



# Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?

*Paul Cornell*

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**Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?** Paul Cornell

**The ghost of Sherlock Holmes is dead, but who will solve *his* murder?**

The Great Detective's ghost has walked London's streets for an age, given shape by people's memories. Now someone's put a ceremonial dagger through his chest. But what's the motive? And who - or what - could kill a ghost?

When policing London's supernatural underworld, eliminating the impossible is not an option. DI James Quill and his detectives have learnt this the hard way. Gifted with the Sight, they'll pursue a criminal genius - who'll lure them into a Sherlockian maze of clues and evidence. The team also have their own demons to fight. They've been to Hell and back (literally) but now the unit is falling apart . . .

## Who Killed Sherlock Holmes? Details

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Author : Paul Cornell

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## From Reader Review Who Killed Sherlock Holmes? for online ebook

### Carolyn says

This is a dnf for me at 20% in. My fault for not realising that it's #3 in a series before I started reading it. There is a lot of referral to previous events so it's not flowing well at the moment. Other GR friends have read and enjoyed the series so I will have to reserve judgement for now until I've read books 1 and 2 before trying this again. So, no stars yet ...

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### Miriam Joy says

This was... very odd. Considerably more mind-bending than the first two, in my opinion, although that might just be because Sherlock Holmes is a more familiar subject to me and therefore I've got more of a mental picture of the versions and ideas Cornell was not-quite-referencing throughout the book. That said, it was slightly less creepy than the second book, I think: more straightforward murder, even if it was being committed by something entirely un-straightforward.

I do love how intensely "London" these books are: how they rely upon stories and history of London to create their stories, and couldn't happen anywhere else. It gives them a strong sense of place and while I don't know all of the locations in the book, I knew enough of them to feel grounded in a mental picture of the world the story was existing within.

I also like that this series has some subtly queer characters -- that is to say, it's explicitly stated that they're gay or trans or whatever, but it's not a major aspect of their storyline, and while they do address some of the challenges they face, that doesn't become their entire plotline. Which is always refreshing, you know? Just the acknowledgement that hey, queer people exist, that's a thing.

Some dark moments in this, and some major challenges currently unresolved -- I'll be looking out for the next book when it comes out to see whether they've managed to fix any of them...

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### Booniss says

This is third in the Shadow Police books, a series in which a team of coppers gifted with the Sight use it to solve supernatural crimes. It's been a long wait to the third book, but it's well worth it.

Sherlock Holmes has been brought to ghostly life by the London's consciousness. His ghost has been murdered, and in case you were wondering, murdered ghosts do not apparently come back as ghosts. As the team quips, the game is afoot.

Who Killed Sherlock Holmes is a twisting and intricately crafted mystery worthy of the super sleuth himself, whichever incarnation you believe in. As ever, we switch perspectives between each member of the team, each of whom have their own personal quests to deal with on top of finding Holmes's killer; Quill is battling the mental health demons which have tormented him since his return from Hell, Ross must retrieve her

future happiness from an auction; Lofthouse is on a very personal mission to save her marriage in a very unconventional way, and former dodgy copper Costain is on his continuing mission for redemption. It's great to see there is significant fallout following events from the previous two books being not only acknowledged but thoroughly explored, seeing as said events would be enough to mess up the most balanced of people, which our team never really were to start with. Of them all, Sefton seems to be dealing with things the best, but then he has the adorably steadfast Joe to support him while he continues to experiment with the Sight.

Once again, Cornell gives us a high concept brain teaser populated with a wonderfully diverse and oddly charming cast of characters who grapple with their personal demons as well as London's dark supernatural underbelly. This is also probably the only urban fantasy to contain a smutty Cockfosters joke, for which I will always hold the series close to my heart. We also, finally, get some answers to questions posed way back at the end of London Falling.

Now for the long wait to book 4.

(Disclaimer: I am friends with Paul, and he always thinks I'm really kind about his books. I'm not though, if I didn't love them I just wouldn't read them ;) )

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## **David says**

Paul Cornell had me reading past my bedtime again, yet I am definitely not complaining. Those sleepy early mornings waiting until the coffee kicks in to feel human are a worthy price to pay.

Bleak, creative, intense, depressing and yet hopeful... "Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?" expands the teams knowledge of the hidden underground community of London and the Sight, and brings burning revelations. Although the novel has a good end, it is not necessarily a happy one, because we all know where we will all go after we die in London. This, of course, sets us up for more novels in the series, and by the Gods I want more where this came from!

I enjoyed this novel quite a lot, even through the despair and suffering of the characters, they all demonstrate that they are more at home with their Sight born skill set.

