



The Hollow Man

Oliver Harris

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The first in a series of gritty and original thrillers following cunning detective Nick Belsey from a rising voice in British crime fiction

"A twisting spiral of lies and corruption, a pitch-perfect portrait of contemporary London and a beguiling bastard of a hero-what a recipe for a great read." - *Val McDermid*

Waking up on Hampstead Heath in a crashed squad car, still drunk, with no wallet, no phone, and only a Masonic candlestick to remind him of the events of the night before, London police detective Nick Belsey has hit rock bottom. At dawn he checks in at the station to collect his things on what should be the last day of his career, but something in the overnight files catches his interest-a missing person report from Bishops Avenue, London's richest street. Alex Devereux-worth a fortune, never seen, lived alone-has vanished, leaving his Porsche in the garage and a suicide note on his desk. In Devereux's disappearance, Belsey sees a way out for himself: the opportunity for a new start by stealing the man's identity. It's a pity, however, that so many other people are looking for Devereux as well. Belsey quickly realizes that his would-be scam is about to be outclassed by a far more ambitious fraud, as the race to get to the elusive oligarch's fortune becomes a game with life and death stakes.

The Hollow Man is a tour de force of pace and plotting, and a vividly evocative love-letter to London. Oliver Harris is a sharp and stylish writer who has created a seductive, worldly, and cunning anti-hero. Nick Belsey is amoral and cynical but nonetheless deeply serious about his investigation, about a police officer's vision of the world, and about the quest for truth that haunts any good detective.

The Hollow Man Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2012 by Harper Paperbacks (first published January 1st 2011)

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Author : Oliver Harris

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From Reader Review The Hollow Man for online ebook

Steve Black says

This is certainly an unusual crime novel. Nick Belsey is definitely an anti-hero, and for most of the book I disliked him intensely. Surprisingly, I found myself warming to him towards the end.

The plot is about as realistic as Batman and Robin. Nick is a police detective who seems to operate completely on his own, with no superior taking any interest in what he is doing while he pursues his own agenda. The plot is complex, with a plethora of characters, and there are plenty of red herrings. Having said that, it moves very quickly and I had to read to the end to see what was going to happen.

I can't quite make up my mind whether I am relieved to get shot of it or if I want to read the next one, although on balance and rather to my surprise, it may well be the latter.

Jason says

My favorite Easter candy!

Can't wait to read this!

James says

I've reached the age where it is hard to finish a book once the spark has gone. Much of this is to do with reading the last page before time.

I have read the last page of this book. I know what happens at the end. BUT it is a totally compelling read and I am absorbed by the story of Baseley the anti hero who teeters on the edge of oblivion or escape or discovery of his failings or a solution to the mystery he finds himself involved with.

I urge all crime fans to read The Hollow Man. As a story it is brutal and driven, as the story of a man leaping up and down on his own self destruct button it is brilliant.

Daniel Sevitt says

Can't quite remember how I got to this, but it rattled along at a fair pace even as the convoluted plot became more and more absurd. The author tried to make London one of the characters in the story, but he may have been trying a little too hard. Still there were plenty of references to places I recognized - shout-outs to Edgware, Hampstead High Street and the Finchley Road. Pleasantly surprised to find this is the first of a series, so I might see if I can pick up the next one from one of London's cheapo charity shops.

R-Cee*Jay says

I must say that I am a little disappointed here. Although a gal tends to like a bad boy, this cop didn't really win my favour. He is an out-and-out crook yet still sort-of the hero. Maybe it's just me.

Ian Mapp says

Start of a new crime series which introduces us to anti Hero bad cop, Nick Belsey.

Starts in a totally breathless style, with Nick waking up on Hampstead Heath, having crashed his stolen police car the night before and in a confused and hungover state.

He pieces together the elements of the night before by nicking the change in the tip jar of a coffee house to get this thoughts together. My the time the recollection has been completed, I thought he may have stolen a blind man's white stick. He is that low.

The book then loses its way a bit. He has a suicide to resolve - a rich man in the poshest part of London is found dead. He takes the man's identity to try and get away from his problems.

The rest of the book is a breathless Carlito's Way type escape from his past, as it tries to drag him back in.

Plus we have the investigation of the man who's identity he has stolen to unravel. Things are compounded when a Schoolgirl is shot by a sniper in an NW3 Starbucks.

It's that kind of bombastic book that is all rather OTT.

A fresh voice and a more unusual police procedural. I have a decision to make with whether to continue in the series.

