confused as to why I had given up reading it on my first attempt -- this book was so funny! Why in the world was I remembering it as being slightly dull?

Then I realized: Ohhhhh! I get it -- this isn't the book I was reading!

While I did eventually finish the first book -- and gave it high marks for story and style -- this book's rates much higher for me. I just fell completely in love with the writing here, which was an absolute pleasure to read. Howard is hysterically funny, and it feels like he allowed himself to loosen up just a bit with this story.

The author is British, and that wonderful British humor is certainly on display here, even going so far as to pay homage to some of England's well-known comedies.

In this book, Cabal is back, this time beginning as a prisoner (necromancers are no more popular now than they were in the previous book) before becoming embroiled in the political machinations of a seriously disturbed wannabe dictator.

Learning how he makes his escape, only to become further entangled in the local politics, as well as a murder mystery, is part of the joy of this book.

I would highly recommend this book, especially for fans of British humor. Although it is the second book featuring Cabal, I don't think it is completely necessary to read the first book before tackling this one.

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## Maxine Marsh says

4.5\*

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## Melora says

More uneven than the first in the series, this one swung between three and four stars most of the way. After a rip-roaring start it slowed to a crawl. albeit an amusing crawl, and didn't pick up much energy again until about halfway through the book. Horst, Johannes's brother, didn't make an appearance this time, and I missed him, but Leonie Barrow returned as a major character and was marvelous. The writing, and the editing, felt a bit rushed in places, but, as in the earlier book, there were *many* deliciously funny bits.

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## Bryce says

For fans of Johannes Cabal the Necromancer, a warning: This book is very different from the first. Different tone, different type of comedy, and (dare I say it?) even a different side of Johannes Cabal.

At first, the differences put me off. Especially the imaginary geography/political situation and all the steampunk elements. I was hoping for another madcap supernatural adventure, but got instead a mixture of Sherlock Holmes and William Gibson. But once I stopped trying to shoehorn the book into my preconceived hopes for it and started enjoying it for its own merits, I actually had to ask myself "Is this a sequel that surpasses the first in a series?"

In JC the Necromancer, Cabal is an obsessed, self-absorbed "right bastard." In JC the Detective... well, he's still all those things, but the return of his soul gives him a conscience, a sense of perspective, and the nagging question of whether he wants to continue being a "right bastard." Added to the mix is Leonie Barrow, a much stronger character here than in her brief appearance in the first book. She's marvelously portrayed as loathing Cabal while being drawn to him at the same time. I hope to see more of her in a third book, and soon.

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## K says

Before I begin, I'd just like to say - I like more Cabal without a soul.

**BUT BY GOD!** I love this series. It contains everything I could ever want in a book: blood, necromancy, murder, zombies, dark humor, and most importantly - a thoroughly detailed plot. I have to confess, the main reason that I like this series is because like the hopeful fool I am, I see (or envision) myself in the quixotic main character: Johannes Cabal. He is narcissistic, egocentric, cold hearted, emotionally deprived, and also is just a complete bitch to everyone around him. HAHHAHA. I like to think that I have all these characteristics in myself. To be honest, he perfectly embodies the antihero: murderous with villainous intentions achieved by dark methods. But he is neither good nor bad, and in the end makes the logical choice...(most of the time anyways). If anyone reads comics, Deadpool is what comes to my mind when I read this book. Neither characters would give a rat's ass about anyone else!

[image error]

Although, now that Cabal has regained his soul, he **SOMETIMES** slips up from his usual indifferent demeanor to reveal a human emotion he tries very hard to hide: compassion... No matter how much he tries to hide it underneath all of his seemingly selfish motives - I can see what he did! **HE CARES ABOUT PEOPLE!** Ahaha! **You can't hide it bro, I see what you did there.**

But seriously folks, when Cabal wants something done, he just does his necromancy thing and could care less about anyone else!

