



# Ghosts of War

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Ghosts of War picks up the story a month after the end of Ghosts of Manhattan. New York City is being plagued by a pack of ferocious brass raptors – strange, skeleton-like creations with bat-like wings that swoop out of the sky, attacking people and carrying them away into the night. The Ghost has been tracking these bizarre machines, and is close to finding their origin: a deranged military scientist who is slowly rebuilding himself as a machine. However, this scientist is not working alone, and his scheme involves more than a handful of abductions. He is part of a plot to escalate the cold war with Britain into a full-blown conflict, and he is building a weapon – a weapon that will fracture dimensional space and allow the monstrous creatures that live on the other side to spill through. He and his co-conspirators – a cabal of senators and businessmen who seek to benefit from the war – intend to harness these creatures and use them as a means to crush the British. But the Ghost knows only too well how dangerous these creatures can be, and the threat they represent not just to Britain, but the world. The Ghost's efforts to put an end to the conspiracy bring him into an uneasy alliance with a male British spy, who is loose in Manhattan, protecting the interests of his country. He also has the unlikely assistance of Ginny, a drunken ex-lover and sharpshooter, who walks back into his life, having disappeared six years earlier in mysterious circumstances. Suffering from increasingly lucid flashbacks to WWI and subjected to rooftop chases, a battle with a mechanized madman, and the constant threat of airborne predators, and with the fate of the world hanging in the balance, can the Ghost derail the conspiracy and prevent the war with the British from escalating beyond control?

## Ghosts of War Details

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Author : George Mann

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# From Reader Review *Ghosts of War* for online ebook

## Elizabeth (Miss Eliza) says

Gabriel Cross, the erstwhile Ghost, is still in mourning from the loss of his love Celeste. She did what he would have done in her situation, but that doesn't mean his heart is so easily healed. But luckily for Gabriel New York is a city under siege. The newest devilment takes the form of winged creators, half brass, half dark magic. These raptors swoop out of the sky and kidnap people, for what evil purpose no one knows. They aren't just the bane of the police, with over fifty people missing, but Gabriel as well, they are too strong and too fierce for him to kill and too fast for him to follow back to their nest in order to rescue the captives, if they should still be alive. Gabriel's friend on the police force, Donovan, is surprised when his boss pulls him off the raptor case and puts him on the case of a missing British spy at the request of Senator Isambard Banks. Yet the more Donovan looks into things with the help of Gabriel, the more it looks like the two cases aren't so separate as the Senator would like them to appear.

The fact of life is that sometimes life itself gets in the way of a good book. This past week I've been bedeviled, luckily not by raptors, but by deadlines and holiday preparations. A few times perhaps I would have liked a raptor to swoop me away from my work, but only if it was to a cosy bed and not where the Ghost finds their victims... but alas, I don't think they'd play ball. Therefore a lot of the peril and immediacy of the book was lost due to the sad fact of setting it down. Sometimes when this happens I picture the characters in the book standing around and looking bored waiting for the story to begin again, like actors waiting for the director to shout action. Silly though this thought is it does show how attached I become to my stories. But enough about me, I'm sure that's not why you're reading this.

*Ghosts of War* was a solid second outing in George's Ghost series, though it might have veered a little towards a certain trope that every penny dreadful and every horror story has utilized, the big bad that everyone thought vanquished returning. Yes, yes, I get that this is more a tradition of the genre than anything else, and I will admit that George gave enough of a spin on a certain evil creature's return that it didn't overly annoy me, it's just that at a certain point credulity sometimes gets strained. The villain, who definitely was totally dead, I mean 100% totally for sure dead magically goes, "but wait," can really become a *really* tiresome trend.

Yes, there are villains we grow to love, but let's look at *Doctor Who* as an example. Am I the only one who thinks that the Daleks and the Cybermen should be put on hiatus for AT LEAST five years? No! Because new is more unique than old told in a different way. Though George tells the old in a new and different way, so I will allow it this once because yes, it did work, but I don't want to see these Cephalopod-esque aliens for quite awhile now, thank you.

