



## Poison City

*Paul Crilley*

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# **Poison City**

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The name's Gideon Tau, but everyone just calls me London. I work for the Delphic Division, the occult investigative unit of the South African Police Service. My life revolves around two things - finding out who killed my daughter and imagining what I'm going to do to the bastard when I catch him.

I have two friends. The first is my boss, Armitage, a fifty-something DCI from Yorkshire who looks more like someone's mother than a cop. Don't let that fool you. The second is the dog, my magical spirit guide. He talks, he watches TV all day, and he's a mean drunk.

Life is pretty routine - I solve crimes, I search for my daughter's killer. Wash, rinse, repeat. Until the day I'm called out to the murder of a ramanga - a low-key vampire - basically, the tabloid journalist of the vampire world. It looks like an open and shut case. There's even CCTV footage of the killer.

Except... the face on the CCTV footage? It's the face of the man who killed my daughter. I'm about to face a tough choice. Catch her killer or save the world? I can't do both.

It's not looking good for the world.

Poison City is the first in a fantastical new series for fans of Ben Aaronovitch, Lauren Beukes, Sarah Lotz and Stephen King.

## **Poison City Details**

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Author : Paul Crilley

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## From Reader Review Poison City for online ebook

### Lynn Williams says

<https://lynns-books.com/2016/08/15/po...>

Poison City is the first in a new Urban Fantasy series by Paul Crilley set in South Africa. The main protagonist, one Gideon Tau (nicknamed London Town) works for the Delphic Division of the South African police force. The Delphic Division keep all the supernaturals in the City from misbehaving and given the number of other worldly critters out there it isn't an easy job! At the start of the story London is about to investigate the death of a ramanga who died a most violent death having not only his chest cavity laid waste to but also having had his head removed – well, I don't suppose you can be too careful with vampires, even if the vampire in question is a down at the bottom of the pile, lowly, ramanga!

So the scene is set. London is sent to investigate. And the Body count is set to explode.

In terms of the setting. Based in Durban (otherwise fondly referred to as the Poison City that gives the book it's name) we have a world where every sort of supernatural creature exists. If you can think of it then it no doubt lives – including Gods, angels and demons. There is a covenant in place between the supernaturals and humans which helps to keep the peace and the Delphic Division are the ones who enforce that agreement. Think Men in Black but with werewolves and vampires rather than aliens. It's an interesting world full of dark possibilities and frankly crammed to the gills with imagination involving sea deities, secret fae markets and a labyrinth of waste tunnels where the effluence is the least worrying thing to deal with! On top of the supernatural element Crilley gives the story a different twist by throwing into the mix a society where corruption is rife amongst the topmost echelons and government officials.

The characters are a mixed bunch indeed. We have the Delphic Division which seem to include a number of none human employees and even a talking dog that provides spiritual guidance to the main character. London himself has a terrible history that haunts his dreams. His daughter has been murdered and his marriage ended as a result. It's actually an incredibly sad storyline although maybe not the first time that we've seen it used to create a hard boiled and cynical detective. Basically London's motivation now revolves solely around revenge! His actions are all led by his need to avenge his daughter's death and whilst sometimes his rash decisions assist the work of the Division it does make him into something of a maverick who frequently makes the wrong choices with quite disastrous results. His sidekick, known only as Dog, does help to bring a measure of relief to the story by the use of the sarcastic banter between the two. Basically, the dog is a raging alcoholic with a penchant for sherry and soap operas and London is a man on a mission who also likes to find solace in the bottom of a bottle and isn't above making some very self centred decisions. I think there is a lot of potential for both London and the dog to grow in this series. At the moment they're entertaining but I wouldn't say they're really showing their full potential although being the first in the series there's a lot to get across. I really liked the character Armitage, London's hard assed boss who experiences a very unusual character development that I won't elaborate on.

I can't really write much more without spoiling the plot for other readers. I thought this was a fast paced, murder mystery, packed with supernatural elements and with an entertaining duo at it's centre. There's a very interesting magical system in place that involves tattoos and magical wands and the story is littered throughout with cultural references that will undoubtedly bring a cheesy grin to the faces of most readers.

I thought this was a really enjoyable read. A dark and cruel world that I certainly don't want to live in but would definitely like to visit again through the pages of a book!

I received a copy courtesy of the publisher through Netgalley for which my thanks. The above is my own opinion.

