



## The City of Shadows

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Dublin 1934: Detective Stefan Gillespie arrests a German doctor and encounters Hannah Rosen desperate to find her friend Susan, a Jewish woman who had become involved with a priest, and has now disappeared.

When the bodies of a man and woman are found buried in the Dublin mountains, it becomes clear that this case is about more than a missing person. Stefan and Hannah traces the evidence all the way across Europe to Danzig.

In a strange city where the Nazi Party is gaining power, Stefan and Hannah are inching closer to the truth and soon find themselves in grave danger...

Longlisted for the CWA John Creasy New Blood Dagger Award 2013.

The City of Strangers, the sequel to The City of Shadows publishes in ebook on 10 October 2013 and paperback on 7 November 2013.

## **The City of Shadows Details**

Date : Published November 7th 2012 by Avon (first published September 1st 2012)

ISBN : 9781847563460

Author : Michael Russell

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## From Reader Review The City of Shadows for online ebook

### T.B. Markinson says

I won a copy of this in a Goodreads giveaway.

This is a fascinating mystery set in Ireland during the 1930s. I'm not too familiar with Irish history and I found this interesting. I never knew about any connections with Germany and the Nazis at the time. As a history nerd, I loved this aspect. As a reader, at times I found the author to be a bit wordy. Once I settled into his style it didn't bother me. Also, parts of the book take place in Trieste, Italy and I happened to bring this book on my trip and we had a stop in Trieste. It was fun to sit in Trieste and to read about it at the same time. Overall, I enjoyed this book. And the next book I picked up was the second one in the series, The City of Strangers.

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### Nigel says

Well... I was recommended this on the basis of "because you liked..." on a well known internet site. The idea sounded interesting and the allusion to Carlos Ruiz Zafon's books made me think it would be a good idea. I did enjoy reading it but it is nothing like Shadow of the Wind other than the era and the fact it is set in another country. In practice I did enjoy the Irish parts of the book - they felt like they captured something of Ireland at a time. The part set in Danzig seemed to lack depth for me. Not bad - not brilliant.

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### Sarah says

I received this book through goodreads first-reads, along with the sequel 'the city of strangers'. I found this book an interesting read and enjoyed the mystery of who committed the many crimes featured.

An evocative picture is painted of the world in the 1930s, and especially the details around Danzig, which I haven't come across much in fiction, were very enlightening. The history of Ireland and the relationship with the church was described well, enhancing the story rather than detracting from the mystery.

I'm very much looking forward to 'the city of strangers', based on this book.

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### Carol says

This was my Secret Santa book from one of my "on line" book clubs so was a complete surprise and what a terrific one it turned just out to be, thank you Secret Santa whoever you are. Set between the wars in 1932-35 in Dublin and Danzig/ Gdansk. The rise of the nazi party in Germany and the links with Ireland are covered and it was enlightening as this part of Irish history I am not overly familiar with. I was grateful to the author for the two brief resumes at the back of the book explaining the Irish Free State and the Free city Danzig/ Gdansk moving between Germany and Poland as borders changed. The grip of the Catholic Church on Irish society and the control it had on its citizens was clear as were the sinister implications with Ireland and

Europe. The plot had everything, murders, mystery, historical fiction, social and political history, plus a love interest. The likeable character of Stefan Gillespie the detective trying to unravel the murders of two bodies found in the Wicklow mountains but as he starts uncovering the secrets he finds that they go right to the top of the church and Irish Society. A bit wordy at times but I will forgive this as it was entertaining, gripping, absorbing, strongly recommended and I will definitely be reading the next Stefan Gillespie "city of strangers".

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## Gram says

Detective Stefan Gillespie is a nonconformist in 1930's Ireland - a troubled country now free of British rule and under governance of the Irish Free State. He is a single parent, raising his young son Tom in rural Wicklow, where Stefan's parents run a small farm. Because of Tom's education, Stefan finds himself in conflict with the local priest. This latter is one of several asides which intertwine as the main plot unfolds.

Meanwhile, in his role as a policeman, Stefan arrests a German doctor and meets a young Jewish woman, Hannah who is desperately trying to find her friend Susan, another young Jewish woman who had become involved with a Catholic priest. But Susan seems to have vanished.

Then, as the bodies of a young man and young woman are found in the mountains above Dublin - both executed by a shot to the back of the head, the story takes a very dark twist. There are rumours involving both dead people, with the young man seemingly a homosexual who had links to Dublin's Gate Theatre and possibly to a young man training for the priesthood.

As a result of his investigations into both deaths, Stefan, aided by Hannah, finds himself travelling to pre-war Europe and the free city of Danzig where the local Nazi Party, aided by its powerful leaders in Berlin, is trying to gain control.

The plot thickens and Stefan's police work seems to be being stalled not only by the Catholic Church but also by his own superiors with the backing of the Irish Government. Even Hannah appears to have an agenda of her own, although both find themselves in danger - first from the Nazis in Poland and on their return to Dublin. There, as Stefan works painstakingly to uncover the truth, he finds himself involved in the intrigues of a charismatic Catholic priest who has connections and protection at the highest levels of Church and State.

