



## Shadow Unit 1

*Emma Bull , Elizabeth Bear , Sarah Monette , Will Shetterly , Kyle Cassidy (Illustrator)*

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**Shadow Unit 1** Emma Bull , Elizabeth Bear , Sarah Monette , Will Shetterly , Kyle Cassidy (Illustrator)  
The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit hunts humanity's worst nightmares. But there are nightmares humanity doesn't dream are real.

The BAU sends those cases down the hall. There, Stephen Reyes and his team pursue criminals transformed by a mysterious force: the anomaly.

Welcome to Shadow Unit.

The Shadow Unit series was created by award-winning authors Emma Bull and Elizabeth Bear.

Contains four novellas:

“Breathe” by Emma Bull  
“Knock On Coffins” by Elizabeth Bear  
“Dexterity” by Sarah Monette  
“A Handful of Dust” by Will Shetterly

plus bonus material.

## Shadow Unit 1 Details

Date : Published May 24th 2011 by CatYelling

ISBN :

Author : Emma Bull , Elizabeth Bear , Sarah Monette , Will Shetterly , Kyle Cassidy (Illustrator)

Format : Kindle Edition 216 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Mystery, Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Crime

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**Download and Read Free Online Shadow Unit 1 Emma Bull , Elizabeth Bear , Sarah Monette , Will Shetterly , Kyle Cassidy (Illustrator)**

## From Reader Review Shadow Unit 1 for online ebook

### Nadir says

The first ebook adaptation of an ongoing internet serial, Shadow Unit is an urban fantasy (yes I know I said I was going to stay away from them, but it's co-written by one of my favourite authors and I am weak!) written by four creative authors who decided to create a TV programme in short story form, with great success. The whole series is free-to-read, just go to the official website, which also has several amusing extras that allow you to become even deeper submerged in the Shadow Unit world.

The world in question is much like our own, with the 'fantasy' part of the urban fantasy genre being mostly hidden from the public. When a person is under stress, they become weak to outside influences. They might catch the flu – or they might become host to an 'Anomaly' which cranks the host's metabolism into overdrive and gives them a special, usually aggressive, super power. Normal police wouldn't be able to take on a super-powered killer, so when things start to look odd, they call in this FBI team, lovingly dubbed WTF by other units.

The team are a close knit group, each with their own distinct personality, flaws and drives. The POV of each 'episode' usually flicks between one or two of the team, allowing the reader to get to know each member of the unit over the course of the book without being overwhelming or confusing. I believe each 'episode' has one main writer, so each short story has a different style, yet this does not detract from the enjoyment of reading. No matter who holds the pen, the characters ring true, their interactions, quirks and reactions consistent and fluid. It reminds me strongly of the BBC programme, Torchwood, the writers showing the same fearlessness about including minorities and different sexualities in their characters. There isn't as much sex or violence as Torchwood, however, and for that I am somewhat pleased.

The novel I purchased contained the first half (and then some) of the first 'season', of which three are completed and the fourth is just starting. I bought the second book as soon as I finished the first. I found it a wonderful, relaxing read, entertaining and humours at times and chilling and suspenseful at others, short enough to let my mind wind down after the marathon struggle I'd had to read *The Blade Itself* above. The plots were not very complicated, the conclusions sometimes a touch too swift to arrive, but these grievances are minor. It was, all in all, an easy and enjoyable read.

Characters: 7/10

Setting: 5/10

Plot: 7/10

Dialogue: 8/10

Overall: 7/10

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### James says

Shadow Unit is an online series of stories, called "episodes," gathered into seasons involving a team of FBI agents who investigate supernatural incidents. The episodes are freely available at <http://www.shadowunit.org>, but have also been made available as books for Kindle. This collection is the first four episodes of the first season (the season has eight episodes). Like many TV shows, these first episodes feel like a lot of establishment of character and background, but they are still entertaining and fun

with an intriguing set-up. I expect to read more of them in the future.

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### **Trike says**

Emma Bull! Wil Shetterly! Elizabeth Bear!

Write boring-ass fan fiction based on Criminal Minds!

