



## Ghost in the Machine

*Ed James*

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## **Ghost in the Machine** Ed James

Detective Constable Scott Cullen of Lothian and Borders has only been three months in CID as a full DC. He is assigned a Missing Persons case which has stretched his uniform colleagues. Caroline Adamson - a young, recently divorced mother from Edinburgh - has disappeared whilst on a date. The more Cullen digs into her disappearance, the more he unravels her private life. Who was she on a date with? What happened during her divorce from Rob Thomson? As Cullen's own private life gets messier and the relationship with his DI deteriorates, Caroline's body turns up and he finds himself hunting for a ghost in the machine. Book one of the Scott Cullen series.

## **Ghost in the Machine Details**

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Author : Ed James

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## **From Reader Review Ghost in the Machine for online ebook**

### **Vinay Leo R. says**

I think this is the first time I've read a book with the setting in Scotland. This, the first of the Scott Cullen police procedural series, was definitely one of the best books of my short Kindle-reader experience to date. Though the Scottish accent filled dialogue felt a little confusing at first, I got adjusted to it. And it brought some originality to it. The case qualifies as a mystery and to a little extent, as a thriller too because it kept me interested and wondering. The characters are well put, and the twists at the right time. Though towards the end, you do have an idea who the perpetrator will be. A delightful read, and I'd say it rates 3.5 stars. Not quite moving toward the four, so a 3 here.

A note to Kindle crime-fiction fans: as of this moment, this book is a free copy. So give it a try. You won't lose a lot of time here, the plot goes along very quick. So you could gain a good read here.

Review at the blog: <http://bit.ly/14wrTmY>

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### **Michelle Bacon says**

#### **Irish Who Dunit**

I love a good mystery that keeps you turning the pages such as this particular book. Some women start turning up murdered and Scott Cullen is on a hunt to find the murderer. Bain, who is Cullen's boss has assumed who it is by the connections and a grainy security tape but Cullen is not 100% it is that guy. Many twists in this plot keeps you guessing to the very end. I may need to read more in this series.

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### **Lasciel says**

The story was in general good, but I felt like the book lacked emotion and momentum. DI Cullen was a touch dull, his thought process was admirable, but he seemed to lack passion at least from my perspective. There was very little momentum, ordinarily murder mysteries spark this thrill to find the killer. This seemed to much like hard work. I don't think the characters were deep enough. Maybe all these things improve in the later novels, at least I hope so as I liked the style of this story.

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### **Steve Wenn says**

i enjoyed this, but why do so many police detectives have to have a stupid boss (Frost Morse etc)in this instance it got in the way of the story by the end.  
I'd read more, but it's not up to Ian Rankin or Alison Bruce

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## **Sean says**

First in the series of books about Scott Cullen. A really good start and the series really looks promising.

Ed has done a brilliant job of creating a thoroughly good atmosphere and this held throughout the book.

Will give the next book a go now.

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## **Andy Angel says**

A very well written police procedural novel set in and around Edinburgh that may well lead to comparisons with the likes of Mark Billingham and Ian Rankin and in my opinion those comparisons would be well deserved.

What starts out as a missing person case quickly becomes a hunt for a serial murderer. The trail leads to several dead ends and red herrings. The chief has his eye on a possible promotion and is wanting to close the case quickly, convinced he knows who the guilty party is but DC Scott Cullen isn't as certain. Can he find the killer before the wrong man is arrested and charged? Or is the chief right all along?

Cullen, the star of this story is no high flying detective, just a lowly DC which makes for a refreshing change and as a character he comes across well.

The killer is picking his victims via Schoolbook, a Facebook like online site for meeting people you knew at school, which asks the question "how well do you really know the people you meet on the 'net'".

As a first novel this was a highly enjoyable and accomplished effort. The next of the Scott Cullen novels "Devil in the Detail" is high on my 'to read pile'

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## **Mark Tilbury says**

DC Scott Cullen hasn't been a detective for very long before he is given a missing persons case. A single mother has disappeared whilst on a date and her private life and events surrounding her divorce get examined. The use of social media sites and internet dating are a big part of the story and they are used to show how the characters tie together.

The first chapter is eventful and pacy, and this sets the tone for the rest of the book. The story continues at the same speed with DC Cullen attempting to solve the case in the midst of workplace bullying and backstabbing, whilst the people he is investigating hide behind their on-line personas.

The setting of Edinburgh took me away from the usual settings of more southern cities and the use of local dialect made the events in the story seem all the more real. Much of the story is written in dialogue so as I was reading it I felt as if I was there in the investigation listening to all the conversations.

This police procedural story stands out from many others due to its originality. Its use of social media and other technologies is effective without being complicated. The author's use of dialogue kept the focus on the characters and what their roles and responsibilities were in the investigation.

A great first installment of a series and a main character that readers can relate to and want to be successful.

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### **Nigel Bird says**

Facebook has a competitor. It's called Schoolbook and it hooks up old friends. It also leaves some of those friends dead.

Ghost In The Machine opens with a blind-date that ends in the murder of a woman in an Edinburgh hotel. This sets off a chain of events that we watch unfold from the point of view of Scott Cullen, a detective who is new to me and who brings a wonderful energy to the world of the police procedural.