That said, Quill has been going through an emotional wringer processing what he went through in the previous novel, and it was both painful and endearing to read about his ordeal.

I have to say that I absolutely love Quill. It is amusing to say, that I have physically visualized him very similar to Inspector Lestrade from the BBC show "Sherlock" since book one. Ironic as hell (no pun intended), taking into account the subject matter of the book.

Which brings me to another thing that made me quite enjoy this novel.

I read the original Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stories in my teens, and quite enjoyed them. I am also most obviously a fan of the modern BBC Sherlock series. I also quite enjoyed the Robert Downey Jr and Jude Law films.

That said, this novel made me remember and relive details from the original stories much more than either the TV series or the movies. Paul Cornell's research and application of the Sherlock mythos is deep, and he

truly excels in how smoothly he weaves it into the London of the Shadow Police (and I say London with the weight of the Sight on this one).

I found the novel quite brilliant, and I am now sad that we do not have a fourth book out yet to purchase and delve into.

I do have to add one last thing. Quill, man. By the Gods.

I feel you, Quill, I really do.

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### **Victoria says**

Absolutely fantastic. Brilliant story. I love the characters and find myself totally submerged in the city of London the Cornell has created. A brilliant series so far. Looking forward to hallowe'en!

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### **Kirsty &#x1f4da;&#x1f4d6;♥? says**

I was told this one was the best one so far and as much as I have loved all three books I'd have to agree. Lots of loose ends tied up, explanations of certain bits. I can't wait for the next one

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### **Trelawn says**

I love this series. The books are never a quick read for me because Cornell's vision of his London is so vividly imagined and jam-packed full of detail that I sometimes have to take a minute to figure out what is happening and how it relates to what came before. This is neither a criticism nor a drawback. This London is real and to inhabit it is to experience a sensory overload. This installment sees Quill trying to keep a grasp on his sanity in the wake of his sojourn in Hell, Ross needs to find a way to win back her happiness, and Costain is wracked with guilt over decisions he made. Only Sefton seems on target which is just as well because he has just received a plea from Sherlock Holmes in a dream. Sefton rushes to 221B Baker Street to find the ghost of Sherlock sprawled on the floor of his study with an ornate knife in his chest. So who killed Sherlock? This is a cracking case for the Shadow Police and I can't wait for the next installment as, once again, Cornell has left us hanging.

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### **Paromjit says**

A proper brilliant and imaginative take on Sherlock Holmes by the talented writer that is Paul Cornell. This is the first of the Shadow Police series that I have read and it meant that I had difficulties at the beginning tuning in and getting a handle on the story. However, that ceased to be a problem as I got into the book. There is a special sighted police team that is fractured and damaged from previous events. Quill has been to hell and returned a broken man fighting for his sanity, Lofthouse has a husband possessed by an evil character threatening and controlling her, Ross and Costain are struggling to get on and then we have Kevin, who is trying against the odds to keep the team united.

The team come across the horrific murder of the ghost of Sherlock Holmes with a ceremonial dagger. Here fictitious characters assume real like characteristics if enough people believe in them! The investigation leads the team on a grotesque, dark and harrowing trail where the body count is ever rising. They encounter conundrums, gods, Sherlock actors galore, powerful magical objects, and threats to the entire population of London. Ross searches for her lost happiness. Lofthouse, aided by a mysterious key, hunts for her lost memories whilst trying to protect her husband and her team. The range of twists and turns are mindblowing! The Shadow team are tested to their ultimate limits whilst at the same time fighting their personal demons. There is a brilliant and clever criminal mind behind the murders!

This is a uniquely intelligent and upside down take on Sherlock Holmes and tests our perceptions of Sherlock. This is a novel where you are pleased to see Moriarty. Fantastic, multilayered and ingenious story from Paul Cornell. Cannot recommend it enough! Thanks to Pan MacMillan for an ARC via netgalley.

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### **Just A. Bean says**

Welp. If I wanted there to be *less* meta, this wasn't really the book to read. However, Cornell handles the whole commentary on the Holmes industry so charmingly (affectionate with a few barbs, similar to his comics commentary on *Elementary*), that I found myself disarmed, even with Hiddlebatch as a major character. I was totally chasing one of the red herrings when it came to the mystery, and was well satisfied with the way it turned out. Something in there for most Holmes fans, I think.