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### **Denise says**

Gideon Tau, called London by most of his colleagues due to his English origins, works for the Delphic Division of the South African Police, investigating supernatural crime. With his spirit guide (a talking dog with a penchant for anything alcoholic) and a few magical tricks up his sleeve he deals with whatever crimes cross his desk, kills the occasional god, and tries to find the man who killed his daughter. A seemingly open-and-shut murder case involving a slaughtered vampire, complete with CCTV footage of the killer, turns out to be the opening act to something much larger - but the part Gideon cares about most is that the killer's face is that of the man who murdered his daughter. The fate of the world may hang in the balance, but revenge might just have to come first.

This was... a lot more gory than I expected. It's a good thing that doesn't bother me all that much. Gritty, violent, and packed with fast-paced action, this was a pretty intriguing series opener, though admittedly fewer body parts flying around and liters of blood gushing all over the place also would have done the job.

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### **Dave says**

Fancy, funny, dark and with a brilliant cast of characters. Gideon Tau is one to watch. Imagine Paul Cornell and Ben Aaronovitch got together with Lauren Beukes and you're on the right track.

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### **Heather Duff says**

Any book that features a talking, bitching, wise ass, slightly magical drunk dog will automatically get upon my reading list, I mean what is not to love? In fact I would go as far to say as the dog needs a spin off series. He is awesome.

Anyway its not all dog related, he has of course an owner/partner/skivvy, Gideon Tau. A policeman who has upped sticks from London town (London is also his nickname) to South Africa, Durban to be exact. He is not a run of the mill copper, he works for the Delphic Division who deal with all things occult.

Tau can wield magic or shinecraft as it is called in the book which I personally think sounds kinda cool. His days are spent dealing with the magical scum of the Earth and trying to solve a case that is very personal to him - the murder of his daughter.

His daughter's death understandably has really screwed him up and he is trying to uncover what happened to her, who is responsible for taking her from him.

But before he can continue with that there is the small matter of a Ramanga (what is a Ramanga?, well the book describes it wonderfully as a low-key vampire - basically, the tabloid journalist of the vampire world) who has been murdered and the killer turns out to be the main suspect in his daughters murder.

Things are not open and shut however, a whole heap of other mystical, magical dudes are hell bent on giving Gideon a very bad day. His daughters killer might have to wait a bit.

Now I haven't read many books set in South Africa but straight away I fell in love with it, Paul Crilley has painted it so vividly and it isn't just the setting, the characters are excellent too. Of course I have already mentioned my love for the dog but another mention has to go to Armitage, Tau's boss who is from Yorkshire and every time she spoke in the book I heard her as a mixture of all the ladies from Last of the Summer Wine. She is a bit more badass than Nora Batty - younger/non Brit readers may need to Google this comparison.

This book was fantastic, it was funny, it was smart, it was enchanting and it was one heck of a read, quite frankly I loved it, it sucks you in straight away and has a good mix of menace and magic too.

I highly recommend it.

Thanks to Hodder and Stoughton for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Mandy says**

Poison City

WTF did I just read!

Gideon Tau, an occult investigator and his alcoholic, talking dog spirit guide, in a story with every kind of supernatural being you have ever heard of and many you haven't while he tries to find out who killed his daughter and stay alive.

It's some kind of f\*\*\*ed up, bloody, paranormal Tarantino film and I loved it.

\* I received a free copy in a Goodreads giveaway \*

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### **Adam Blond says**

I loved this book. Supplied as an advance copy from my wife's book shop. The first time I have given 5 stars on good read. I don't like to give spoilers so I stay away from plots in reviews. The book is set in South Africa (I've never been) so the cities and areas covered do have a real basis as do some of the local practices. The book is definitely for adults. There are some disturbing scenes where humans show their worst and best traits. Great writing style. Great characters human and non-human. The "DOG" just cracked me up throughout the book.

The story is fast passed from beginning to end. The genre is hard to describe. Great detective/mystery novel with a supernatural element that is treated as every day. Some alternate views on God, mystical beings and the universe that I found very interesting. If you are someone with strong Christian views or if you easily offended this might not be the book for you. But I think everybody else with an open mind would like this

and should give it a go. I will be looking out for more from this author in the future.

