



The Dark Side of the Road

Simon R. Green

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Ishmael Jones is someone who can't afford to be noticed, someone who lives under the radar, who drives on the dark side of the road. He's employed to search out secrets, investigate mysteries and shine a light in dark places. Sometimes he kills people. Invited by his employer, the enigmatic Colonel, to join him and his family for Christmas, Ishmael arrives at the grand but isolated Belcourt Manor in the midst of a blizzard to find that the Colonel has mysteriously disappeared. As he questions his fellow guests, Ishmael concludes that at least one of them not least Ishmael himself - is harbouring a dangerous secret, and that beneath the veneer of festive cheer lurk passion, jealousy, resentment and betrayal. As a storm sets in, sealing off the Manor from the rest of the world, Ishmael must unmask a ruthless murderer they strike again.

The Dark Side of the Road Details

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From Reader Review The Dark Side of the Road for online ebook

Starla says

This book was not up to Simon R. Green's usual standard of plotting.

Plot elements that were supposed to be a surprise were so perfectly obvious that the "big reveal" at the end fell flat. If I've figured something out by Chapter Two, but I'm supposed to be shocked by it on the next to last page of the book, there's something wrong.

Then there's the ending. The timing for the characters didn't work during the climax of the book. Rather than fix the scene, the author wrote a very weak patch and left it to reader gullibility to smooth it over. The manipulation was blatant, and jarring. The reader should never see the author/puppeteer pulling the strings! It was very annoying to get this far into a book and have the ending thrown away in this manner, especially when it could have been fixed.

I liked the main characters very much. Simon R. Green's trademark witty banter was firmly in place. But, I can't recommend it.

Siobhan says

I would like to thank NetGalley and the publisher for the chance to advance read this brilliant book. I thoroughly enjoyed it (it was almost a five star book, something I will elaborate on shortly) and I appreciate the chance I was given to read it. So much so that I now feel the need to read more books by the author, to see what else I have been missing out on.

The book itself is one of those genre mixes that you're never quite sure if it will work or not. I love a good mystery along with a good fright, so any book which is to be a mix of the two is something I am happy to read (even if I'm usually somewhat tentative about such reads). Of the books I have read which mix the two genres together there are very few that I have grown to really love, but this one is certainly up there towards the top.

At first I thought I was going to be disappointed by the supernatural aspect. In truth, it is more than merely a mystery with a supernatural twist, as there is also a sci-fi twist in there. Whilst I am not against sci-fi I had expected a horror and was disappointed on the faulty information – that is until the horror came about. It may sound a bit much – horror, sci-fi and mystery in one – yet it works much better than you could imagine.

It was beautifully written, with great characters all of whom were unique in their own way. It was a refreshing read, on that front. Despite it being such a short read it was a book so original that you wanted it to go on for much longer than it did. Will there be more, and it seems as though there will be, I don't know. But I certainly hope there are more as I really came to love the characters and would love to see more about the world they live in.

However, it is a four star book rather than a five star book. Sadly, the fact that I managed to work out the mystery aspect early into the book let me down. It is a four and a half star book but I'm really picky about handing out my five stars. Perhaps if it had not been quite so obvious I would have given it the five stars, alas I cannot be handing out the five stars to just anything.

Nevertheless, it is certainly a wonderful read and one of the best reads I have had in a while. I certainly recommend it to those looking for something a little bit different.

A Voracious Reader (a.k.a. Carol) says

*Book source ~ Library

These days he goes by Ishmael Jones, but he's been many people in the past. With growing technology it's harder and harder for him to remain hidden, so he works for The Corporation doing secretive things, things most people don't want to do. In exchange they pay him well and keep him off the world's radar. When his handler, the Colonel, calls him and asks him to join his family for Christmas, Ishmael is taken aback by the invitation, but complies, feeling an urgency to get there as quickly as possible. Racing through a blizzard he arrives to discover things are going bad fast. It's up to him to solve the Colonel's problem, but will he survive doing so?

I really enjoyed this supernatural tale of murder and mystery. Locked in a mansion at Christmas in the middle of the worst blizzard in decades, who is doing the killing? And why? Reminds me of something Agatha Christie may have done. Anyway, Ishmael is a very interesting character (I won't spoil his background) and while the mystery is top rate and the tension first class, the execution of it is a bit simple and at times, dumb. It's hard to explain. I must mention the poor editing when it comes to identifying the Colonel as Penny's half-brother. She keeps calling him her stepbrother even though they share a father. And in one paragraph he's first her half-brother and then her stepbrother again. Fix that shit! It pisses me off! But overall I am impressed with the world in which Ishmael exists and I look forward to continuing with the series.