But what I felt was the flaw in the book was oddly its creepy reflection of reality. A group of wealthy men and politicians war mongering. Where there is war or the possibility of war, no matter how disgusting it is to us, no matter how unpalatable, there are people looking to either make money or secure power. Even if their means are supernatural verging on the extraterrestrial, well, their motives are sadly all too common. Everyday in the news there is something like this. Or at least I feel that way. Politicians are more and more looking out for their own interests and their own pocketbooks than doing the altruistic job of helping their fellow man. I read, for the most part, to escape the real world, the news that could easily bring on a panic attack. To have the news seeping into my story... well, yes, it's realistic and shows that humans haven't changed, but it kind of puts a damper on my escapism.

That doesn't mean that I am any less enamoured of the Ghost. In fact I have kind of gotten maybe a little overly attached to him and one thing in particular is making me worried about him. What is that one thing? It's the breaking down of his identities. I don't mean breaking down as in having a break down, but as in Gabriel and the Ghost merging, coming together and accepting that they are both needed in order to become who Gabriel once was, before the war shattered him; and before he created careful facades in order to survive. I am liking that he's coming to terms with himself, growing and becoming more functional...

But at the same time I'm worried. With this acceptance of who he really is, this inclusion of both halves I'm worried that he might be in danger. By being seen with Donovan as Gabriel and not the Ghost, might people start to wonder? Is his safety at risk? His old flame Ginny shows up out of the blue and within minutes he's all, I'm the Ghost! There's a reason superheroes have secret identities. The secret is their for protection. Sure the secret might weigh on you and cause psychological issues, but wouldn't you rather be safe then sane? I guess I'll have to wait for more of his adventures to find out!

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### **Robert Spencer says**

Just a bit of fun - ridiculous as heck, but who cares? I liked this better than the first book - a bit more over the top, took itself even less seriously :)

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### **Jason Pettus says**

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted illegally.)

Regular readers will remember last year's *Ghosts of Manhattan*, from genre veteran and *Doctor Who* scriptwriter George Mann, and how I found it only so-so when originally reviewing it myself; and now its sequel is out, *Ghosts of War*, which I decided to go ahead and read as well, partly because a copy was nicely sent to me by our buddies at Pyr and partly because I've always suspected that I didn't give the first volume a fair shake. And indeed, the good news is that this "Art Deco Steampunk" actioner came off this time as *much* better than the original, I suspect partly because both Mann and myself have grown more into these characters and setting; for those who don't know, it's set in an alt-history 1920s New York, in which a Shadow/Batman-style crimefighter is assisted by lots of fanciful tech gear, while facing complications not from German spies but ones from a still-strong and now antagonistic British Empire, who has been locked into a cold war of sorts with the US for decades on end by now. Of course, in my defense, it's also clear that this sequel is simply better than the original as well, and very specifically addresses some of the problems that I mentioned about the first book; for example, while I found what Mann actually *did* with this milieu in the original to be rather uninspiring, this time he comes up with a real corker of a dilemma, one I'll let remain a surprise but let's say ties in nicely with the work of HP Lovecraft, who in real life was writing his best-known stories right in these same years. Essentially more of the same but now just a little sharper, a little brighter and a little smarter, it comes recommended to both traditional steampunk fans and aficionados of Early Modernist noir serials, a rousing thriller that stands strongly against the Victorian setting where most of these types of novels are usually placed.

Out of 10: **8.4**

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## Mr.G says

You might have an amusing time reading other reviews of this book. A lot of people hate it.

I admit it is not the best. The writing is kind of derivative and shallow and all of the characters are unapologetically stereotyped.

However, I don't think the author was setting out to write the next *Great Gatsby*. No, the author was intent on writing a multi-genre mash-up and on that point, this book must be regarded as an unadulterated success.

In fact, I would argue that *Ghosts of War* is surely the *Citizen Kane* of superhero/steampunk/hardboiled mystery/Lovecraftian horror novels.

Yes, author George Mann seeks to graft all these genres together in this second installment of his "Ghost" series. The titular character himself is somewhat of a mash up of 1930's Batman and the Watchmen's Rorschach.

So if you want to read quality serious literature go pick up something by Herman Melville or John Updike.

If you want to read about rooftop battles between a gas-powered masked vigilante and demonic mechanical gargoyles, this is the book for you.

