



# Thicker Than Water

*Mike Carey*

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## **Thicker Than Water** Mike Carey

Felix Castor is a freelance exorcist, so dealing with the dead is his stock in trade. Between his private clients and some consulting for the Met, he thinks he's seen it all. But a late-night call out to a South London housing estate proves that he still has a few surprises left. After all, it's not every day you see your own name painted in blood at a crime scene.

But that's only the beginning. The estate is in the grip of an epidemic of violence, and it doesn't take Castor's sixth sense to realise that something very wrong is happening. The Anathemata, excommunicated militant arm of the Catholic Church, is on the case, too, but its brutal solution may only make things worse. And Castor's brother, Matthew, is pursuing a secret agenda of his own.

Blood may be thicker than water, but Castor suspects he's dealing with something thicker than blood. And he needs to find it before the Anathemata. Or there'll be hell to pay...

(Description from back cover of mass market paperback edition)

## **Thicker Than Water Details**

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Author : Mike Carey

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# From Reader Review Thicker Than Water for online ebook

## Joulez says

So firstly I want to say that I read the first three of these series one after the other, I read this one I think about a year later. It was quite difficult to get back into this book, especially considering I had such a long gap between the other three I had read, and I think I spent the first part of this book trying to remember what had happened in the previous books, because there was a lot of call backs to some of the previous ones.

That isn't to say I didn't enjoy the book, because I did, once I had gotten comfortable reading as Castor once again I did enjoy reading it. It took me so long to finish though, the book its self moved along at a nice pace at the start, and by the end it had wrapped everything up nicely, explained a lot of things and obviously gave us a MASSIVE cliffhanger to entice us to read book 5 (which I will be doing).

But the middle of the book seemed for me - this is just my opinion - to just sort of stall, there were only small parts of the middle that moved the story along, it took what felt like forever to actually get anywhere. That's why it took me so long to read this book and why it's only got the 3 stars, because the middle seemed to lack something for me.

Over all, I did enjoy the book, I did think at one point I had guessed what was going to happen only to have it do a 180 on me and blind sided me, I actually didn't call that ending. I do like being surprised at the end of books, and this definitley had that.

I will be reading the next book, maybe not straight away but definitley without a years gap between the two!

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## Carol. says

If you are a fan of the urban fantasy detective, I highly recommend you read Thicker Than Water, one of the best Felix Castor books to date. Reading prior books is not required; while they add some character back story and add to the overarching philosophical developments, the plot is largely discrete in each book and Carey does a nice job of providing information without backstory infodumps. Thicker starts off with a teaser, a third person witnessing of Castor's demon-ridden friend Rafi being abducted from the asylum right before the scary Dr. Mulbridge comes to take him to her special house of ~~horrors~~ scientific research. It moves quickly into a confrontation with the police when Castor's name is found scrawled at a bloody assault scene. Like all decent fictional PIs, Castor is not content to let the police investigate, suspecting the victim was directing attention to his special exorcist skills, and soon finds himself poking around one of London's rougher estates (which seem to resemble inner city projects for Americans).

Carey does a particularly nice job world-building, using modern London as his base. His take on the supernatural is largely spirit-based, with ghosts (leftover human spirits), zombies ("corporally-challenged" spirits), loup-garou (animal bodies taken over by spirits), and demons, the big bad unknown. Thicker delves even deeper into the metaphysical underpinnings of ghosts and demons as Fix investigates the spiritual miasma at the estate. He does a very nice job realizing the various manifesting ghosts and Fix's interaction with them, truly building an experience that seems plausible. The scenes of Fix visiting a hospital were especially outstanding.

I enjoy many of the supporting cast, especially Nicky, the paranoid hacker zombie (and don't you just *love* a review where you get to type that phrase?). He is the information gatherer for Fix, a somewhat standard supporting character role, but his breath-challenged status was a stroke of genius. His dialogue is always enjoyable, but he had me chuckling at "What highlights? He's born, he lives, he maybe dies. Bit of a cliffhanger ending there, but that's as good as it gets."