Rimsha Salam says

Thrilling!

M Hamed says

he did every Cliché and followed every rule in (how to annoy the living shit out of your reader Manual) and (guide to be a very bad writer)

Grace O'Malley says

What the hell did I just read?

I remember enjoying the Nightside series when I read it however many years ago, but I don't know what happened here. Were my tastes less discerning back when I was a spot-encrusted teen? Did I stray too far from my usual genres, which don't include murder mysteries in the Cluedo mansion?

I didn't enjoy this book much. I finished it, but I didn't enjoy it. The first half had so many red flags I thought I was at the National Semaphore Convention. Hell, the first LINE was a poor, poor reference to an epic tale. I wouldn't call it plagiarising as such, but the reference was unnecessary. The main character's name, as far as I could tell, was solely for that introductory line, as everyone else had perfectly reasonable names.

The setting was poorly thought out. Considering Mr Green is English born and bred, I would have thought he'd do a better job of writing a book set in England. A snow storm like the one that traps the protagonists in the manor hasn't been seen since the nineties (and this is set no earlier than 2010). If you want to be snowed in, go to Scotland. There are plenty of musty old buildings up there for people to mysteriously vanish in.

There was too much exposition and not enough action. The first third of the book had passed and I already knew everybody's backstories - and one of the 'twists' had already been made painfully obvious. The romantic sub-plot was shoe-horned in and kind of irritating, even aside from the groan-inducing dialogue.

But it wasn't all bad. I got into it enough to be legitimately scared of being murdered in my bed, though I suspect that has more to do with my overactive imagination and susceptibility to even really shitty horror movies/stories.

Never mind, eh? I'm giving this book two stars because, despite my poor opinion of it, I still managed to get through it. One-star reviews are for DNFs.

Better luck next time, Mr Green.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I thought that since I just got an eARC of the fourth book in the series "Death Shall Come" was it about time I got the review written for the first book in the series. As usual did I not start this series from the beginning, I have a special talent for starting in the middle or so in a series and with this one did I read book two "Dead Man Walking" first. And, I loved it! And, now I have read all three books and can't wait to start book four.

The Dark Side of the Road was nice to read since it gave me the full story of what happened at Belcourt Manor. I read a lot of what happened in the sequels, but it was very nice to get the whole picture. Ishmael Jones arrives at Belcourt Manor after getting an invitation to join the Colonel to spend Christmas at Belcourt Manor with him. The mysterious Colonel and Ishmael work together, but they never really socialize together and the Colonel also hints that something is wrong at his family home and that's why he is returning for the first time in years. But, when Ishmael arrives is the Colonel missing and his family and guest are a really odd bunch of people. And, could it be that the Colonel is right, is there someone there out to kill the people at the manor? It gets even worse when they all get snowed in...

If you read more of these books will you start to notice a pattern. Ishmael Jones travels to a mysterious mansion/castle etc. to solve something, and it often ends with a lot of dead bodies. The first sentence in the blurb "*a country house murder mystery with a supernatural twist*" is very fitting. That's what it is and if that's what you're looking to read then you will like this book. It has a very interesting main character; Ishmael Jones who has a mysterious past. I quite like him and his partner Penny, although in this book they are not yet partners. The book has a lot of action, banter, and brutal killings. Perhaps it's not that hard to figure out or suspect who the killer is, especially when more and more of the family members and guest starts to die, but

it's such an enjoyable book. Personally, did I like this book a bit extra because I wanted to read how Ismael and his partner Penny met.

Elsbeth says

I don't know why I asked for this book. I mean I haven't liked a Simon Green book since the nineties. I keep trying, maybe it's the magic of Paris that keeps me coming back for more. I mean I tried three times to read *Ghost of a Chance*, but I just couldn't get into it.

The Dark Side of the Road just sounded so interesting. Maybe like a paranormal ending to *Clue*, it made me curious.

The book started off pretty good, but the farther I got in the more the "surprises" kept bringing down my rating.