The character stuff was all really good. I loved finally finally finally getting more Lofthouse and finding out what her story was. I loved the progression of Ross and Costain, and how Sefton is really coming into his own. Quill's story was, well I had to stop reading for a bit in the middle there because poor guy, but I really liked that his choice at the very end of last book came back at him. The way his sister in law was included in the story was a nice touch as well.

The arc plot made some nice moves as well, edging forward, and it was nice to have the Smiling Man backgrounded a bit, plotwise. Though I'm sure it will all come swinging back next book. Hopefully it's not so long a wait this time.

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### **Alex Sarll says**

A series of murders mirror the London killings in the Holmes stories. Plus, in a London where ghosts speak more to the city's memory than the facts of history, Holmes' phantom has itself been found dead. And the small, fraying police team who deal with the metropolis' supernatural side need to solve the crimes despite not even being sure what it means to murder a ghost. It's a brilliant set-up for a procedural horror, but I didn't find this Shadow Police novel as satisfying as its two predecessors. Partly, that's deliberate - as the coppers note, many of the mainstays of Holmesian detection are bunkum: once you eliminate the impossible, there are still lots of possible answers, mostly incorrect. And in this haunted London, how can they even be sure what's impossible? But at times the degree to which the team's efforts feel futile starts to get a bit much, and one particular blind alley feels too reminiscent of a similar trick in the previous volume. Yes, they're dark books, in which evil is ascendant, partial victories come at terrible cost, and London has become one colossal trap. But in a detective story, I still need some sense that in some tiny way, the detective is achieving something.

Beyond the central plot, though, I was much more engaged. The three versions of Sherlock all being filmed at the same time, and their respective stars, are more disguised than eg Neil Gaiman in *The Severed Streets*, yet still recognisable enough for Cornell to make some salient points about the current appetite for reboots and familiar franchises. The ongoing story of the team's efforts to work out what became of their predecessors, and how occult London works, provides some satisfactory answers while still leaving sufficient mysteries for subsequent volumes. And the leads, their interactions and their separate crosses to bear are still emphatically characters I want to follow, even when their case sometimes feels as frustratingly unending and hydra-headed as real work.

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## **Mikhail says**

So, either the shine is starting to go off Paul Cornell's books for me, or this was a weaker installment. Possibly both, really. Alright, let's review...

### **The Good:**

Paul Cornell is, above all else, a character writer. His strength is his portrayal of his complicated and diverse group of heroes, and this is a strength which continues in this book. The bulk of the focus is on Quill, Ross, and (new!) Lofthouse, with Sefton and Costain taking a rather backseat role. You really do get a sense of them as people, and it's always fun watching them twist and turn with events. The side characters are equally great, particularly the Trickster and Lofthouse's civil servant friend.

Cornell also has a gift for language, particularly when it comes to action sequences, and he's pretty good at developing the plots. I found the antagonist a little weak, but better than *Severed Street's*, so that was good.

Also, he's continuing to develop his metaplot in a very concrete way. You are getting a definite sense that events are moving, and each book expands your understanding of the setting and the Smiling Man arc in a definite way. This is satisfying.

### **The Bad:**

Cornell has a couple of quirks which are really starting to wear on me. First, the man loves his expository flashbacks. They bothered me less in this book than before, maybe because they were less jarring, maybe because I'm just trained to expect them by now, but it still annoys. It's a very 'blunt object' approach to storytelling.

Likewise, and I feel like he spends too much time torturing the characters and giving them New and Exciting (Psychological) Issues each time. I confess I started skipping over some of Quill's scenes, though Ross's were better handled and interesting.

He still has a bad habit of throwing in versions of Real People into his story, though it's a little less jarring than in *Severed Streets*.

Finally, I think that the police procedural aspects here were a bit weak, primarily due to pacing. Essentially, a good police procedural relies on the steady drip-drip-drip of information. *London Falling* did that very well, with the characters' understanding increasing at a constant rate. Here, however, the investigation pretty much stalls for the first two-thirds of the book, as the villain is One Step Ahead at all times, and then when things burst through, it's more in a moment of pure revelation than through good detective work.

Conclusion:

Overall, I liked it, and I think the end of the book really brought things together (bumping this from a 3 to a 4), so I'll still be getting the next one.

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## **Dan says**

[Spoilers for previous books in the series]

After the events of *The Severed Streets*, Quill's team is in trouble. Ross has traded away her future happiness, Costain is feeling guilty and Quill is trying to cope with that fact that everyone in London goes to hell. Sefton just wants his team to pull together and he hopes a new case can do that. He discovers the ghost of Sherlock Holmes has been killed and it becomes apparent a series of seemingly non-supernatural murders also have a Sherlock Holmes connection.