Another reason I like this book, is because the author **tastefully** kept the Romance on the down low. As an emotional detached person, I **HATE** romantic novels. I don't care if they are classics like Jane Eyre or recent like Twilight. I hate'em all! Sure, one can see Cabal's burgeoning love for Leonie Barrow (no matter how much he denies it) - the love is simply not overdone. Like a good piece of steak, Jonathan Howard is being sure to cook the love dynamics between Cabal and Ms. Barrows slow and steady.

Unlike other craptastic teen reads that my generation of growing idiots seem to covet, this series also has a

wide range of vocabulary that revives my depraved mind! I am a word fanatic and all this colorful usage of diverse vocabulary and phrases just makes me SO HAPPY.

**But I HAVE to warn you, this series is not going to float everyone's boat.** Because the plot can be somewhat confusing, and the general theme is a bit dark and morbid, I imagine that people who think Twilight has a complex plot will find this book unreadable.

*I recommend this to anyone who have enjoyed reading: Hold Me Closer, Necromancer by Lish McBride, The Thief by Megan Turner, and Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children by Ransom Riggs.*

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## Jason says

4 Stars

The Detective, book two of the Johannes Cabal series by Jonathan L Howard is a dark urban fantasy done right. Johannes Cabal is not a good man heck, he is not even a nice man. He literally sold his soul to the devil and then went to Hell and back to get it back.

This book moves along competently and there is plenty of action, dialogue, and witty banter. This story takes place mostly in the sky and plays out like an old murder mystery that takes place on a train. I really enjoyed the writing style of Howard. He is big on painting a dark and dirty picture and he is big on witty and satirical dialogue. I am a huge fan. I was however disappointed with Cabal himself. The Detective is much more a murder mystery than it is a book about a nasty necromancer. Not enough raising of the dead.

I love the series and will definitely move on to the next in the series.

Pick it up for the fun...

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## Amanda says

Johannes Cabal the Detective is the second book about the eponymous necromancer. I read the first book, Johannes Cabal the Necromancer, at the beginning of this year, and was enormously enamoured with the bitingly sarcastic gentleman in question. In fact, it has remained my number one read of 2010 despite fierce competition from other titles, and so I was almost nervous about picking up this second novel about Johannes Cabal in case it did not live up to the first.

I am pleased to report that Johannes Cabal the Detective is just as darkly funny, original and snarky as the first novel in the series. In this book Cabal begins the tale in a prison, following the aborted theft of a rather nasty little book. Through foul means and not a little luck, he finds himself aboard an airship — the Princess Hortense — as she flies her maiden voyage between Mirkarvia and Katamenia. As is usual with Cabal, what should have been a peaceful flight turns into a murder mystery, and he is caught in the middle of it, trying to

piece together all the clues to discover whodunit. Accompanied by Leonie Barrow (a character from the first novel), Cabal is caught in a race against time. If he doesn't discover the culprit, then he might very well become the next victim.

By far the strongest element of the novel is Johannes Cabal himself — a complicated, scientifically-minded, dark-hearted man. I equate him somewhat to Basil Fawlty from the Fawlty Towers series (those of you who don't know of this, pick up the TV series on DVD and delight in the bizarre English humour of it all) — Basil is enormously dislikable, biting sarcasm and always doing something that will benefit himself; and yet you find yourself sympathising with him when his schemes go awry and generally cheering him on. Exactly the same could be said about Johannes Cabal. His dialogue carries the story along, and his various encounters with the other members of the crew are hilarious and uncomfortable by turn. Without Cabal this book would be merely an amusing mystery novel; with him included, it is elevated to a comedic fantasy classic.

Because of the nature of the novel — a murder mystery — we encounter a number of other secondary characters who do remain fairly two-dimensional. Howard does attempt to lift them above being merely props to the plot, but all bar Leonie Barrow (who sparkles thanks to her common sense and an ability to make Cabal feel uncomfortable) feel rather hollow.

I mentioned the noir humour of the novel — as well as the main bulk of the story, we are handed other gems, such as diagrams of the airships and entomoptors complete with excitable comments (as though from the pages of a boy's magazine) and exam questions such as the following:

"Read the following brief description of the Second Gallician Conflict, its results and ramifications, and then answer the questions that follow it.