Juliet the succubi continues to evolve. This time Carey nicely treads the balance between drooling and scary, and still manages to make her seem real. Her limited emotional range is clear, as is the ways she is humanizing. Nicky treats Fix and Juliet to a Blade Runner screening. "'What did you think of the movie?' 'I enjoyed the deaths,' she said, like someone looking around your living room for something to compliment you on and finally settling on the curtains because all of the furniture is eye-wateringly bad."

Despite the charm of Nicky and Juliet, this is the first book where I liked Fix more than the ensemble; perhaps that is a staple of the UF detective field--the friends are often more likeable than the detectives, who uniformly seem to be ill-tempered and emotionally immature.

I generally enjoyed the generally sophisticated writing style, with the exception of the occasional awkwardness. I'm unsure if some of it is perhaps a particularly English way of speaking, local idioms or just perfectly executed English language that caught me, being somewhat grammar-challenged. Examples include, "But she's always fought shy of explaining how that other life works," "I looked forward cordially to never finding out," and, "I had things to do over there that I didn't want the daylight to look upon." Still, the writing was tempered with enough world-building, character development and humor that such stumbles were quickly left behind.

I wholeheartedly recommend it for UF detective fans. One of the tops in the field.

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### **Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says**

Mike Carey's supernatural noir series keeps getting better. Scouser Felix Castor makes an excellent I-Can't-Believe-It-Isn't-Constantine(tm) and Carey's richly witty and descriptive prose helps, as does the complex plot with distinct overtones of horror. Various long-running plot threads are starting to come together and this book, satisfying on its own, also sets up what promises to be a massive confrontation between Castor and the demon that's been possessing his best friend.

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### **Sarah says**

"Time to fight dirty - assuming you count a knee to the balls as fighting clean."

Although Dead Men's Boots is a personal fave, this particular book has the best plot and writing. Carey grows as a writer and it shows in Castor's growth as a character, as well as a truly tense and creepy plot, which is quite possibly the only one of the Castor books that I would classify as horror.

Castor is hauled out in the middle of the night by DC Coldwood (what else is new?) and taken to a crime scene and guess what? The victim of the crime was someone he knew and had a beef with. And of course Basquiat is in fine form as The Bitch with a Grudge. I've honestly never been particularly clear what that

grudge was. Because he wasn't guilty of the crime she wanted to arrest him for? There's a flaw there, methinks. Because TBwaG is determined to see him charged with attempted murder, Felix sets out to find out some things about what happened and why he's in the frame.

Because the plot in this one is just so damn good, I'm going to err on the side of caution here. We have The Salisbury Estates, a place that is absolutely covered in a dark miasma of psychic ick that encourages you to make yourself bleed. There's a weird, seemingly unconnected, series of violent incidents that has Fix trying - and failing - to see the bottom line. We have a Juliet who has decided not to help, an estranged brother with his own bit of character development, a young, traumatized psychic boy in the crossfire, said Coldwood and Basquiat, The Ice-Maker, Rafi, Asmodeus, Penn (who spends one agonized moment trying to decide whether or not to clock a certain DC over the head), a zombie who's wincing over the lack of a certain succubus's appreciation for his fine and extremely expensive wine... The gang is all here and they are all in fine form.

This book makes me sad that he only plans on releasing one more book. He spent all of this time making us love Castor and fine-tuning his writing chops, only to run off with said writing chops and become M.R. Carey (The Girl with All the Gifts). I'm sad that there's only one more published and one more coming, and I'm sad that we aren't going to see this much improved writing in a character that I love.

On a side note - the audio switched narrators and this narrator was a much better fit for the role than the last.

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## **Brainycat says**

Brainycat's 5 "B"s:

blood: 4

boobs: 1

bombs: 4

bondage: 1

blasphemy: 4

Bechdel Test: FAIL

Deggan's Rule: FAIL

Gay Bechdel Test: FAIL

It's been a few days since I finished this book. Also, I finished the next (and last) book "The Naming of the Beasts" in the series a few hours after I finished this book. So this review is written after I've recovered from the sadness and shock of finishing what has become one of my most favorite series' ever, and after I've had enough time for the details to fade and blur a little.

For an exceptional review that provides a synopsis of the plot and deconstructs some of the elements, see Carly's review.