Seriously, for all their jibber-jabber about *this* TV series and *that* TV series and how they're writing stories based on an imaginary new TV series they really want to see, this is just crappy Criminal Minds fanwank. All the characters from that show are here; basically what they've done is change their race or gender... or in the case of Penelope Garcia, her weight. (No fatties in Fantasy!)

The hook for me was that this was going to be a Fantasy (or perhaps Science Fictional) version of a police procedural. It's not. The Fantasy elements (and that's what they ultimately are) are minimal at best. Just an excuse for people to kill other people so the ~~Criminal Minds~~ team can walk around saying cryptic bullshit. Using the show as a jumping-off point is fine, but you have to do it \*better\*, not worse.

I wouldn't be so mad about this if these guys weren't (normally) so good at what they do. This is exactly like Robert Towne faffing off and writing Days of Thunder, that shitty NASCAR movie starring Tom Cruise. Except in that case at least Towne got paid millions of dollars to turn in a bog-standard 3rd act that any monkey could've written. I literally have no idea what the motivation for this thing was.

If you want to practice your writing by taking an existing TV series and trying to emulate its tone and style, that's a good idea. As a writing EXERCISE. You then delete it from your computer and write something good. You don't sell it to people. Life's too short to waste it reading fanfic.

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### **? Irena ? says**

I thought that being similar to *Criminal Minds* would make it as good. I was wrong.

This isn't similar to the TV series. Just replace serial killers without weirdness with series killers with some kind of anomaly. It is the only difference. The first story is almost a clone of *A Higher Power*. Only the way the people are being killed is changed. There are two more longer stories: one with a gamma - a person with an anomaly - who causes schizophrenia and the other with a rapists/killer who causes people to die of fear. Between those three, you have snippets from the lives of team members.

The characters are boring. Their attitude and thoughts would make sense after you've already seen or read a lot of episodes. I love anthologies, but this one bored me.

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### **Reed says**

Lured by names like Bear, Bull, Monette, and Shetterly I was eager to give Shadow Unit a look as soon as I heard about it. Which, apparently, was late in the game as there are a slew of these books already.

The conceit is an interesting one, in which the authors write "episodes" for a non-existent TV series. The "show" in question feels like a mash of Criminal Minds and shows with supernatural storylines, such as X-Files or Alphas.

My problem with the book is the fact I don't like Criminal Minds, and I didn't care for the choppy, episodic nature of the writing. Neither is truly a problem with the book, as they are both fully intended by the authors. It just wasn't my kind of writing.

At least it was a cheap look at the series, as it's all free online, and the Kindle version of the first book was a mere dollar. While it wasn't my cup of tea, I can't really complain about the cheap opportunity to explore a new series. Try it only if you like the elements mentioned above.

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## Fey says

### My original thoughts before reading:

Emma Bull, Elizabeth Bear, Sarah Monette?

Holy shit sherlock thats an authorgasm. ungh.

### My Actual Review:

In Emma Bull's own words, Shadow Unit is fan fiction for a tv series that never existed. Bull thought up this fantastic urban fantasy type tv series, taking ideas from her old favourites such as *x-files* and *The Man from UNCLE*, and then brought on board some of her writer friends to collaborate and write for it.

To compare it to more recent tv shows, it has a lot in common with *Alphas* one of my favs. The series revolves around a small branch of the FBI, the 'Anomalous Crimes Task Force' also commonly called 'the shadow unit', whose job it is to identify and track down Gammas. Who are humans infected with an unknown substance (simply called the 'anomaly'). No one knows what the anomaly is, whether parasite, virus, bacteria etc, but it's effect on humans is to give them supernatural abilities, and then to bend their mind subtly to it's own purpose. Most Gammas end up using their abilities to harm or kill, and that's when the shadow unit gets called in.

The format of the book is as a collection of short stories, called episodes, each written by a different author, but all set within the same universe and timeline. The first episode **Breathe** makes a very good introduction to the series. As it brings in the character Daphne Worth who has just joined the Shadow Unit team, and is as new to all this as we - the readers - are. Worth was originally an EMT (that's paramedic for us Brits), who trained up to join the team after a nasty encounter with a Gamma that resulted in the death of her colleagues. After meeting the team, Daphne gets to go on her first case. Several victims have been found suffocated to death without any apparent external cause. The Gamma that did it is still out there, and the team are racing against the clock to put all the evidence together and catch the Gamma before the Gamma takes its next victim.