(A) In what year did Mirkarvia invade Senza?

(B) i) With hindsight, what was Dulcis III's most serious error?

ii) And without hindsight?

(C) Discuss any two of the following statements:

i) Mirkarvia behaved like a right bunch of bastards.

ii) Polorus behaved like a right bunch of bastards.

iii) All countries behave like a right bunch of bastards.

(D) Write a political treatise — not to exceed 250,000 words or 500 sides, whichever is less — detailing your solution to stabilising relations in the region, military force above brigade level is not permitted, nor is divine intervention."

If the above extract of rather absurd humour appeals to you, then you will delight in the continual flashes of comedy that anchor this novel.

My slight complaint from the first novel in the series was that the world-building was slim to non-existent. This is addressed admirably in Johannes Cabal the Detective. We are introduced to the states of Mirkarvia and Senza, and a petty political back story is laid out for us. I do wonder how these states connect to the location we encountered in Johannes Cabal the Necromancer, however! Jonathan L. Howard does succeed in developing a strong steampunk feel to the series, which builds on the presence of the carnival locomotive from the first novel.

Happily, this novel is relatively standalone. Enough details are passed out about the first novel to give the reader a good indication of events that occurred, and it is not necessary to have read that book to read *Johannes Cabal the Detective*.

Howard is quietly going about the business of presenting a character who feels iconic right from the very first moment he steps onto the page. Johannes Cabal the Detective is a triumph of dark murder mystery combined with steampunk flair. Add more than a dash of laugh-out-loud funny moments and you have a novel that builds on the success of the first. I was kept awake long into the night feverishly turning the pages of this book, and would recommend it highly.

??????? says

[illegible][illegible]

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“The main course came next, steak cooked in the Mirkarvian fashion—so rare as to be just this side of stationary. Miss Barrow looked at her plate as red juices oozed from the flesh. “What am I supposed to do with this?” she asked Cabal in an aside. “Eat it or resuscitate it?”

“Thank your stars that you asked for it well done,” he replied. He’d asked for his to be cooked medium rare, which in Mirkarvian cuisine meant it had been shown a picture of an oven for a moment and then served. A very brief moment, mind.”

? ?? ????? ? ????????? ? ?????????????????, ????? ?? ? ?????, ??? ??:

"Do you smoke, Herr Cabal?"

"Only to be antisocial."

## Wortmagie says

Die „*Johannes Cabal*“ – Reihe begann ich 2013. Obwohl ich den Auftakt Seelenfänger mochte und bereits zwei Folgebände besaß, hielt ich mich mit dem Weiterlesen zurück, weil ich warten wollte, bis sie weiter fortgeschritten ist. Der vierte Band erschien 2014 in Englisch, also wollte ich ausharren, bis dieser übersetzt wäre. Ich wartete und wartete. Im Juli 2016 war meine Geduld am Ende. Ich fragte die Twitter-Community um Rat, ob eine Übersetzung nach zwei Jahren noch wahrscheinlich sei. Meine liebe Blogger-Kollegin Elizzy wandte sich für mich an den Autor Jonathan L. Howard, der dann auch prompt antwortete, dass er leider keinen deutschen Vertrag über den vierten und fünften Band habe. Unerhört. Er riet mir, Mundpropaganda für die Reihe zu betreiben, denn stiegen die Verkaufszahlen, würde Goldmann seinen Vertrag eventuell ausweiten. Deal. Einen Monat später nahm ich mir den zweiten Band „*Totenbeschwörer*“ vor und erfülle nun hiermit meinen Part, euch von dem Buch zu erzählen.

Nekromanten haben es schwer. Von der Welt gehasst und verfolgt, kann ein Nekromant nicht einmal ohne Komplikationen ein Buch ausleihen. Gut, Johannes Cabal wollte das Buch nachts ausleihen, als die Bibliothek verlassen war. Er hatte auch nicht vor, es jemals zurückzugeben oder Ausleihgebühren zu zahlen. Aber das ist noch lange kein Grund, ihn ins Gefängnis zu werfen und zu exekutieren, oder? Während Cabal in seiner Todeszelle über diese Ungerechtigkeit nachgrübelt, erhält er überraschenden Besuch. Ein hoher Staatsmann verspricht, ihn zu begnadigen, wäre er bereit, seine Fähigkeiten einzusetzen, um den unerwartet und gänzlich unpassend verstorbenen Kaiser des Reiches vorübergehend wiederzubeleben. Cabal erkennt die Gunst der Stunde und lässt sich auf die Vereinbarung ein. Doch damit fangen seine Probleme erst an...