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## FunkyPlaid says

Oh my goodness, it gets worse. All five points I described in my review of *Ghosts of Manhattan* are turned up to 11 in the second volume of Mann's *The Ghost adventures*. Even with my level of OCD in having to complete books that I purchase, I had to stop a little over halfway in. I tried to keep pushing and pushing, but I was afraid that George Mann would kill my love of reading before bed.

This is clearly not a review, but a comment. My review is linked above, and holds doubly so for *Ghosts of War*. I can't wait to get these out of my house. Sorry, George.

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## Fred Hughes says

George Mann always spins a great story.

This is the third book in the Ghost series and focuses on raptors that are snatching random people off the streets of New York. Why are they doing that ? Who is making them do that ?

None of the people snatched have ever been found and there is no common thread.

A rousing adventure all around

George Man HIGHLY recommended as is this series

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## **Joe says**

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## **edifanob says**

The second adventure of the Ghost. Partially breath taking.

I liked the insights of the Ghost and inspector Felix Donovan. Impressive what a writer can achieve within 214 pages!!

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## **Kirsten says**

This one was better than Ghosts of Manhattan. It seemed to flow a little better (maybe b/c the character development was taken care of already).

The only problem I really had was the ending seemed brief and a little rushed, though I'm not sure what I would have changed. I'm referring to the confronting of the main antagonist.

I do enjoy this series b/c it's semi-steampunky, but in a different time period. It's a nice change.

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## **Steven Morton says**

I have to say I did enjoy Ghosts of War but not as much as Ghosts of Manhattan. The Ghost once again is an interesting character and I still view him more of a Shadow/The Spider analogue than a Batman rip off (which most people say). Looking at him from a pulp perspective makes me like him more especially since he is not the perfect man (he smokes too much, does not win fights cleanly not the greatest detective in the world). But in this book I just thought the villains (a corrupt senator, a mad scientist with leprosy) just weren't as interesting as the Roman and his Moss Men from the first book. Also I would have liked an origin story on how Gabriel Cross became the Ghost; fine Mann did not do this in his first book but he did not do it in this one either which disappointed me. I do love Felix Donovan and his relationship to Gabriel and also

liked Ginny but not sure if the British spy(Rutherford) was really needed since he just allowed us to discover the conspiracy that was going on thru him which was not that fascinating. I will still read more Ghost books if Mann decides to write more of them but next time please tell us why Gabriel decided to walk this path.

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### **Nicholas Ahlhelm says**

It seems that the latest craze in fantasy fiction is steampunk. Half a dozen new steampunk titles seem to hit shelves every month. With so many titles in the new field, it only seemed natural for several to take on pulp sensibilities. Most steampunk has a late nineteenth and/or early twentieth century setting, which puts it in just the right place to crossover into new pulp.

While my previous steampunk review *Society of Steam: The Falling Machine* was a tale of Victorian heroes in a superhero-esque team, George Mann's *Ghosts of War* is straight up pulp heroics set in an alternate 1930s. The Ghost is a hero in the vein of the Spider, though with the emotional damages that drove him to vigilantism more prevalent.

The world of *Ghosts of War* has the US and England in a Cold War after England introduced massive war machines to win World War I. The early twentieth century setting is filled with steam-powered automatons, holographic phones and other bits of steampunk tech.

Massive cybernetic monstrosities called raptors are kidnapping and murdering people on the street. Only the Ghost and his allies, a police officer and his girlfriend, stand against them. The commissioner and a major businessman want all the focus on a British spy, but Ghost and his cop ally immediately suspect everything isn't as it seems.

The Ghost's battle with the raptors, the cop's investigation of his own precinct and the spy's attempts to save himself all lead into the discovery of the true nature of the raptors and their master.

*Ghosts of War* is actually a sequel to Mann's previous book *Ghosts of Manhattan*, a fact of which I was unaware until I was a few pages into the book. Like so many great pulp stories, I never felt lost without the previous story, though the book did leave me intrigued to learn more about The Ghost's origin.

*Ghosts of War* by George Mann is available now from Pyr Books.