If you can tell from my comment when I first noticed this series, I was a little excited about the authors involved. In my teens, I loved Emma Bull's lesser known cyberpunk novel *Bone Dance*. And in the last year

or two I've turned into a **huge** fan of Sarah Monette, I just think she's the bees knees when it comes to fantasy involving lgbt characters, and I'm reading everything of hers that I can get my hands on. I haven't actually read any of Elizabeth Bear's solo work, but her collab work with Sarah Monette is really good. Her work on *Shadow Unit* has further convinced me that I need to explore some of her stuff soon.

The shadow unit series features a really interesting cast of characters that really draw you in, some great writing, and an inovative new twist to the urban fantasy/paranormal genre.

The episodes were all originally published on the Shadow Unit website. They're still all there and available free of charge if you wish to go through them that way. Theres a helpful wiki built that's immensely helpful. The page for reading order of the episodes is the best place to start if you want to go down that route.

Or.. Most of the episodes have been released collected together in ebook format. This being the first novel, a collection of the first four episodes and extra material. It's easier on the eyes than reading on the website, they're really cheaply priced (72 pence, you can't go wrong!), and of course you would be supporting the authors. Available on Amazon.

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### **Andrea says**

The concept behind this shared-world series is fanfic/tie-in novelisations of a tv series that doesn't exist, which is basically a mashup of X-Files and Criminal Minds.

Easy reading stuff, although very fanficcy feel in parts - we spend a lot more time on characters than cases. The second 'episode' is an office bbq. (The email/blog chats between some of the characters didn't work particularly well for me).

Still, being priced smartly (free first, and cheap episodes) it was easy to power through the first four novels. There's one character which is the clear authorial favourite and we've spent most of the time around him - the other characters have not had nearly so much time lavished on them.

So, readable but not so compelling that I'm likely to zoom through the entire series in one hit. May pick it up again if I want something I can dip into.

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### **Joe Hempel says**

Shadow Unit is a different kind of book....it's a tie in set of stories for a TV show that never happened, except in the heads of it's creators.

Think of it as a cross between X-Files, Criminal Minds, Man From UNCLE, etc...more heavily on the Criminal Minds side.

Shadow Unit is a division of the FBI in the Anamolous Crimes Division, investigating the crimes of something they call "gammas", or people that have certain un-explainable powers. They setup and how they go about catching the criminals are straight from Criminal Minds, and that's the closest tie-in.

Each book is a set of short stories with little tie-in extras to give you more insight to the characters (like DVD-Extras).

There are currently 4 seasons of about 8 stories each season that you can read online free, or buy the eBooks. Each "season" does end with a season finale, just like a TV Show. It's obvious that they wanted to make it like a TV Show, and very easy to imagine this in your head as a TV Show.

Bottom line, the first book had 4 stories....the first two were kind of slow, but entertaining...the last two had more of that *Criminal Minds* flavor that I was looking for. I've heard it continues along that line in the later books, and I've already bought the 2nd one.

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### **Denise says**

*Shadow Unit* is, essentially, what would happen if *Criminal Minds* and the sci-fi/urban fantasy genre had a secret fanfic lovechild. Now, I happen to love *Criminal Minds*, the sci-fi/urban fantasy genre and fanfic, so it's probably not entirely surprising that I found this series opener (consisting of four novellas and assorted titbits) pretty damn entertaining. I had my doubts at the beginning, with especially the first of the novellas just feeling a little too much and too obviously like CM meets the supernatural, but the further I read and the more I got a feel for the characters, the more I enjoyed this. Will definitely continue the series at some point.

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### **Miriam says**

Looks like this is currently free for Kindle: <http://www.amazon.com/Shadow-Unit-1-W...>

In any case, you can always read the entire series online and pay/donate what you like to the authors: <http://shadowunit.org/>). In addition to the stories listed in the goodreads description there are also peripheral materials in between, stuff that's happening in the characters lives that doesn't relate to the investigations, etc. I'm not sure if these are included in the kindle version as I'm not reading that edition. I will mention, since I'm writing this retroactively, having read further, that the extras sometimes contain information that gets referred to later.