Ich verstehe, warum die Verkaufszahlen der „*Johannes Cabal*“ – Reihe nicht ausreichten, um einen weiterführenden Vertrag zwischen Goldmann und Jonathan L. Howard zu rechtfertigen. Die Bücher um den zwielichtigen Geisterbeschwörer Cabal sind sehr speziell. Sie liegen weit abseits vom Mainstream und werden daher wohl niemals die weltweiten Bestsellerlisten stürmen. Sie verkörpern eine besondere Art von Humor und folgen einem Erzählstil, der ein wenig nostalgisch an den Film Noir der 1940er und 1950er erinnert. Jonathan L. Howard schreibt nüchtern und altmodisch, er lässt die Skurrilität seiner Geschichten für sich sprechen, statt atemlos dem nächsten Actionkick nachzujagen. Das bedeutet nicht, dass seine Bücher nicht spannend wären, doch das Erzähltempo ist wesentlich gemäßigter, als man es heutzutage aus der modernen Literatur gewohnt ist. In „*Totenbeschwörer*“ treten diese Eigenheiten meiner Meinung nach noch deutlicher zu Tage als in Seelenfänger, weil es sich bei diesem zweiten Band um einen Kriminalroman in der Tradition von Agatha Christies „*Miss Marple*“ handelt. Mich überraschte diese Herangehensweise, da ich mir den Protagonisten Johannes Cabal vor der Lektüre niemals als Detektiv hätte vorstellen können. Natürlich ist er hinsichtlich seiner Fähigkeiten geradezu prädestiniert für diese Rolle, denn er liebt es, seinen analytischen Verstand für die Lösung kniffliger Rätsel einzusetzen, aber ich hätte nicht erwartet, dass ihn die Aufklärung eines Kriminalfalls interessiert. Dass er in die Ermittlung involviert wird, ist ein gewaltiger Zufall – dass er sich dieser annimmt, ist seinem Ehrgeiz sowie seiner Eitelkeit zuzuschreiben. Ich bezweifle, dass ich der verwinkelten Logik des Falls allein auf die Schliche gekommen wäre, obwohl die Auswahl der Verdächtigen eingeschränkt ist, was wiederum daran liegt, dass das Setting räumlich eng begrenzt ist. Der Großteil der Handlung spielt in einem Luftschiff; denkt ihr nun an das Bild eines Zeppelins, liegt ihr allerdings daneben. Die „Prinzessin Hortense“ gleicht eher einem fliegenden Flugzeugträger, was ich dank erstaunlich detaillierter Illustrationen behaupten kann. Die Funktionsweise des Prachtstücks erschloss sich mir nicht völlig, die libellenähnlichen Entomopter verstand ich besser, doch ich wusste die leichte Steampunk-Atmosphäre, die Howard durch ihren Einsatz beschwört, sehr zu schätzen. Dieses Flair passt einfach zu Cabal, dem charmanten Schurken, pardon, Nekromanten. Es ist schwer zu sagen, was genau



Cabal charmant erscheinen lässt, denn sympathisch ist er nicht. Er ist Egoist und Misanthrop, andere Menschen sind ihm bestenfalls lästig. Er neigt zu drastischen, endgültigen Entscheidungen und behandelt Gewalt als ein selbstverständliches, notwendiges Mittel zum Zweck. Trotz dessen beobachte ich ihn unheimlich gern. Gerade aufgrund seiner verkümmerten sozialen Kompetenzen bereiten mir seine Interaktionen mit dem Rest der Menschheit einen Heidenspaß, weil dadurch der unnachahmliche, trockene, makabre Witz entsteht, der Howard und Cabal so eigen ist.