1. Aliens: I didn't know this was going to be sci fi.
2. The Romance: No chemistry...none. It was just really awkward.
3. The Mystery: Really? You are really going with that?
4. The Killer: see above
5. The Aftermath: A lot of eyerolls. Lots.

So I think I have learned my lesson. Green and I just need to part ways...but we will always have Paris.

I received this book from Netgalley for an honest review.

Kathy Davie says

First in the Ishmael Jones mystery urban fantasy series and revolving around a man who stays under the radar this Christmas of 2013.

My Take

It's easy to tell this is a Simon Green, if only by his writing, his approach in his stories, and those comic-style names for the bad guys. That said, it doesn't feel like a *Nightside* or *Secret Histories* tale. Not quite as outrageous, lol.

It's obvious, clichéd, and full of tropes. Think murdering country house party à la Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* crossed with the supernatural with all the backstabbing you hate to see in a soap opera of horrific possibilities. It's a sad fall from the plenitude of family with so many of them dead and the table bare with the business failing — and I'm really curious if it's Walter's or Khan's mishandling.

I like Ishmael's firm stance and his moral code. I also enjoy his snarky attitude, lol. Where things get really interesting is in how long he's been alive and the interaction he has had with different guests: as Adam, Diana Helm's lover in 1969 during her dancing heyday and as a Black Heir operative from 1982 to 1987 with Khan.

I like Ishmael's moves too, as he shows 'em all why it's not a good idea to go up against him. I'm looking forward to reading more of his adventures, even if I do feel like crying for the Colonel. Green has set up such an amazing back history in *The Dark Side of the Road*, that I have trouble remembering this is only the first in the series.

I don't know what the Cook's problem is. She and her partner *have* been hired as security. And Khan, well, I despised Khan. Until the end. As for that unexpected move towards the end...why couldn't he have stepped forward sooner? Was it because of the truth of his existence? Green was stretching things out?

"I'm so sorry. I killed your mother.'

'That's all right,' said Penny. 'We weren't close.'"

The ending was clichéd and reminded me of the ending of *Casablanca* with that ending comment from Renault, and they walk off with "...the beginning of a beautiful friendship".

I will give Green props for a complete story full of possibilities.

The Story

It's the prodigal son returning home, so to speak, for the Colonel hasn't been back home for the past many, many years.

Also invited to this country house Christmas is Ishmael Jones, one of the Colonel's operatives, for something is threatening the Colonel's family.

And the Colonel will need all the help he can get to stop it.

The Characters

Ishmael Jones is the name he's using these days. He "searches out secrets, investigates mysteries, and shines a light into dark places". Sometimes punishing the guilty. His past began in 1963.

It's been fifteen years since Ishamael first signed on with the **Colonel**, who heads up the **Organization** for which Ishmael works in exchange for protection from those who hunt him.

Belcourt Manor is...

...the Colonel's — **James Belcourt**'s — childhood home. **Walter Belcourt** is the Colonel's father and still chairman of the board. **Melanie** is his scheming second wife. **Penelope** is Walter and Melanie's slutty daughter who works in publishing. The dissatisfied **Diana Helm Belcourt** is Walter's first wife and James' mother. The predatory **Sylvia Heron** is Diana's companion. **Roger Levine** was once engaged to Penelope and still wants to be, despite her dislike. **Jeeves** is the butler while **Ms. Leilah Bridges**, the dissatisfied cook, is the only other servant who agreed to work over Christmas.

Alexander Khan is Walter's business partner, and a former Black Heir operative who betrayed the organization. *Ishmael doesn't like that he's very ready to terminate any alien.*

Black Heir is...

...a very secret U.K. organization for alien affairs.

The Cover and Title

The cover is cold and lonely with the bulky figure of Ishamel Jones trudging down the snow-rutted road, trees arching over it with fat flakes of snow coming down, some hit by the camera light into perfect circles of varying transparency. The series information, author's name (blackened in places), and title are all in white.

The title is where Ishamel travels, on *The Dark Side of the Road*.

Renee says

I received this book on net-galley from the publishers in return for an honest review.

I love Simon R Green, aside from his sci-fi series I pretty much have read everything he has ever written. I don't care for the Secret History novels, but the Nightside books and the Ghost Hunter books and many of his stand alone novels are ones I have read over and over and recommended to anyone and everyone.