“Breathe” by Emma Bull -- Nice introduction to the characters and set-up via the classic newbie-arriving-at-the-job device.

“Knock On Coffins” by Elizabeth Bear -- Kind of jarring after “Breathe” as the writing style and interpretation of the characters is so different.

“Dexterity” by Sarah Monette -- If your hand offends you, cut it off. If someone else's hand offends you, beat them to death.

Nice job adding a bit more nuance to the gamma concept.

“A Handful of Dust” by Will Shetterly -- Nice Eliot reference, although I have trouble believing the character in question is a big poetry lover. Still, as one agent points out, you can always google a good quote.

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### **Jennifer says**

This is definitely a series (if actually made) I would watch in all its geeky, X-Files meets Fringe meets Supernatural, glory. You've got a secret FBI unit made up of misfit toys--all with their own stories to explore--and a mythology that involves some sort of alien force/parasite that makes people behave in deadly ways unless it doesn't. Two members of the task force have actually been infected by this force but use it for good (even as they battle the side effects). Some of the episodes are stronger than others--the first, Breathe, and the last, Ballistic, stand out to me. However, anywhere Emma Bull goes, I will follow and this was a fun and intriguing trip into a text that was originally online (and still is, btw.) Strangely enough, I did not read this on the kindle but in good old fashioned paperback form (but there was no paperback version on goodreads).

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### **Stephanie says**

Serial story, told like a blend of CSI and X-Files. Pretty interesting, and several seasons worth of "shows" to read.

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### **Jacqie says**

I'm a big fan of Elizabeth Bear, and like Emma Bull and Sara Monette just fine. Somehow this ended up being less than the sum of its parts for me. We get a team of FBI agents who investigate paranormal crime. Hard to go wrong with that, right? It's still unclear to me after reading this book exactly how someone gets triggered to be a "gamma" (someone who manifests some sort of mutant power after being triggered- it's all very random). Gammas are always bad and may be killed with impunity- no moral ambiguity there. Only reason to keep one alive is to study it.

Except- two team members are "betas"- folks who have mutant abilities who never kill anyone (except gammas). They seem to do just fine. Why? Not this book's problem.

The characters just felt too much larger than life. Everyone is hyper-ultra-aware of what every person says and does, and every team member is constantly "profiling" everybody. Words like "victimology" get thrown around as if I'm expected to go "ooh- science!" But everybody is also ultra-cool, ultra-hip, and ultra-enlightened to any race or sexuality issues. It also felt like paint-by-numbers diversity. We have a closeted white gay man, an "out" gay white woman, a black Cuban-American boss, a Jewish female second in command, a war veteran (also Jewish?), a Chinese PR specialist who also seems to do everything else while running backwards in high heels, a (probably) Middle-Eastern ethnic woman who is the coolest fashionista evah and has mad skillz with the computers, and an indeterminate tawny young man, supergenius.

I think I would have liked more depth and less coolness. Maybe I was just expecting something different than what these authors had decided to write.

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## **Jeni says**

Criminal Minds is one of my favourite tv shows so I've been putting off reading this book for ages as I wasn't sure if a supernatural / paranormal version on paper would work for me. Well it did - yay! ... In fact, at the moment I think I prefer the characters and the stories in the book to the tv series, so I will certainly be continuing with them.

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## **Danielle says**

I bought this ebook for \$0.99. You get what you pay for.

The concept is interesting and familiar: an FBI task force assigned to entities called "anomalies," a type of supernatural possession causing people to commit crimes, mostly murder.

Sarah Monette and Will Shetterly saved this from being a one-star experience. I love everything Sarah has written - it was what brought me to this book - and Will's writing was a pleasant surprise, though that might have been because the other parts of the story were so difficult to get through. Slogging through Emma Bull and Elizabeth Bear's clumsy prose and lifeless, stereotypical characters, I was ready to abandon this book before I got to Sarah's section, which was itself enjoyable, but ultimately not worth the frustration.

I'm willing to concede that things probably got lost in translation when story was put into ebook form, but that doesn't motivate me to want to read any more of it. If it hadn't been so cheap, I would want my money back.

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