For me, this book works as both a well-written and intelligent thriller with a number of fascinating characters - in Ireland and mainland Europe - and as a very atmospheric historical, albeit fictional, account of Ireland in the 1930's and the early signs of Nazi dominance in Europe.

NOTE: I read this book back in the summer of 2013, but received the 2nd book in this series (The City of Strangers) as a giveaway from Harper Collins, so I thought I'd review "City Of Shadows", which the publisher also sent me - even though I'd already bought it and read it. Clear? I hope so.

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### **Marisella says**

I couldn't finish this book, it was disjointed. It starts with a young man who falls in love with a priest he had contact with once, the young man is almost killed by gay-baiters but then run over by a car. A woman "the woman" is prevented from getting an abortion, the illegal abortionist is arrested.... The descriptions meander, the plot falls apart like smoke, and the characters are waterlogged and pale.

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### **Rob Kitchin says**

The City of Shadows is quite simply a brilliant crime novel. Although his debut novel, Michael Russell has a wealth of experience as a television scriptwriter (Midsomer Murders, A Touch of Frost, Emmerdale) and it shows in the quality of the story, which works at every level - plotting, sense of place, historical contextualisation, characterization. Whilst the plot is expansive and complex, it is straightforward to follow and utterly compelling, grabbing the reader from the start and not letting up in intrigue or pace, and very well structured. There are plenty of twists, turns and feints, with the reader kept guessing until the very end as to the mystery of the disappearance of Hannah's friend. Russell drops the reader into the landscapes of Dublin, rural Wicklow and Danzig, and the heady mix of state and religious politics both at a senior actor level and how it played out in everyday life. There is real attention to historical detail and recreating the social and political atmosphere of the time. Stefan Gillespie and Hannah Rosen are both wonderful characters, each trying to fight a system that is seemingly too large and powerful. Russell brings both to life and their fragile relationship is well penned, as are the myriad of secondary characters. Overall, The City of Shadows is an entertaining and gripping story that I thoroughly recommend.

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### **Emma Bull says**

\*\*\*RECEIVED FROM FIRST READS GIVEAWAY\*\*\*

This is a genre I don't tend to pick up too often, as I am extremely nosy and must know exactly what is going on, if I can't figure out the twists and turns of a thriller then I can get frustrated! This is so well written that even though I couldn't figure out who dunnit until the author chose to reveal it, that I didn't lose interest at all. And as theories evolved in my own head, the author takes you away and plants a completely new one there! I also was fascinated by the depth of knowledge piled in regarding nazi politics. How they went about "winning" elections in the run up to the war in the 30s. It is certainly one that I shall be recommending.

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### **Elaine Tomasso says**

Sergeant Stefan Gillespie is called to investigate 2 sets of remains found buried in the mountains. This is the start of a long, complicated investigation which involves Special Branch, Military Intelligence, the Catholic Church, Zionist activism and the Nazi Party amongst others. This novel has an amazing breadth and depth not often found in the genre but, at the same time, it is easy to follow and draws you in effortlessly. If you want an intelligent page turner this is the book for you.

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## **Louise says**

Michael Russell is a man who brings a lot of experience to the table in his debut novel *The City of Shadows*. After reading English at Oxford, Michael joined Yorkshire Television as Script Editor on *Emmerdale Farm*, where he became Series Producer. He also spent several years in the Drama Department, first as Script Consultant, then Producer, before leaving ITV to write full-time. A regular contributor to *Midsomer Murders*, he recently scripted the last ever episodes of *A Touch of Frost* which topped the TV ratings. Russell certainly lands the reader firmly in 1930's Ireland, exploring controversial territory, religion, democracy, fascism, communism, the rise of Nazism, those considered outsiders of the Free State, murder, abortion, the rural/city divide, and a whole lot more besides. This is a period of history that seems to have dug its claws into Russell, and would not let go, the book partly inspired by stories told to him from his grandmother, about the Black and Tans, murders, and Thompson machine guns. If you read *The City of Shadows*, you will be immersed in the complex life of Stefan Gillespie, a character who never quite settles into the world around him, and therefore presents a deeper reflection to the reader of this time in history. You can't really discuss Stefan Gillespie without touching on the engaging, exotic, and at times intoxicating Hannah Rosen, Stefan's dark eyed acushla. It was a strange combination, these two characters crossing paths, almost as if destiny deemed it to be, but with a destiny governed by the macro picture. In a time when, if you were Catholic, you were Irish, Protestant, almost Irish, and if Jewish, in some circles, definitely not. The character of Hannah, an Irish Jew, is also a window to what's happening in Europe, therefore opening up the macro picture in the process.

There was one particular quote in the novel where Stefan's young son, Tom speaks about the swastika flag, saying – 'I like their flag, don't you Daddy?' It's said with the innocence of a child's viewpoint, but actually, it seemed to reflect the viewpoint of many at the time, who didn't have the benefit of hindsight.