There are many things I loved about this. After two books I've been sucked into Cornell's supernatural London. But actually what I loved about this one was the Sherlock Holmes stuff. Cornell manages to do a proper celebration of all things Holmes whilst still telling a proper story. There's a series of murders which mimic those in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Holmes, Watson and Moriarty all appear in one way or another. There's even a great nod BBC Sherlock, Elementary and the Robert Downey Jr Sherlock films. It turns out Benedict Cumberbatch is a god, which frankly wasn't much of a surprise.

There's also more about spooky London stuff. Ross and Costain go to try and get back Ross' happiness and explore the sighted London community more as they do so. And Lofthouse finally becomes a proper character as we see her supernatural links and find out more about the mysterious Continuing Projects Team. Whilst I did like this aspect of the book I couldn't help but feel it distracted from the main plot somewhat. About three quarters of the way through the book the Sherlock Holmes plot is almost forgotten whilst this stuff goes on. It makes the book feel a little disjointed.

Cornell really delivers with the characters here. Few authors could really have four main characters and tell four character stories every book. But Cornell manages it. But not only that he adds a fifth in Lofthouse, who I assume will be more important in future books, and a great depiction of Sherlock Holmes which manages to fit Conan Doyle's character and Cornell's London universe. Genius.

As brilliant as the first two books in the series, with added Sherlock Holmes goodness. Very enjoyable!

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## **Milo (BOK) says**

The review can also be found [here](#).

If you're a fan of *The Great Detective*, you can't get a much better title than "*Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?*" especially when the actual mystery itself does not concern the Great Detective but rather his Ghost, which raises more questions, namely how can a fictional person have a ghost, and who or what could kill a Ghost? Either way, it's up to the Shadow Police, a small team of Detectives who have been given the Sight, an ability to explore the world of the supernatural in a fascinating mystery that of course comes from Paul Cornell, who's written several awesome Doctor Who episodes in the past as well as an episode of my

favourite current Sherlock Holmes TV show, *Elementary*, proving that he can pretty much tackle any medium at this point and succeed, especially when you take into account how good some of his comics work has been in the past.

The characters are all interesting ones and it's great to return to Ross, Lofthouse, Quill, Costain and Sefton who all should be familiar with the audiences by now after the last two books *London Falling* and *The Severed Streets*. This book further explores London's mythology by tackling Sherlock Holmes, something that seemed obvious for a series that has delved into the rich mythology of London in the past. Cornell's world, now three books in, is fully realised and has plenty of interesting topics to explore that the writer handles really well, pulling the reader in and keeping them hooked from start to finish thanks to a fast paced plot that moves at a consistent rate.

The Detectives with the ability to see the sight are tested like never before as the team find themselves in different and dangerous situations, each dealing with their own newfound problems. It's an effective balancing act between the cast that works really well and Cornell manages to make the most of their personalities as they're pushed further to the limit, exploring them well and giving them plenty of depth. London is much of a character as the Shadow Police themselves, and the setting really adds that extra layer of awesomeness to the book.

If you've read the previous book you'll be fully aware of the fact that Neil Gaiman has a cameo of it so there's more of the same here featured with a particularly Sherlock Holmes-based nature. However, Cornell is a little more subtle with his approach this time around, and the decision to feature characters that look similar to real celebrities rather than using the celebrities themselves worked in the book's favour.

The plot unfortunately does get a bit too convoluted in places but apart from that it is still immensely enjoyable and even when it does go a bit sideways you won't find yourself caring that much because it's still an absolute blast to read, providing about as much enjoyment you'd expect from a book that looks the death of Sherlock Holmes' ghost. There's plenty of things to love about *Who Killed Sherlock Holmes?* and it's another really solid entry to the series as a result and is worth checking out if you're familiar with the previous novels in the series. However, If you haven't yet had the chance to check them out though, perhaps drawn here by the concept of the book and you're a fan of Ben Aaronovitch, Benedict Jacka, Jim Butcher or Neil Gaiman, then you should move the Shadow Police series to the top of your watchlist.

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## Mark says

A very enjoyable read, great world building and character expansion.

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## Lisa says

4.5 stars

This is the third book in the Shadow Police series who deal with supernatural crimes in London.

I love this series but you really need to concentrate to follow it! I would also recommend that you start at the beginning of the series else this will be extra hard to get your head round.

As an added bonus this one includes Sherlock Holmes - yay!

I struggled to get through this on kindle but only because I was in a reading slump - I switched to audio and plowed through it. The narrator is excellent so I highly recommend this version.

More of these please!

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