D.E. Meredith says

This was a great read. I know nothing about the author and it was a random selection but the writing was really really good. Smooth as silk prose, some lovely descriptive pieces, some great one liners and I thought the whole play on hollowness - the corrupt cops, the seedy images of London, the lead detective's hollowed out complacency and gambling debts etc was spot on, zeitgeist stuff. Oliver Harris is going to go on to big things, is my guess, if he keeps up this standard.

Book Addict Shaun says

My good luck of reading nothing but excellent books continues with this one. I recently discovered this author on Twitter when I read about his second book, Deep Shelter. The blurb immediately jumped out at me as something I would love reading. Oliver very kindly sent me a copy of Deep Shelter but first I bought this book as even though some people just jump into series without reading other books, I felt it would be better

to read this first book to acquaint myself with Nick Belsey. And am I glad I did! This book was absolutely fantastic and from start to finish I struggled to part with it!

One of my favourite things about crime fiction is detectives who don't play by the book. It doesn't always have to be in an illegal way, but when it is it is all the more enjoyable. I can say that I haven't enjoyed that aspect of a crime story as much as I did with this one. At the start of the book I was just in shock at what Nick was getting up to but loving it at the same time. First off when we are introduced to him he is covered in blood and soaking wet and he has abandoned a police car. Planning on running away he sees a MisPer for someone living on one of the richest streets in London and decides to go and have a look. Upon arriving at the house Nick helps himself to the clothing and food of the missing person.

We learn that Nick Belsey is pretty much bankrupt and all he has left to lose is his job. He comes up with a plan to get out of the UK by assuming the identity of Alexei Devereux (the MisPer who isn't missing for long...) and this is where the story really picked up and became amazing. Oliver Harris has really written a unique, interesting and gripping story which in this genre isn't an easy thing to do. Belsey was certainly a unique character and one that I just loved reading about. In terms of the actual story itself I had no idea where it was going to lead, usually you might have an idea of what's going to happen if it's a fairly predictable read but this book literally left me guessing with the end of each chapter.

And the writing! It's been a while since I've read a book written as well as this one, the words smooth as silk definitely apply here. Oliver Harris is a very talented writer. Another thing as well is the setting, I love books set in London but especially books where you can really feel the setting, the city came alive in this book and I really felt as if I was a part of it. Some authors set their books in cities but there isn't anything distinguishing in how they write about it, not the case here however and it was great.

I am just kicking myself at not discovering this author sooner and am now itching to read Deep Shelter, it is definitely at the top of my to read list. I am just wondering where Belsey will go as a character especially after the events of this book. However if Deep Shelter is even half as good as The Hollow Man then after reading it I should imagine I will be listing Belsey amongst my favourite fictional characters and Oliver Harris amongst my favourite crime authors.

John Lee says

I think that I read somewhere , a very positive review of the authors next book - and that is how I came to find this one.

It was an exciting enough tale which kept you turning the pages but whereas with other novels I felt the need to know who everyone was, here I wasn't really bothered. Perhaps because I felt the characters were inadequately drawn they didn't register and it became a bit of a 'surface' read.

Throughout the story I had the feeling 'but would you do that?'. If you looked too closely, you would see other problems about to hit Nick Belsey

This was one of those stories that sweeps you along and it isn't until you stop to take a breath that you realise all the holes it has opened up.

Enjoyable, yes. But I won't be chasing the follow up.

Patricia says

The Big Question: To finish or not to finish. I don't like the main character AT ALL, I find the setting (Hampstead) familiar but nothing new so not very compelling and the whole thing is a look into the underworld / slimy life that I'm not sure I want to pursue. Especially as the guy is a jerk!

Decided: Life's too short.... Time to move on and store this one for another year.

Mark says

Nick Belsey is a crack detective. He is also at the end of his tether, ruined by drinking and a gambling addiction. So when a missing persons report comes in on a wealthy Russian expatriate, Nick sees his opportunity: he will occupy the man's mansion and inhabit his life long enough to get cash and a passport together to walk away from his forthcoming humiliation.

But then, Nick finds himself getting interested in what actually happened to Alexei Devereux, especially after his body is discovered in a safe room, throat slashed. Not long after, Nick finds himself following a schoolgirl away from the house because she is vaguely familiar, and at a Starbucks, an assassin opens fire.

That is when Nick's audacious plan turns into a mesmerizing combination of trying to solve the case of Alexei Devereux and still find a way out for himself. Along the way, there will be shady oligarchs, gambling consortiums, contract killers, compromised cops, corrupt financiers and a half dozen twists and turns.

Belsey is the kind of cop that you end up rooting for despite his flaws, or maybe because of them, and the action is nonstop. It is probably also the kind of tale where some of the bumbling of the other police shouldn't be examined too closely, and Nick's ability to lie his way through almost any situation is also not up for close scrutiny, and that was the only reason I couldn't add a fifth star.