Felix continues to broaden his horizons in this book, both internally and externally. This is mirrored in the plot, where our intrepid hero and his merry band of cohorts confront an antagonist larger and more intimate than he's ever seen before. Not coincidentally, this situation is occurring in a run down housing development that features distinct blocks connected by stairs and skybridges. This physical construction acts like a metaphor for Felix's internal construction; a series of core elements (guilt, selfishness, morality) loosely connected by a byzantine maze of seemingly random connections that make it so difficult to reach an exit or conclusion that he's trapped in his internal hell.

And that's what this book is about, aside from the whole "saving the world from nefarious otherworldly powers despite the other humans getting in the way" motif. This is the most introspective book of the series. This book builds up Felix's internal world and provides an opportunity for him to develop a vocabulary to start to get himself sorted. We meet some of Felix's family, especially his oft mention brother, and we go back into Felix's childhood and learn about some of the wounds that still ache and helped shape him into the adult he is. Needless to say, these wounds are mirrored in the nature of the antagonist.

I related to both Felix's and the antagonist's arc in this book, more so than in any of the other books in the story so far. I saw my own childhood wounds and subsequent depression and alcoholism writ large by Felix's childhood and current dilemmas. I related deeply to the antagonist, actually, and for the first time in the series I felt an affinity for the antagonist. Even before I read the fifth book, I saw this device as the leadup to the inevitable conclusion of the series.

I really only have two quibbles with this book. Firstly, at the end of Dead Men's Boots Felix had burned through his cachet with all of his friends and allies. As this book starts, though, he's back on good - or at least normal for him - terms with the cast we've come to know and love. I was looking for some explanation of how he'd atoned for what he'd done, but I never found it. Secondly, and related, we don't see a lot of development from the supporting cast thanks to the focus on Felix's internal life. The supporting cast is so ancillary in fact that despite(view spoiler) the book fails the Bechdel test, whereas previous installments had passed.

This was a powerful book in it's own right, but it wouldn't make sense without reading the rest of the series. It's obviously setting up for the grand finale in book 5, and it does it with grace and aplomb and Mike Carey wasn't afraid to get dirty and wade into the filthy mess that is Felix's internal life and draw Felix a map to his own grail.

***Please note:** I don't review to provide synopses, I review to share a purely visceral reaction to books and perhaps answer some of the questions I ask when I'm contemplating investing time and money into a book.*

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## Abigail says

I mean, I'm nearly done the series. I keep reading, so obviously I'm into it. Couple of notes:

How many times can Felix Castor's shoulder get punctured/lacerated/torn up. How does it even function anymore? In each book, his shoulder is getting annihilated. Even if it's alternating shoulders, it's still a lot. Poor dude.

Also, Carey has a tendency to reuse tropes and phrases and scenes from book to book to book. It's like he was writing and said "Ooh, that sounds nice, let me add that," forgetting that he did in the last book, and the one before that. Minor nuisance to me.

But that's it, really. More demons and death and destruction and chaos and ghosts and zombies and werewolves. More fun.

Also, the ending, though I should have seen it coming, nearly knocked the wind out of me. The last two minutes had me with my hands to my mouth, frozen while I listened (audiobook) to it play out in all its gore.

Book five starts tomorrow!

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## **Nana Devourer of Tomes says**

dshfghdsgfhdgsj shit shit shit what an ending!

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## **Jamie Collins says**

This fourth book in the Felix Castor series is my favorite so far. The occult is not my favorite urban fantasy subject, but the exorcist theme works for me in these books. I also love the depiction of modern-day London and the British slang, and that the story has a nice mix of fantasy and the prosaic.

This is richly written and suspenseful. It's very focused on Castor himself, and the other characterizations are admittedly a bit neglected. There seems to have been an off-camera reconciliation between Castor and his landlady, and there's no explanation given for Detective Sergeant Coldwell's unusual helpfulness. I think many people will guess the twist in this story, since it's obvious in hindsight. But I rarely figure out these things (and I enjoy reading all the more) and I was more engaged in this plot than that of the previous books.

I'm anxious to read the next one, which is supposed to conclude the story arc concerning Castor's demon-possessed friend, Rafi.