Cullen's good at his job and is keen to do what is right. That's not always as easy as it might be, given that his bosses are playing political games and looking after their reputations, while his juniors are often rather incompetent.

As he battles against the lack of imagination of his seniors, Cullen moves off on tangents by following a mix of instinct and logic. It's a good job he does, too, even if it does get him into hot water with the powers that be. The thing is, he's the one with the handle on the case and he's the only one likely to come up with the right result.

I really enjoyed this one. The setting is colourful and the characters well put together. The process of Cullen's investigation into technologies using ultra-modern techniques is fascinating and well-explained. The pace of the story is terrific and the plot really accelerates from the off. There are plot-twists that came totally unexpectedly for me, yet made complete sense once the pieces of the puzzle were put together. There's also enough in Cullen's personal life and general manner to make him a pleasure to get to know. Most interestingly for me was the style of the book. To me it goes against the writing rules I often read about and discuss, namely in the way that it tells the tale almost entirely through dialogue. It's a great example of how to buck the norm; in so doing, James creates something that feels fresh and exciting. It helps that he uses strong differentiation between the voices of the characters, whether that be through accent, manner or phrasing. This rhythm adds to the style and pace of the work and helped this reader to shift through the gears with perfect ease.

It's fair to say that I was bolting along as the climax played out. I was totally hooked and had been from pretty early on. This is a bonus as it helped me save on battery life on my TV remote control, the telly being switched off for the past few days to make way for the real action.

Recommended to anyone who likes a solid police story. I'll definitely be reading more in the series.

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### **Tim Smith says**

This book reminds of the quote (paraphrasing here) that Americans and the inhabitants of the British Isles are peoples separated by a common language. That observation could also apply to any reader not willing to look beyond James' liberal use of regional slang and colloquialisms to the story told here. Another facet of this title that kept me from rating it lower was the insider view of the grinding nature of police procedures. Although this has been used with great success by many American authors, James does a good job of

showing discouraging it was to Cullen. Can't say much more or this will turn into spoiler review. E-book version is free on several sites and worth a look if you haven't read any other books by James.

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### **edifanob says**

First in series of the cases of Detective Constable Scott Cullen set in Scotland.

I really liked this police procedural novel. Schoolbook which is the Facebook in Scott Cullens world and plays an important role.

I will definitely continue to read the series.

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### **Bernadette Robinson says**

I really enjoyed this story which is the first in the Scott Cullen series of books based on DC Scott Cullen. I picked it up as a free kindle read.

I enjoyed the relationship between Cullen and his colleagues which at times became a little strained but to me this made it all the more believable. I think Cullen has the makings of a great character and look forward to seeing how he progresses in the next books in the series.

The story follows the disappearance of a woman and what you initially think is a one off soon turns into the search for a serial killer. With the use of social media network sites this is a very current and modern read.

Set in Edinburgh this style of crime story could easily be compared to the likes of Ian Rankin, if you like Rankin's style then give this one a go.

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### **James Rye says**

This is my second Ed James and his first in the Cullen series. I liked several things about this book: his ability to draw the character of Cullen and his DC; the realistic dialogue; the details of the Kafkaesque police procedures; the ability to handle the slowly unravelling plot that becomes personal towards the end.

The main reason for not giving it higher than three stars is that I found myself deeply annoyed by DI Bains. I found him to be so horrible and so stupid that he was unbelievable and therefore became a cliché. If characters like him exist in real life, heaven help the police force! I concluded that he was an invented device necessary to frustrate (and therefore prolong) the plot. For me he undid any good that had been created by the rest of the book. He needs toning down, murdering, or promoting to another force.

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### **Lexie Conyngham says**

A slightly under-stated but thoroughly enjoyable book with real characters and slightly too real settings - I was alarmed to find one scene set in the hotel I was just about to stay in the following night! It showed a

thorough knowledge of Edinburgh (not just the usual aspects) and its people, and the plot was a good page-turner. I look forward to another one in the series.

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## **Edward Beavers says**

### **Unusual read**

### **Unusual read**

I wouldn't say this book was better than expected it was a good read but was too much into Bain's incompetence and should have spent more time in "police work" in finding the killer.

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## **Debra says**

The disappearance and subsequent murder of Caroline Adamson means one heck of a lot of work Detective Constable Scott Cullen and others, as his bullying, condescending boss expects results fast. But catching a killer becomes much more complex when three other murders occur. The suspect, hiding behind different online personas, is difficult to identify let alone find.

Ghost in the Machine is one of the grittiest, most engaging police procedurals I've read this year. Set in an area called Lothian & Borders CID, (I think this is a part of Edinburgh), author Ed James does a terrific job with dialect and setting. Above all, the portrayal of political and social dysfunction in a police force with all types of personalities and agendas is terrific. Those folks are definitely not the slick professionals you see hunting killers on American TV shows, which is why I like this book. The characters come across as so amazingly real that it's easy to relate to Cullen's struggles to keep from lashing out at lazy, backstabbing coworkers and supervisors.

My only quibble is that the flashbacks showing each victim's encounter with the killer doesn't add anything to the story. In fact, it slows the pacing down at a point where it should be building. Having said that, the book is still a great read.

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