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### **Maraya21 (The Reading Dragon) says**

? They shut up & took my monies. Now time to get reading! Roped in the MacHalos as well cause I can and also if there's anyone who likes mean drunks & violence it's definitely *not us*. ?

### **4.5 Stars**

This was FUCKING awesome!  
Review coming soon in a theater near you!

#### Pre- Reading Thingy:

*I have two friends in my life. The first is my boss, [...]*

*The second is the dog, my magical spirit guide. He talks. He watches TV all day. He's an alcoholic. And he's a mean drunk.*

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### **Margaret says**

I have to say up front that I liked this story. I just had to suspend belief and let myself be drawn into the plot. From its promo it was probably not a book I would have chosen to read and I was surprised that I liked it so much. Fun if you are into the supernatural.

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### **Liz Barnsley says**

Poison City is adorable...

Oh who am I kidding? Poison City is fricking nuts, completely utterly beautifully crazy. With dog.

I loved every minute of it. Urban fantasy at its brilliant best with a banging addictive story, characters to die for and thought provoking, intensely insightful glances at human nature in all its terrible glory. With vampires.

This is like Urban Fantasy Noir – its kind of like one of those old school detective stories, where the bars are smoky, the conversation is peppered with underlying feeling, the investigator is enigmatic and focused and there is always some kind of huge blow up fight at the end. Only with added Angels. And other things. And the fight is really on from first page to last...

It rocks along, the dialogue is sharp and funny, the world building is incredibly imaginative with a truly authentic feel considering theres a fae market down the road – the setting is pure joy, the whole thing comes alive around you while you read. Those are the best books right? Also whenever dog is around he steals the limelight and frankly he should have his own sidekick comic or something. Really. I do feel like I should send Paul Crilley ALL the sherry.

If this was just a tale of adventure that would have been pure class but the thing about Poison City is it is EMOTIONAL seriously seriously heart wrenchingly emotional at times. I won't give anything away but there are moments in Poison City that I felt right down in my soul. My engagement with London and his search for his daughters killer was a complete one. Bonded now we are.

As for Armitage well. Amazing you know she's...actually I'll let you find out for yourself....

Brilliant characters, utterly clever plotting, a world you both want to live in and run screaming away from, Poison City is my new favourite thing. Bring on the next book...I'll start queuing now if necessary get ye behind me people!

The war is coming...

Highly Recommended.

With Dog.

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### **Laura says**

If, like me, you are itching for the next Peter Grant book, I recommend Poison City as the perfect salve.

Gideon Tau is a member of Delphic, the division of South Africa's occult police force charged with the thankless task of bringing a bit of law and order to the gods, demons, vampires and fae who flock to Durban from across Africa and the world. Tau is a wise-cracking, hard drinking British transplant who, along with his sidekick 'Dog', gets intimately involved with a criminal plot which goes right to the very, very top.

The book is fun and absorbing and there were a few laugh-out-loud moments. I found the beginning quite slow as Crilley set the scene, and some of the early jokes felt a little contrived, but the writing became more assured as the book went on and built to a thrilling crescendo.

It's not a shallow book either - it takes some deep digs at corruption and crime among SA's political class, and I also loved the healthy dose of blasphemy (those of a religious persuasion beware).

I look forward to reading the other books in this series.

*(With thanks for the publishers and NetGalley for providing me with an ARC in return for an honest review)*

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### **The Tattooed Book Geek (Drew). says**

As always me fellow Goodreaders, this review is also available on my blog for your perusal at [TheTattooedBookGeek.wordpress.com](http://TheTattooedBookGeek.wordpress.com)

4.5 stars!

I received a free copy of this book courtesy of the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Poison City is the first book in Paul Crilley's new urban fantasy series of books. Focusing on Gideon Tau (nickname - London Town as he's British and Tau sounds like town), his spirit guide 'the dog' and his boss Armitage and set in South Africa, Durban to be precise - the titular Poison City of the title.

Tau works for the Delphic Division, which is the occult investigation unit of the South African police force and was formed to keep the supernatural creatures that live in SA, under control and within the law, making sure that those creatures (Orisha's, Fae, Vampires, Werewolves, Demons, amongst others) abide by the covenant.

The covenant is the centuries old agreement between mankind and the supernatural where each side generally sticks to the rules of not committing crimes against each other, obviously that doesn't always happen as then there would be no need for the Delphic Division.