I pick at this author a bit for word repetition, because I haven't quite forgiven him for using the word "spavined" three times in the first novel. But the writing is really very good.

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## **nemotron says**

Another thrilling (mis-)adventure in the life of Felix Castor.

Carey is really good at this, and once again he does not disappoint. The writing is witty and the plot is intriguing. The book builds on everything from previous books without actually requiring you to read them first. (Although I would recommend to do so, just because they are really good! :)). It also has some very interesting new information about the nature of demons, that hopefully will be explored more in the future.

I did see 2 of the big reveals coming quite early on and I had the feeling at least one of them should either have been revealed sooner or covered up a bit more, because it was just too obvious already.

As we get closer to the end the first person narrator moves away from one of the main plot of the book and so it feels a bit like we are missing out on the details of that ending in favour of the set up for the next (and final) chapter of the saga. That set up is very exciting, but I still would have liked a few more paragraphs about this book's plot wrap up.

Anyway, great book, worth reading!

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## **Meggie says**

Have to admit, I wasn't especially satisfied with Fex's behaviour in *Thicker Than Water*. He was really blind. How couldn't he see the truth when it was always before his face? This book was solid, but equally annoying.

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## **Tim Pendry says**

This is the fourth in the Felix Castor series and the best so far. And why is that?

Well, first of all, he is pulling together all his themes into a very cogent universe with a hint at a big back story to come. A major twist at the end of the book tells us something important about his demon world that shifts our perception and reminds us that this is the graphic novelist who brought us *Constantine*. I can't tell you more because I am not into spoilers. The surprise is part of the fun.

But, more than this, he is maturing as a writer, moving away from relying on the wise crack. He is also getting off that kick of describing each frame as if he was determined to tell us a tale for *Vertigo* and misses the pictures.

This book is a hybrid between the sharp, imaginative but ultimately formulaic first novel and something like a proper novel set in some imagined next year. There are sections where he visits Liverpool and looks back on it as the wasteland of Thatcher's Britain that go way beyond what we usually expect from a genre writer.

It is almost as if the kid who wrote comic books out of post-adolescent passion is turning into a literary man as his kids grow up (there is a revealing and interesting interview with Carey at the back of this edition).

Fantasy is now only half the story that he tells. The state of Britain and what makes a man have started to intrude as themes. Some of the more outre characters of past novels only get a walk-on part though the succubus Juliet (on whom he clearly has a crush) and Asmodeus the demon who inhabits his best friend are central. Demons get all the best parts in Carey novels.

The characterisation of the 'humans' also shifts between the expected and some exceptional development of personality. The inhabitants of this novel are real and recognisable whether on the South London Council Estate where most of the story is set, in Liverpool or as nurses and policemen who keep the plot going.

This is a top notch genre writer shifting between his preferred genre and something both much broader and more intimate, a writer who could yet 'mature' into writing a 'novel' that contained only sufficient supernatural and horror to give an angle to, say, social comment or the inner life of a denizen of his tightly plotted universe. Whether we want him to do this is a moot point but he probably could if he willed it so.

The ending strongly implies another Felix Castor novel. He has set himself up to demonstrate some



sensitivity beyond the wise cracks but you also get the feeling that the flip over to 'literature' may take a while yet. Carey's love affair with demons is not over. There is something he is working through here and there is probably a decade of work in it yet, though perhaps not always with Felix Castor in tow.

I have said nothing of the story. Why? Because to tell too much would ruin the atmosphere. In essence, demonic evil is afoot in the heart of South London's under class, that's all you need to know. You ought to read the three previous books in the series but you don't really need to. Carey's slightly laboured determination (his only weakness) to make sure you are never left guessing as to the facts of the matter means that all the salient facts from the previous novels are provided in the first quarter of the book - by fair means or foul.

Funny one-liners are sprinkled throughout - though you have to be British for the best ones. Imagine Raymond Chandler but with that English self-deprecating irony for which we notoriously love ourselves.

But, though more of a detective story than previous tales (why is it that 'going respectable' for fantasy writers always appears to involve writing crime fiction!?), the flow between crime story and horror is well managed because, after three previous outings, the universe hangs together.