But enjoyable and fast moving -- OMG, yes.

Book Him Danno says

It is funny how when you really have nothing else to lose it seems to make sense to double down and go for broke. Nick Belsey is a police detective with problems. He drinks too much, he gambles, he is broke and homeless. We find him waking up with a crashed police car, which he stole, hung-over, and most likely to be shortly unemployed. All in all his life is crap.

But as the hammer is about to fall he avoids his bosses with one last call, a missing person case. And were off on the wild ride involving reclusive Russian billionaires, teenage prostitutes, high finance, assassinations, and behind the scenes deals. Detective Belsey is definitely a man who believes the ends do justify the means; and the end in mind is to step out of his life and disappear with the nice parts of the victims.

You get a sense Belsey wasn't just having a bad night from the moment he steps into the victims house. His true nature comes out while suffering from ruined wet shoes he spots a very expensive pair of shoes in the closet are his size and he changes into them. Next on is the pricey suit followed by the Porsche from the

garage. The very wealthy victim is missing, presumed dead from suicide, and has nobody in his life to claim him. Instead of a crime, Belsey sees an opportunity to get his life back on track again. He just needs to figure out a few first, and then he is gone.

Told in quick choppy chapters with concise witty dialogue, Oliver Harris leads you through a compelling crime at breakneck speed. Introducing the true anti-hero, the detective you hate to love, Harris has opened up a London you never knew existed. I was so glad to hear this is book one of a projected series; which can only get even better with time.

Sarah says

I got into this one quickly, but then it seemed to go nowhere. I'm 4/5th of the way through, and still feel like I know nothing about the protagonist, and have no connection to any other character. The plot is sort of flat, always at the same pace, and very little suspense. I'll finish it because it's an easy enough read, but I'm a bit let down.

Update: didnt care, didnt finish.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

The Hollow Man by Oliver Harris is a noir police procedural featuring Detective Constable Nick Belsey. This is a procedural novel with a twist: Belsey is an antihero. He's broke, homeless, corrupt, and on the verge of unemployment. He just wants to find a way out of London and his life. When he is sent to investigate a missing person case and discovers the apparent suicide of enigmatic Russian millionaire Alexei Devereux he sees a way out. No one really seems to know the elusive Devereux. Belsey could create a new identity for himself and a new life, all financed by the dead man's assets.

As Belsey investigates Devereux, however, things are not quite as simple as he first thought and Devereux's life is much more complex than it seemed at first glance. Even as Belsey sleeps at the dead man's luxurious home and schemes to take over his money, he continues to investigate the tangled web surrounding the Russian and his personal and business dealings. And then people that may have been involved in Devereux's life are starting to be murdered, making Belsey's plans more complicated.

Belsey is determined to uncover exactly what was going on, even while he lies and schemes to everyone.

This is Harris's first novel and hopefully not his last featuring D.C. Nick Belsey. While the beginning moved much slower than the end, once Belsey's plans began to firm up even as he continued his investigation, the tension began to mount. Toward the end of the novel I was reading with a frantic intensity as pieces of the complicated puzzle were falling into place. Harris had a strong supporting cast of characters that could be further developed along with Belsey in another novel.

The Hollow Man by Oliver Harris is certainly worth reading, especially if you enjoy police procedurals. It sort of reminded me of an old film noir movie (like The Maltese Falcon or Key Largo, with a skilled but world-weary investigator). In other words, I could really see The Hollow Man being made into a movie.

Highly Recommended - as a noir police procedural with a twist.

The Hollow Man is another novel being released by HarperCollins US, in their new Bourbon Street Books imprint.

Disclosure: I received an advanced reading copy of this book from the publisher and TLC for review purposes.

Mike Gabor says

Detective Nick Belsey is a mess. He wakes up in a field one morning after a hard night out. He's broke and has no place to go as he's just been evicted from his last residence. He's a man of excess, drinks too much, gambles too much, just an all around mess.

On what he believes will be his last day of work, as the previous night in addition to his drunken behaviour, he also stole a squad car, which he wound up crashing and had a bit of a dalliance with a superior's wife, he begins to investigate the disappearance of a Russian millionaire. The investigations begins to seem to provide him with a way out of his current situation, maybe he can start over by stealing the missing man's identity.

I really enjoyed this book, I like my lead characters to be a bit flawed and Nick Belsey certainly fits the bill. Even with all his faults, which are plenty, you have to like him and hope he succeeds with his plan. My only complaint was the ending which seemed a bit contrived but I still highly recommend this book.