Where do the supernatural creatures come from you may ask and I'll tell you. There's two worlds in Poison City, Dayside and Nightside. Our world and humans are Dayside - presumably because we are deemed to be the light. With the other world and the supernatural creatures that inhabit it, Nightside - as they are the dark. Now, that's a very simplistic black and white description of the two worlds and there's actually countless shades of grey between the two colours, as we all know about human nature and the evil that can lurk within humanity.

At the start of the book, the story appears to be a simple investigation into the murder of a minor vampire, only for that crime to turn into something far bigger as the story progresses, building to the big reveal about what's really going on behind the scenes and the epic confrontation between good and evil at the books conclusion.

I recently finished Nevernight by Jay Kristoff. I thought that it had one of the best opening lines I've read in a book, not just recently but in a very long time, setting the tone and authors writing style for the whole book. Worry not bookish peeps, I'm not merely rambling incoherently and I do in fact have a point. As, Poison City tops that opening line, again setting the tone for the rest of the book, along with the authors writing style but also adding humour - most will chuckle and introducing you to 'the dog', Tau's spirit guide, he's sarcastic, droll and foul-mouthed with a penchant for the cheapest sherry available. He is pure awesome and is by far

the best character in the book.

"The first thing the dog does when I walk through the door is sniff the air and say, 'you forgot the sherry, dipshit.'"

The writing is of a high standard for the whole book, from the first page - I've already mentioned the first line, all the way through to the conclusion and ending. With a fast paced and descriptive style Crilley really pulls you in to the story he's telling. The pacing never wavers either, with plenty of action, humour, some emotion and various plot twists and turns thrown in making for a real page turner of a book.

The world building in Poison City is also very good. The two worlds idea, whilst having been done many times before in other books, is always intriguing and Crilley adds his own unique take on it. Along with the magic system and usage which is well explained and is interesting. And, Crilley brings Durban to life with his writing style, creating a gritty, dark and realistic setting for the book to take place in.

Throughout the book there's a lot of popular culture references thrown around, Harry Potter and Star Wars to name two along with many more by Crilley. They are a nice touch and addition, making you smile knowingly at the references as well as giving some light relief at times. Me personally, well, I never thought I'd here Star Wars as being described how it is by the dog, but well-played Crilley, after thinking about it, it really is an ingenious and apt way to describe the film and it fully deserves a tip of the hat, a nod and a handshake as it was top quality and humorous!

The cast of characters are all well described and even the secondary and small part characters (both human and supernatural) come across as real, well thought out and individual with some unique traits and there's always reasons for why they do, what they do, so you as the reader even if you disagree with them, understand their motives.

Armitage, Tau's boss is a great supporting character, she acts perfectly as the foil to Gideon and the interplay and occasional banter between them throughout the book is one of the highlights, again she's a likeable character and would make a great boss for anyone. The best character for me as I mentioned earlier during my read of Poison City was the dog. He certainly isn't the main focus in the book but every time he appears and is given page time, he steals the show and you can't help but smirk at what he says. For a secondary character and a little guy he adds so much to the book.

While the supporting characters all do their jobs, the good guys are likeable and the bad guys are bad, all of that would mean nothing if the main character wasn't someone you wanted to read about and could get behind. Luckily with Tau, Crilley has nailed it and as the main protagonist he really draws you into his world and story. Tau is a flawed and emotionally challenged person, with a tortured soul and an underlying cynicism to the world that comes through in his comments and narrative during the book. Losing his daughter and the after effects have really damaged him and you really feel for him. Underneath it all he's someone who's lost the most important things in his life and has been left attempting to get by the best way he can, while remaining a member of the Delphic Division. By the end of the book, you may not agree with all his actions but you fully understand the reasoning behind them and he's a sympathetic character that really pulls you into his plight.

Poison City contains swearing, violence and gore which won't appeal to everyone, but it didn't bother me at all, they generally play a big part in the books I usually read and all the elements have their place in this genre to. They are part of the story being told and aspects of the characters involved. And, while swearing may not be to everyone's personal taste, it feels natural to the characters personalities in the book. For

example, if the dog wasn't foul-mouthed and was instead polite and well-mannered, it would completely change the character and wouldn't feel right.