The coppers have got used to zombies, ghosts, loup-garous, demons and radicalised off-balance sheet Catholic excommunication squads. So, it would seem, have the general public. The level of threat from these supernatural forces is nuanced so that public life is conducted in atmosphere of mild confusion rather than fear.

Much recommended for those who love mildly dystopian British culture and fantasy-horror set in urban grey and with a few world-weary laughs added.

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### **Scott says**

Oh man oh man oh man. What a ride. Best of the series so far with an ending that was just, I don't even know what.

I so want to jump into the next book, but I think I need a breather after this.

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### **Stephanie says**

Well, the shit really hits the fan in this one. Felix "Fix" Castor, exorcist-extraordinaire is faced with a massive entity that is causing havoc in the Salisbury Estate in South London. He is also implicated in the mysterious stabbing death of a former childhood nemesis, who happens to have lived in the Salisbury. Fix goes to investigate and runs into Father Gwillam, the Pope's favorite exorcist and his band of soldiers. Then Fix's older brother, Father Matthew, shows up too and Fix is REALLY confused.

Family secrets, self-harm, demonic possession, stalking, and kidnapping, along with various and sundry attempts at murder and mayhem ensue. Oh, and remember Fix's demon possessed BFF, Rafi? Well, Fix broke him out the "sanitarium" where he was being contained and had him stashed with the Ice-Maker, a woman with the ability to keep the demon Asmodeus contained. Guess what happens?

Huge major cliff-hanger at the end, and I am headed to the library this weekend to find the next one in this series. Loved it!

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## Carly says

**\*\*\*WARNING: a main theme of this book is self-harm (specifically cutting) It isn't fetishised or romanticised, but Carey's writing is quite visceral and my review has quotes, so beware of triggers...\*\*\***

It all starts with a jailbreak.

Felix "Fix" Castor, aided by the succubus Juliet, daringly swipe Fix's demon-possessed friend out from under the noses of the sadistic doctor who wants to take him apart to study him. Fix is just beginning to catch his breath when the police arrive on his doorstep. To his surprise, however, Fix isn't carted off to jail for kidnapping; instead, he is taken to the scene of a near-fatal assault. Much to his chagrin, the police didn't ask him over for his supernatural senses--they just want him to explain why "F Castor" is scrawled across the car window in blood. When Fix learns that the victim of the attack was a childhood enemy, his quest to discover the meaning behind the message leads him back into his murky past and into a darkening future.

This book left me breathless--and not just because I read it at the gym. It wasn't just the atmosphere and characters, or the scenes that ripped my heart into shreds, or the plot that kept me guessing into the second half of the book, or even the flawless worldbuilding; it was the visceral, visual nature of the scenes Carey painted and the way he used the template and tropes of pulp to delve into the duality and hypocrisy of human nature. Throughout the series, one of my favourite aspects has been Carey's use of the supernatural conflict as a metaphor for the story's more human tragedies-- a ghost's speech is stolen from her in the same way that her life as an illegal immigrant and prostitute left her without a voice, or spirits that physically steal men's bodies in much the same way that their entrepreneurial ruthlessness has trampled others. (Yep, I like my metaphors blatant.) This book explores a new theme: self-harm in all of its manifestations, from the supernatural to the mundane.

The location, too, the Salisbury estate, is one of Carey's best: Fix describes it as

*"One step closer to Heaven....streets eighty feet of the ground...a city in the air...leave your worries on the ground, take to the skies and live clean. Only it turned out that you left a lot of other stuff on the ground, too... closer to Heaven, maybe, but you bring your weather with you."*

It is a Babel whose towers were built to rival Heaven and is thus inevitably doomed to failure. Within this fallen city of all-to-human gods, we have a young boy who forsook his innocence of youth and apparently jumped from the airy balconies. (view spoiler) Throughout the series, the atrocities that Castor faces are, by and large, man-made. Every aspect of the world speaks of man's inhumanity to man; even the supernatural beings are, at their core, people. Ghosts, loup-garou, and zombies are people who have been refined by death into something both more and less human, and even the actions of demons are inexorably shaped by the humans who summon them into the mortal plane. (view spoiler)