This book was really good and I can't wait to purchase it in paperback this coming May. It was like Clue on fantasy crack. I always love this author's way of writing people humorously and in a very real and dark way, playing on how we humans have darkness that lurks in our thoughts that we sometimes act on. Mr. Green also has a talent for writing backstories and places that pop, whether that pop is light hearted or sinister and haunted.

This was a great mystery novel and I didn't get the catch until the MC himself figured it out, though I did guess the murderer a bit before hand. I like mysteries where it's a bunch of people locked in a house where they can't leave and people are being murdered, secrets are revealed and EVERYONE is a suspect. My favorite board game is Clue. There is a colorful cast of characters and very much "The Trophy Wife in the Study with the Poisoned Hot Toddy" kind of feel to it. (No that's NOT a spoiler, sheesh, it's just a funny Clue-esque joke.)

My only issue with this book is that Simon R Green writes most of his male lead characters the same; Eddie Drood, Ishmael Jones, John Taylor and JC Chance.... all kind of the same person, just different in whether they are human or not and have a unique special gift. I would REALLY like a main character from Simon R Green that is a woman or not a decently handsome dark haired sarcastic awesome guy...Though in THIS book what Ishmael is...is a little kooky.

So enjoy the mystery, I sure did!

Matt Braymiller says

Take one game of Clue, add a serving of the supernatural and a protagonist who is not from around here. Add two heaping cups of cliché and stir well. You may have just produced this book.

Which is not to say that I didn't enjoy the story.

This is pure fluff. There are no deeply drawn characters or obscurely hidden plot devices. The whole story rockets along like Ishmael's drive from London to the manor house where the story take place. It is a linear bullet train from point A to the conclusion with station stops a Familiar Tropesville, Obvious Town, and Saw-It-Coming-A-Mile-Away. It is a fun, fast read which doesn't really require any investment from the reader. Consider it a filler book for when you need some mindless entertainment.

Jon Recluse says

A refreshingly fun spin on the classic English locked room mystery, involving murder most foul at a snowed in family manor. Green serves up a tale featuring all the usual suspects....including a Jeeves who isn't....and doesn't.

No one is who they appear to be, particularly Ishmael Jones, who not only isn't what he appears, even he's not quite sure what he is.

An entertaining read, written with a sly humor and a touch of Green's Nightside that will please both mystery purists and fans of subtler dark urban fantasy.

Highly recommended.

Expected publication: May 1st 2015 by Severn House Publishers

This was an eARC from Netgalley.

April Steenburgh says

Ishmael Jones is the sort of fellow who gets things that need doing done. He worked for the organization Black Heir, chasing down illegal Aliens (of the in from space variety) and covering up any messes they might have caused. The kill first, never get to the questioning part rubbed him the wrong way, considering the fact that Ishmael himself is not quite human. So he left his Black Heir days behind to work for The Colonel and his Organization. And when the Colonel asks Ishmael to come to his familial home for Christmas, Ishmeal starts driving.

But The Colonel is missing when Ishmael arrives, and all is very much not well in the massive, old home, or with its strange and often estranged holiday guests.

Green has written a sinister game of Clue, expertly crafted in his usual way of playing with words to make

them do things you are pretty sure they did not want to do. The prose, characters you are not sure you want to like but somehow get maybe attached here and there, and the shadowy world Green has created work to bring what could have been a tired old plot to grim and uncanny life. Recommended for Green fans, mystery fans, or folks who want to leave the hall light on at night. Just in case.

Bibliofiendlm says

Disclaimer: I received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review

The Dark Side of the Road marks my 16th Simon R. Green novel. I continue to be a fan of his writing. He never disappoints in bringing a unique perspective to horror storytelling.

Readers meet Ishmael Jones just as he embarks on a journey to arrive at a mysterious country manor. Jones is rather mysterious and we learn that he works for a classified agency called the Organization and his boss is known only as the Colonel. Said Colonel has asked that Jones immediately travel to a country estate despite a catastrophic blizzard. Upon arrives readers meet a cast of characters as a horrifying plot of supernatural murder and mayhem unfurl.

This is a heart-pumping, quick read for fans not only of Green but supernatural, mystery, and horror fiction.

Karl says

Ishmael Jones books:

"The Dark Side of the Road" (May 2015)

"Dead Man Walking" (May 2016)

"Very Important Corpses: An Ishmael Jones mystery" (March 2017)

"Death Shall Come" (September 2017)

"Into the Thinnest of Air" (March 2018)