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### **L.E. Fitzpatrick says**

First off looking back this is probably the first one star I have ever given and in some respects this isn't the worst piece of literature I've ever read. But by about 2/3s of the way through I was hating the story and almost didn't bother finishing.

And the reason? Well it all comes down to the ridiculous plot. I like the steampunk genre and can happily read stories bordering on the ridiculous as long as they make sense and unfortunately the foundation of the entire plot here just didn't.

We are in New York and there are raptors flying around kidnapping people never to be seen again. Why? So

they can have their blood tested against a tentacled monster that eats people. Ok that I can get excited about until it turns out... and this isn't a spoiler it's obvious from the first scene he's in... That the man responsible is in charge of the city and instead of subtly arranging these people to be kidnapped in the traditional non-raptor way he decides to create mass panic.

And there's another thing We are led to believe New York is under seige by these creatures but at the end of the book everyone is enjoying an evening at the fair.

It is a contradictory story which relies on every steampunk cliché for action and reason without ever setting that great ambience a good steampunk novel has.

Couple this with a handful of monotone uninspiring characters this book quickly becomes a lame Doctor Who episode and maybe on screen it would work but on paper it is just utter nonsense.

If you have never read a steampunk novel stay clear of this one it doesn't do the genre justice.

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### **John Montagne says**

Ghosts of War was somewhere between dieselpunk and steampunk, a nicely written adventure tale that takes place in the same (future) world of Mann's Newbury & Hobbs novels. But unlike the previous novels, this series holds some Lovecraftian elements with its Cthulu type monstrosities. Why did I only give it two stars when I've enjoyed Mann's past novels so much? The main character, the Ghost himself, reminded me far too much of Batman, sure all superhero type characters will share some characteristics, but this was uncanny. The second element of the novel that distracted me was the language itself... unlike the language of the characters in his previous books, those in the Ghosts of War lack definition. They do not sound like they're from New York in particular, no idiomatic speech patterns or hints of accents - of the city or the 1920's. There were even a few times that a character sounded suspiciously British (excluding the British characters). But Mann still knows how to write a rousing good adventure and ties up the plots... but I hope he returns to the world of Newbury and Hobbs, as the folks in there had there own voices and unique backgrounds.

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### **? Irena ? says**

3.5

Mechanical raptors are taking people from the streets. Nobody knows where they are taking them or why. The one thing which seems common to them all is that they aren't coming back. Of course it is a job for the Ghost. This time he is not alone. Donovan, Ginny and one British spy are in the middle of everything. Nothing is as they thought. New York is not the only thing that needs saving.

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### **David Manns says**

I have not read Mann's first novel about The Ghost, Ghosts of Manhattan, so I'll go drone, waffle, blegh. However I have just finished Ghosts of War. So here's a little review of it.



Gabriel Cross, millionaire playboy and ex-soldier, is also The Ghost, a mysterious vigilante who patrols the rooftops and skies of 1920's New York, righting wrongs and performing deeds of derringdo. So far, so Batman. But then Mann introduces the Steampunk elements that skew the story into an alternative reality where Queen Victoria has only recently died, her daughter Alberta is on the throne, and Britain and America are locked into a deadly cold war. Flying automatons called Raptors are abducting people seemingly at random. A British spy is on the loose with dangerous information. And a crooked Senator is spoiling to start war with the British Empire.

Mann then ramps it up even more by going all Lovecraftian and confronting the reader with nightmare creatures from another dimension, who like the taste of human blood. Oh and a leper who has replaced his limbs with mechanical ones of his own design. By himself. Yeah, me too. How the hell he wired them into his nervous system so that his brain can control them is never explained. In fact there are some major plot points that are never satisfactorily explained.

Mann's writing is pedestrian and he has a tendency to repeat the same character motivations over and over through the book. Yeah, Cross is a war damaged, driven vigilante mourning the loss of his lover, I get it. No need to repeat ad infinitum.

This is basically 21st Century pulp fiction. Moving Steampunk away from Victoriana into the decadence of 20's New York is a nice idea, but he never comes close to capturing the hedonism of that decade, and his ideas are half formed and ill-thought out.

So, a noble failure then. It's okay if you like this sort of thing, but I'm sure there are better Steampunk novels out there.

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