Through Castor, Carey deconstructs the hero. Throughout, we see a man who is willing to shoulder the responsibilities of others, to throw himself into the fray for friends and strangers. One little oddity stuck out to me: both his mother and brother call him "Felix," so Fix must have bestowed his nickname, with all of its semantic baggage, on himself. To protect and rescue--to fix, in fact--is the role of the hero, yet over and over, Carey has shown us the consequence of choice and the arrogance and unbearable guilt that underlie this

apparent selflessness. As one character tells Fix, *"You persist in thinking that...the whole world is full of the waste products of other people's mistakes? That your role in life is to clean them up, and to take the thanks for it?"* (view spoiler) Castor's tendency to involve himself stems from both his own desire for absolution and an innate arrogance, for why does he believe he has the right, the strength, to make decisions that impact so many? Yet Fix is only one example of this hypocrisy; this duality of saviour and destroyer within the novel. (view spoiler)

Carey's exploration of self-harm is equally complex and multi-layered. Self-harm is itself a paradox; it is a way to act out on one's self-hatred; a way of keeping silence while voicelessly screaming for help, for redemption. It is a form of self-punishment, of hatred and disgust so deep that only disfiguring the vessel can relieve the pressure. Yet while it provides a temporary sense of absolution, it is not constructive, and one quickly becomes addicted to that wire in the blood, that ecstatic moment of release. One of the characters, Mark, speaks to this paradoxical sense of transformation:

*"If I could talk, I'd talk. It's the easy choice.  
But I can't, so my knife must be my voice...  
I take the blade and it just needs one stroke.  
It comes out, but changes as it flows.  
Water becomes wine. My wound becomes a rose."*

Through another character who *"[carves] out his indignation on his wrists and forearms"*, Carey captures how this form of silent self-expression, ostensibly a release of anger against the self, may truly target the world. Self-harm is, at its core, a selfish act, for it is an absolute, egoistical focus on the self even in the annihilation of self. Throughout, Carey provides perspectives and consequences, but neither fetishizes nor condemns. I think he truly sought to understand; in the dedication, he thanks an anonymous "A" for conversations and the basis for the poem. As is typical, Fix is more straightforward and sees the cutting as an ecstatic, sexually-tinged escape, yet his typical lack of subtlety and self-knowledge itself adds another layer to Carey's portrayal. For Fix himself is self-destructive: he goes out of his way to damage his potential relationships before they have a chance to bloom; in his thoughts, he tortures himself with endless slashes to his psyche by going over and over his own guilt without ever thoroughly analysing and altering his behaviour. It is the same vicious cycle of self-hatred and self-destruction, and the scars it leaves are just as deep.

The book is indeed a fast-paced thriller with a satisfying mystery and tight worldbuilding, but also something more. Fix's description of a news archive of past tragedies perfectly captured my emotions:

*"And in that typographic ocean, dark shapes moved of their own volition, against the sluggish tides. People hurt and killed each other, or themselves; broke against pavements, were impaled on railings, swallowed razor blades, carved gnostic messages on their own flesh or the flesh of their loved ones. There was blood, and there was pain. It drew me in, until I couldn't see the land any more."*

\*\*\*\*\*WARNING: MY READING PROGRESS UPDATES ARE SPOILERY.\*\*\*\*\*

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**Erin L says**

It was definitely time to get back to the Felix Castor series by Mike Carey (who also wrote the Girl With All the Gifts). I originally found this series when I found myself caught up on the Jim Butcher Dresden Files series and I wanted more.

Felix lives in London and he's an exorcist. In this installment, Felix drawn into a police investigation as a suspect rather than a consultant. It brings his past and family into play so we learn more about Fix during the book as we inch ever closer to his need to get rid of Asmodeus and potentially Fix's good friend.

This book was another good installment in the series. I'm sad that the last book is coming up. I do love this series.

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### **Kristen says**

I stayed up until about 4am reading this book, completely and utterly hooked. I have been into the series since first getting The Devil You Know, but there have always been small things I thought could have been done better.

This book was incredible.

I think Carey did his best work with the story and the characters in this installment. He has the trade-mark creepiness and horror and goes to a whole new level with it. The setting was really well-chosen, the use of the characters (especially since it, mainly, was ones we had already been introduced to) was engaging and surprising, and the action and pacing were excellent.