„*Totenbeschwörer*“ ist ein Krimi, der von allem etwas hat. Er ist ein bisschen Steampunk, ein bisschen Urban Fantasy und ein bisschen politischer Thriller. Jonathan L. Howard jongliert diese wilde Mischung spielend und lässt seinen Protagonisten Johannes Cabal durch diverse Reifen springen, ohne ihm jemals die Würde zu rauben. Cabal bleibt Cabal und bestreitet die Herausforderungen des Autors authentisch auf seine eigene skurrile, grenzwertige Art und Weise. Ich mag Howards speziellen Schreibstil, obwohl er hin und wieder umständlich ist und ich liebe die Courage, mit der er dem Mainstream trotzt. Der zweite Band der „*Johannes Cabal*“ – Reihe ist, wie bereits der Vorgänger, altmodische Literatur und genau aus diesem Grund herrlich erfrischend. Ich hätte nicht gezögert, dieses Buch mit vier Sternen zu belohnen, wäre es für meinen Geschmack nicht etwas arg krimilastig. Ich mag nun mal keine Krimis – nicht einmal Johannes Cabal, der vermutlich faszinierendste Geisterbeschwörer der Welt, vermag das zu ändern.

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## **Miriam says**

Quite different in plot and setting from the first book.

On the one hand, I like airships (it isn't actually a dirigible in the book) and murder mysteries and political shenanigans in ~~Ruritania~~ ~~Samavia~~ Mirkavia more than I like Faustian bargains and carnivals.

On the other hand, I found Cabal's interactions with Horst more interesting than his exchanges with Leonie. The dialogue was still funny, but not as funny the first book.

However, I did think the ending here was stronger. Also, note that the extra pages are a (quite good) short story, not a preview of the third book as one might expect, so don't skip it!

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## **colleen the convivial curmudgeon says**

I just read my review of the first book in this series, Johannes Cabal The Necromancer, to refresh my memory. I also gave that book 3 stars, down from 3.5. This one is sort of coming from the other end – 3 stars bumped up from 2.5.

Once again, it's not a bad book, but I keep expecting something more from it. There are moments of real cleverness, wry humor and dry wit, and these moments really shine out.

There are other moments, however, where the humor feels more forced than anything, and where everything sort of just falls flat.

More than that, though, is the fact that while the devil carnival is not exactly a unique premise, was still more original than the locked door mystery of this book, complete with expository explanations of what happened that aren't really hinted until the big reveal.

And it just took a good while to get there. The set-up was slow, especially when we were first meeting everyone and setting the scene, and I found myself dozing off more than once while trying to read.

It did pick up, and I'll say the intrigue was handled well enough, the action, though sort of restricted to the end, was done pretty well, and the inclusion of Leonie was a more than welcome addition. I also enjoyed the growth of Cabal, after his getting his soul back in the last book. He's still pretty amoral and all, but with the occasional twinge of conscience which makes things interesting.

Not bad, overall, but far from great. I may continue with the series, but I may not purchase the next in the series, favoring getting in from the library instead. I don't see much reread potential if things continue as they currently are.

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### **Cami says**

Oh, Johannes.

I thought we had something going. Your wit, my interest. Your dark adventures, my stalker-like observation...

Sadly, you seemed to have become an utter bore. I didn't even want to stick around to see you get off of your Hindenburg.

I didn't even get a delicious hint that you were continuing where you left off in your first book.

If a third one is on the horizon, I'll attempt that.

Thanks anyway.

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### **Mei says**

Disappointing after the great first novel. It's a genre switch from the horror/comedy of the first book to a detective/steampunk/comedy and I really miss the horror elements. Cabal is still a lot of fun and a great character though, so I won't knock down the score too much. An entertaining read, but not up to the first one.