One other thing I also feel I should mention, unfortunately in my opinion but I try to give you an honest review, is the religious aspect later on in the book. As I've just mentioned with the violence and swearing, it doesn't bother me at all and is a part of the story Crilley tells in *Poison City*, but there maybe some people out there with strong Christian views who could be offended by the depictions of certain religious figures. And, I say to you, please keep an open mind and don't be, it's merely fiction.

As stated earlier in my review, there's popular culture references strewn within *Poison City* and it seems only apt to use one myself to help describe the book. The first one that springs to mind is from the classic 1980's cartoon series *Transformers*.

*Poison City*: more than meets the eye.

*Poison City* is well written with great characterisation making for an entertaining read, that rewards you with becoming a far deeper book than it at first appears to be. With a satisfying conclusion that ties up the story in the book nicely, while also hinting at more to come in the sequel, it's a great captivating read.

On the front cover of the book it says 'The war is coming' well after reading this book, where's the Delphic Division job application form because, I want in, sign me up!

For fans of urban fantasy, fantasy and booklovers/readers simply looking for something different to dabble in and try, this book would be a great addition to your TBR lists and library.

Highly recommended.

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### **Toni says**

I'm really not sure what to make of this book. It started out with strong flavours of *Men In Black* (complete with a sarcastic, talking dog) but it quickly morphed into a social commentary on the evils of human nature, before finishing spectacularly with a twist on the biblical apocalypse. It was certainly thought provoking. The lead character Gideon Tau was so, well, human. I do think that the dog could have played a much stronger part in the story. But of course there will be a follow-on so maybe he will get his chance.

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### **Kaitlin says**

\* I was sent this book for free from the publisher in exchange for an honest review \*

This is an urban fantasy book, and let me start out by saying that urban fantasy is often a genre that I don't tend to love as much as high/epic fantasy (hence the slightly lower rating). This book is slightly different from the 'average' urban fantasy in that it's set in South Africa. I liked that it wasn't the typical set up, and there were a few moments in the book where I felt as though I enjoyed seeing that culture come through a bit.

We follow a man called Gideon Tau (a.k.a. London Town) and his side-kick/spirit-animal Dog. Together they investigate crimes (of the magical kind) and get mixed up in all sorts of pretty dark goings-on. It definitely reminded me a LOT of Jim Butcher's Dresden Files books, so if you like them you may well like this, but it also had hints of Ben Aaronovitch's style too.

What I did like about this story is that it doesn't take long to get into the action and it was pretty fast-paced the whole way through. When it comes to crime-based books I like it to be quick and easy to read, because I find that I get a little bored otherwise, but this one was a fun and fast one.

One element of Urban fantasy that I don't really care for is a lack of character development. As the urban fantasy story is almost always on Earth in normal society, I feel like this leaves more time to develop characters over world, but I so rarely see this. It's not to say that the character's within this are totally flat, but they aren't totally real to me either because they didn't fully convince me of their motives and there were times when I felt as though the reasoning was a little thin.

On the whole this is a fun start to (what I assume will be) a series. I think there is potential, and there's a lot going on, but for me Urban fantasy is something I do tend to rate fairly harshly, so bear that in mind. If you do enjoy Urban fantasy books then you'll probably like this more than I do, but even if you haven't tried them before and just want a start point with Urban then this one works for that too. I would give this a 2.5\*s overall.

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### **Roy says**

Great fun!! Definitely worth the time. Characters are hilarious and setting although a little familiar with other urban fantasy settings, is a blast. Hopefully a 2nd book on the way.

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### **K.J. Charles says**

Urban fantasy of the 'policemen in Occult Crimes division' type set in Durban. The setting is pretty vividly done, but the rest is fairly routine for the genre, including the lead: a hard-drinking male cop who doesn't play by the rules with the murdered daughter and the ex wife who left him but who he still oh god men \*please\* stop writing this.

Very violent, but though the hero is constantly beaten up and even killed at one point it never seems to hold him back because he is Hard Drinking Cop. Plus, the hero kills archangels, who are all powerful supernatural beings who've survived since the dawn of creation without anything bad happening to them, but evidently they've never met a Hard Drinking Cop in any of the millennia they've ruled Creation. This fails to make sense to me. Also, and most weirdly, this is set in South Africa but there's virtually no description of any named human character. I don't have a clue if that's a deliberate authorial decision and the characters are meant to be a rainbow nation, or if everyone is just default white.

I liked the alcoholic dog spirit guide, but otherwise this didn't do much with its potential.

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