I saw a bit of the plot coming, but it didn't spoil the book for me at all. Carey is good at having the character figure things out, and *then* having a reveal at a suitably dramatic time, too, so we still get that moment but don't feel like punching the main character in the face. Kudos, Carey. Kudos.

Every time I read another of Carey's books I feel like I *need* more. No exception, here. The book is awesome, the ending is a punch in the gut. More, more, more.

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### **Bradley says**

I'm growing very comfortable with this series. Maybe not as comfortable as I've been in more than a handful of others, but it's definitely becoming a more enjoyable read. There's a lot of traditional gumshoeing in this novel, like the others, but for some reason, it feels a bit more polished than the previous novels. It's a lot less disjointed and the way it brings in Fix's wayward childhood, gangland style, was actually rather refreshing.

As always, the titles to these books have multiple references, and this one is obviously blood, be it family or the mark of the demon he's hunting. No spoilers here, but the basic story was pretty satisfying and I really enjoyed all the implications for all the souls in the world and Carey's universe. I feel like some real progress is shown in understanding the deeps.

It's one of the reasons I love UF. The speculation, I mean. Being so firmly based in our reality, it's a foundation that's almost irresistible, even when we work closely with some of the kings of hell. (Well, "king"

is too structured a word, but powerful works just as well. Poor Rafi.) Once again, Castor is roped into using the big guns he has on hand, and once again, it gets away from him. I wish that we as readers could summon an ounce of surprise, but Fix is always in a fix, and being what he is, he'll use whatever tools are on hand.

I was very happy that he did fix up his relationships with his friends. Nicky and Juliet aren't worse for wear after the events of the last book, so I guess that means they forgave him.

(I suppose that means that we as readers can forgive him, too. Good. I hate holding a grudge against the main character. :)

It turns out we can transfer a lot of grudge-worthy elements over to new peeps in this novel.

I heartily approve. I want to like Fix, and now I can get a chance to like him a bit more than I have been.

This is probably the best of the novels, but then, I've been saying that as I read each novel, so that either means it's me or Carey is becoming a better writer. :)

Read this if you love magical noir, peeps. It really is getting quite fun.

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## **Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says**

I'm so torn over this series. I like it a lot. I like the MC. I like the world he set up. I just hate pretty much every other character in the book. Being a character person, that's a problem for me.

I'm just sick of the crap that everyone gives Fix and him just agreeing and bending over. It's like every character in this story exists only to shit on him, and I hate it. Now that's getting pushed off on Fix for being such a wimp.

Thus far, the book (or any of the characters) have yet to convince me that Rafi's condition is his fault. Was it Fix that summoned him? I mean, let's say some dumb fuck was playing with a gun (which, if you take the POV from the book, is basically the same thing) and that idiot shoots himself in the head, is it the first responders fault because he couldn't save him?

Pen, I thought, was the only decent character there but when Pen said some BS like 'right! Run away from your responsibilities!' I wanted to chuck the book. Really? She wants to bitch about responsibilities? This woman who would've allowed this monster free, who'd allow an innocent child's soul be sacrificed to a man who hadn't even been with her at the time it happened (who'd apparently had dumped her and was known for being a player)?

I could, perhaps, take it a bit easier if the characters weren't so fucking self-righteous about the whole thing. He's like 'but what about this innocent kid' and then they try to say he's not responsible? Bah!

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## **Mel says**

This was my favourite of the Felix Castor novels so far. The focus was on a council estate in South London, so you knew that it would be bad. What made this story so good was how very personal it was. This wasn't just some random demon troubling London but tied into Castor's past in Liverpool and managed to capture a lot of the fear of growing up poor, bad relationship choices, broken families, that made the story that much more real and frightening. Of all the books so far this one seemed the most likely to actually happen. You could feel the concrete and the claustrophobia. Even the books climax mirrored events of a couple years ago when the riots were happening on the estates of London. Very highly recommended.

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## **Chris says**

3.5 stars. Good installment of the series in which Felix finds out altogether more about demons than he really bargained for. Very intense read, this. Definitely reading the fifth and presumably last book (since it was written five years ago) immediately.

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