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### **Daniel says**

Druga knjiga u serijalu ali ima skroz drugačiji ton. Dok je prva više bila horor varijanta za ovu je lako pogoditi na osnovu naslova :) Lepa vrsta misterije iliti klasičan who did it? Ono što je prenešeno jeste polu crni humor iz prethodne sa zabavnim i pitkim stilom pisanja. Većina likova koje upoznajemo u knjizi jesu dvodimenzionalni ali to ne smeta previše pošto su zabavni: negativac je ona vrsta koji su zli bez da budu neshvaćeni i slično. Likovi koji se vraćaju su još malo produbljeni pa se jedva čekala da vidimo njihove buduće interakcije.

Sve u svemu dobar nastavak što obećava za nastavak serijala.

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## Carol. says

Safe to say, no one has gone through such travails to read a book as Johannes Cabal. Of course, he didn't only mean to *read* it:

**“Cabal had been caught trying to check out a book from the library... The book was in the Special Collection, and Cabal had intended the loan to be of an extended, open-ended sort of period.”**

I'll wait, while the librarians amongst us recover themselves.

Caught by a Mirkarvian Count, Cabal uses his necromancer skills to distract the Count and escape by assuming the persona of a bureaucrat, Herr Meissner. He escapes on a luxury aeroship on a mercy mission delivering vegetables to the neighboring country, only first they have to pass through the mildly hostile country of Senza. During the flight, Cabal becomes embroiled in a locked-room mystery when the original designer of the aeroship goes missing: **“The curious case of the defenestrated DeGarre and the adventure of the ersatz civil servant were inextricably linked.”**

I began reading in a cranky state of mind, but my ill-temper paled in comparison to Cabal's: **“As for humanity, anything I do for it is purely by accident.”** Before long, Cabal's arrogance and Howard's wit had me not only feeling better about my relatively benign curmudgeonly state, but outright laughing. Howard nicely set up Cabal's adventures, segueing him into being forced to solve a locked-room mystery. Cabal's tribulations are worsened as he is forced to interact with a familiar face and the tiniest twinges of his underdeveloped conscience. In this book, we get to see Cabal shaken to his core:

**“Whosoever would do such a thing to my nimpty-bimpty snookums?”**

**Cabal could not have been more horrified if she'd pulled off her face to reveal a gaping chasm of eternal night from which glistening tentacles coiled and groped. That had already happened to him once in his life, and he wasn't keen to repeat the experience.”**

Howard's writing appeals to the intellect, a deft mix of cleverness and blasé exaggeration. It isn't really a book I sit down and devour, impatiently leaping from page to page. This is a book that I read carefully, not wanting to miss a word-play or reference. Subtle and not-so-subtle humor abounds. Given the humor, Howard still manages to do some really remarkable things with emotion. Cabal is incredibly reserved, repressed even to himself, and generally thinks of nothing but his own skin, so it is interesting when he has to wrestle with his deeply buried humanity. There was a death that was dealt with beautifully, both by Cabal and by his witness, with a line so perfect in its emotion, it stopped me flat:

**“His corpse was pathetic, in that it inspired pathos, and pitiful, in that it aroused pity.”**

The mystery is neatly wrapped up in a classic Poirot denouement, but the final resolution initially leaves the reader hanging. An afterword notes the journey home was **“uneventful in all respects, unless one counts the business with the spy and the bandits and the Elemental Evil and the end of the world as we know it.”** It brought to mind the unsatisfactory passage in *Wise Man's Fear* where Rothfuss alludes to a pirate adventure, and I wondered if Howard was poking fun. Alas, I don't think so—*The Detective* was 2010 and WMF was 2011. Still, Howard is much kinder to the readers and provides a thoughtful account for those people who **“might like to hear about spies and bandits and all that.”**

Ultimately, quite satisfying. I finished with my spirits lifted and view of humanity marginally improved.