One of the most mesmerizing chapters in *The City of Shadows* is the opening one. It has a very distinctive tone and rhythm to it, which stays with you throughout the remainder of the novel.

The novel also includes references to an Irishman, Sean Lester, part of League of Nations in Danzig, and the Russian Bishop of Danzig, who surprising enough was called O'Rourke.

Some people think Russell gave the Catholic Church a bit of a hard time in this book, but overall it felt balanced to me, presenting someone within the church who was quite a heroic figure along with the less attractive elements.

The next novel finds Stefan as part of Special Branch during the Emergency, taking us to New York in the process. One which I will be watching out for.

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## **Cphe says**

Ireland in the 1930's is the backdrop for this absorbing and well crafted police procedural, mystery, political thriller.

Stefan Gillespie is a Detective Sergeant in Dublin, he is investigating Doctor Hugo Keller an Austrian abortionist. During the course of the investigation he encounters Hannah Rosen a Jewish woman. Hannah has come to Dublin to search for her friend Susan Fields. She knows that Susan was involved with a priest and was pregnant, she also knows that Susan had visited Doctor Keller to have an abortion and that was the last that she had heard from her. When two bodies are discovered in the countryside, one of them is Susan

and her unborn child and the other an unidentified male.

As they delve into the seemingly unconnected murders they are repeatedly warned off. As Stefan and Hannah try to find a motive for the murders they endeavour to find the priest who was Susan's lover. Their search eventually takes them to Danzig in Europe and Danzig is a very, very dangerous place for Hannah to be. Nobody is to be trusted and the country is in a state of political upheaval.

Whilst the mystery component is fairly straight forward it is the backdrop of this book that makes it so interesting. It's rich in atmosphere and the politics of the time. The rise of the Nazi Party and the effects that would be felt in Ireland and across Europe, was as sinister as the machinations of the Catholic church in both Ireland and Europe and the political and social clout that it wielded.

The story is a little slow to get going, but I felt that was due to the care that the author took to set up his characters and explore the social and political uncertainty of the time.

This was a real find, with excellent characters, caught up in a time of very real uncertainty, very good value

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### **Andy says**

An-mhaith, beidh mé insint duit níos déanaí!

So as promised.

A book I really had been aiming to read for a while now due to my family background. As a young un I oft heard one set of grandparents tell me the Germans were nice people as they gave them electricity.....! whilst my others said the f@!\*@@s bombed us!!

It's a story of pairs!

2 religions (Catholics & Jewish)

2 Free States (Irish & Danzig)

2 heroes (Steffan Gillespie & ??)

2 Wrongs (they be murders)

2 protagonists (Cant say but will keep you going deep into the read!)

2 ideologies (Nazis & Catholicism)

I was hoping for a bit more grit especially considering the period but as the writer formerly wrote for Emmerdale & despite some of the storyline its fairly family friendly which is understandable s'pose.

Have to admit the opening chapters are a little clichéd as we go from diddling catholic priests too hard drinking Irish coppers to the Magdalene laundries but i'd ask you to stick with it as it's a very good story which knits perfectly with the politics of the time. A very likeable character in Sergeant Steffan Gillespie of the Garda in the lead follows a crime to its completion unsettling all as he goes.

I'll leave it at that, as to say more would tip yer hat.

Recommend highly.

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### **Jasmine says**

I'll go ahead and give this 3.5 stars. I'll start with why I knocked off the 1.5 stars, and that's simply because it was a detective story that didn't really read as a detective story. Honestly for half of it he wasn't a detective. It was also because Hannah just made some really stupid decisions (what Jewish girl consciously goes to Danzig in the middle of Hitler's reign??)

Other than that, I did enjoy the book. The plot was interesting and I liked the way Stefan's family relationships were interwoven into the plot. I enjoyed Michael Russell's writing style - pretty simple and to the point, but still poignant enough to make you really feel the way the characters do.

I probably won't be reading more of this series, but I have definitely enjoyed what I have read of it!

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### **Chris says**

A great crime thriller set in Ireland and Danzig. The main character Stefan Gillespie is a likeable and decent member of the police force having to deal with a many number of divisions in Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century. He becomes involved in what he thinks is a routine case but the deeper he looks the darker things become.

I enjoyed the historical content that the book was based on as I wasn't particularly aware of this era of Irish history. I would read more books from this author.

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### **John Sheehan says**

Very enjoyable book. Parts action adventure, historical fiction, love story, social commentary, it was hard to put this book down. Set in Ireland in the 1930's, in the second decade of independence, at a time of almost absolute control by the Catholic church of all aspects of Irish life, this book tells a story of people on the outside of that society. A young woman is murdered, but no one seems to care part from her best friend. Her path crosses with that of a detective in the newly formed Garda Siochana, who must battle internal politics, as well as religious control in order to investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of the crime. Along the way he uncovers secrets that have ramifications all the way to the top of Irish society.

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