Still, I'll be trying to find a way to work a new insult into a conversation:

**“A hatchet-faced customs official... strode up to Marechal, having instantly discriminated between the monkey and the organ-grinder.”**

**Four and a half stars--just shy of perfect.**

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## Veronica says

*"An unsympathetic observer might have said that when one embarks on a career as a necromancer - consorting with demons, digging up the dead and bringing them back to life, or at least something fairly similar to life - one can hardly complain when things become complicated. Even by those standards, however, it seemed a little unfair that the perfectly simple theft of a book had turned into a great tumbling chaos of politics, murder, deceit, and mystery."*

All Johannes Cabal wanted was to borrow (long term and indefinitely, of course) a book that would help him in his one unchangeable mission to eradicate death. How could he know that it would lead to him kick starting a peasant uprising, having to impersonate a civil service agent, flying on the maiden voyage of a new airship, matching wits and trading barbs with a woman from his past, wearing fashion items he wouldn't be caught dead in (a special item of concern in his particular line of work), dodging numerous attempts on his life (actually, that one he probably does expect), unmasking a murderous plot, going down in flames, and being caught in the crosshairs of a femme fatale? Of all of these, it's the last one that truly horrifies Cabal.

This book was in a very different style than the first book and carries its own vibe. It's still darkly comedic, it's just...different. Cabal himself also feels slightly different, just a shade - not too strong mind you - more human than he was during his first published adventure. The possible reasons for this are two-fold. First, he is once again in possession of his soul, having wrangled it back from his Luciferiousness in the first book. Secondly, his incognito status in this book means that he has to blend in with others in a confined environment. Blending in isn't exactly Cabal's strong suit.

*"He never went out of his way to damage people's lives - not except in some very deliberate cases, anyway - but people would insist on getting in the way. Now he considered it more carefully, he began to appreciate just why quite so many bullets, knives, and the occasional crossbow quarrel had whistled past his frantically dodging head down the years."*

Johannes Cabal isn't one to inspire the warm fuzzies in anyone. He considers himself a scientist and his penchant for letting his actions be guided by logic, rather than the more unreliable and confusing dictates of emotion, means that sometimes he's not even especially likable. Even so, there are moments, brief and fleeting glimpses, into the undercurrents beneath the unflappable and sardonic exterior. And along for the adventure this time, though not by the choice of either, is Leonie Barrow - a young woman encountered in the last book who has reason to bear grudges against one Johannes Cabal. I really like Leonie in the first book and I liked her even better in this one.

I enjoy mystery stories so though it took me a while to accept that this story was going to have a different flavor from the last book, once I made the adjustment I was able to enjoy Cabal navigate this latest adventure. It was still fun, Cabal still has little patience or use for most of humanity, and I still chuckled several times. I'm looking forward to reading more books in the series.

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## Stephen says

4.0 stars. Even though I grade this book as a solid 4 stars, I was still a tad disappointed in this book because I went into it with such high expectations. Based solely on the strength of the writing (which is outstanding) and one of the most intriguing and original main characters in recent memory (i.e., Johannes Cabal), this is an easy 5 star effort. Howard's clever use of language and dry, witty phrasing makes reading the book a lot of fun to read. He also does an above average job of world building and has created a place that I want to visit and learn more about its history.

So with all of that, why only 4 stars? Simply put, I thought the story itself was too slow and not very interesting. Comparing it to a car ride, it is like driving through beautiful country in a Rolls Royce but over very bumpy road. All the potential for awesomeness is there, but you chose the wrong route.

Anyway, dull plot aside, I am so taken with the writing and the main character that I will buy the next installment of the series upon its release and still recommend the series as the potential for greatness is certainly there.

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## James says

"The condemned cell stank of cats.

There were no rats or cockroaches, for which Johannes Cabal - a necromancer of some little infamy - was grateful. But the cost of vermin control was an army of cats who crept in and out of his cell and wandered throughout the dungeons of the Harslaus Castle with complete impunity. Even the cell doors had cat flaps cut into them. It was no secret that the warders had a much higher opinion of the animals than they did of the inmates. When Cabal had been given his introductory tour, which took the form of being thrown down the stairs and shouted at, he had been left in no doubt that any harm that he might cause the cats would be returned to him with interest."

I dare any reader to read this opening paragraph and not want to know more.

Johannes Cabal, necromancer and anti-hero extraordinaire, is a fine creation: amoral, ambiguous, and a dab hand at one-liners. This is the second book he appears in. I now need to check out his first adventure.

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## Ivan says

Very different from book one which took inspiration from Gothic novels.

In this book Johannes Cabal *the necromancer of some little infamy and less even scruples, excommunicated from all major religions and few obscure one*. finds himself posing as minor government official on airship and getting caught in web of international intrigue. Throughout large part this plays out like murder mystery just instead of arrogant British detective we have arrogant evil necromancer.

*They served to remind Cabal - should a reminder ever be necessary - why his social skills were so poor: people were loathsome and not worth the practise.*

Cabal is always fun and It was hilarious to watch him pretending to be normal human. Humor is again very Pratchett esque but this time it was even more on target and I found myself laughing hard during larger portion of this book. I can't wait to see what will other books in the series bring.

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## ? Irena ? says

### 4.5

It is very difficult to explain this book. What you need to know is that you would be definitely doing this book disservice if you expected another *The Necromancer* or if you compared it with it in any way. The two are so different that the only thing they have in common is Cabal himself. I was vaguely aware of these differences before I started reading *The Detective* so I've decided not to compare the two books too much. At least, not in a way that may paint this one in a bad light. Yes, they are *that* different. And, guess what? It was a very smart decision. I enjoyed it very much.

Johannes Cabal gets to play detective on an aership. *The Detective* starts with him imprisoned in a Mirkarvian dungeon for days already. He would make another enemy (nothing new there) here too. Mirkarvians caught him trying to steal a rare book from the Krentz University library's Special Collection. After his escape (if anyone thinks this is a spoiler, please increase the number of books you read), he finds himself with a stolen identity of a government bureaucrat.

'In the last few months, he'd found himself prey to strange twinges that, after some research, he had discovered to be his conscience. This unwelcome quality took exception to many of the perfectly logical actions he had previously committed with the regularity of habit. In the present case, however, Cabal's conscience had apparently taken account of Herr Meissner's occupation as a civil servant and remained as quiet as a church mouse while Cabal stuffed a dirty rag in Meissner's mouth and trussed him up with little concern for his comfort. Even a conscience knows its limits.'

He also finds himself in the company of a character from *The Necromancer*. Then someone dies and he starts investigating. The most important thing in this book and the reason why many people dislike it is that Cabal has to play the part of Herr Gerhard Meissner. **He cannot be Johannes Cabal we expect and, erm, love.**

While the focus of the fist book is Cabal, his wonderful weirdness and whatever he is doing to get his soul back, here the focus is on adventure and murder investigation.

Then there is humour, from Mirkarvian politics (as Cabal notes their way of dealing with problems is '*If at first you don't succeed, then repeat your failure until nobody's left alive to comment.*') to amorous military men from Senza to Mirkarvian cuisine ('*Thank your stars that you asked for it well done,*" he replied. *He'd asked for his to be cooked medium rare, which in Mirkarvian cuisine meant it had been shown a picture of an oven for a moment and then served. A very brief moment, mind.*' or "'*Put hairs on your chest this will, old son,*" he commented to Cabal. *Cabal failed to see how this could be regarded as an advertisement, particularly with respect to female diners.*') and so on.

The wonderful thing in *The Detective* is that Johannes Cabal gets a whole new layer to his personality. I mean, he was hilarious without a soul. And who can forget that last scene in the *The Necromancer*? Not me.

'Sometimes he wished he still lacked a soul. It hurt so much.'

And you get a lot more of that particular story here.

Now he is saddled with conscience of all things. And some other stuff. But, fear not, he didn't completely change all of a sudden. He is still our lovely antisocial necromancer of some infamy as before. Only with an added layer.

The expose in an aeroship salon ridicules Hercule Poirot-like explanations. It is so over-the-top I couldn't help but laugh.

The last part of Cabal's journey home is told in a bonus story ("The Tomb of Umtak Ktharl") told by another character. That part has supernatural and horror elements. I liked it a lot.

Overall, while I did love the first book more, *The Detective* is still great and a well-written story as all Jonathan L. Howard's stories and books I've read so far are.

As for this one, the secret is in knowing what *not* to expect.

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