



The Devil in Amber

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The fabulous Lucifer Box returns for another round of spirited, pun-heavy sleuthing in this devilishly decadent sequel to the acclaimed *The Vesuvius Club*.

Lucifer Box -- portraitist, dandy and terribly good secret agent -- is feeling his age. He's also more than a little anxious about an ambitious younger agent, Percy Flarge, who's snapping at his heels. Assigned to observe the activities of fascist leader Olympus Mons and his fanatical followers, or "Amber Shirts," in F.A.U.S.T. -- The Fascist Anglo-United States Trinity (an acronym so tortuous it can only be sinister) -- in snowbound 1920s New York, Box finds himself framed for a vicious, mysterious murder.

Using all of his native cunning, Box escapes aboard a vessel bound for England armed with only a Broadway midget's suitcase and a string of unanswered questions: What lies hidden in the bleak Norfolk convent of St. Bede? What is "the lamb" that Olympus Mons searches for in his bid for world domination? And what has all this to do with a medieval prayer intended to summon the Devil himself?

From the glittering sophistication of Art Deco Manhattan to the eerie Norfolk coast and the snowcapped peaks of Switzerland, *The Devil in Amber* takes us on a thrilling, delicious ride that pits Lucifer Box against the most lethal adversary of his career: the Prince of Darkness himself.

The Devil in Amber Details

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From Reader Review *The Devil in Amber* for online ebook

Alberte says

Oh Lor'. The second book in the trilogy of *Lucifer Box* is mind-bogglingly fabulous. It is a perfect successor to the introductory "*Vesuvius Club*" and lures the reader further into the world of depraved sophistication and superiority while making it impossible not to adore old Lucy and his sassiness.

Mark Gatiss is an incredibly talented writer and once you open the book, consider yourself a prisoner, because *Lucifer* will never let you go. Especially not if your behind looks fantastic in a pair of tight-fitting trousers.

James Barnard says

Ah, *Lucifer Box*. Here, the Edwardian anti-hero who seemed so at home in the first decade of the 20th century is forced to contend with the far harsher world of the 1930s, as well as the more pressing concerns of the rise of pan-global fascism and being accused of a murder which – for once – he did not commit.

I don't think it's really a spoiler to say he acquits himself very well, and proves more than a match for the genuine villains of the piece. Nor should it surprise people to realise that Gatiss brilliantly captures the spirit of the age he writes about. Well, he captures everyone's perceptions about the 1930s anyway, which may not be the same thing.

Never less than thoroughly entertaining, with just the right balance between sending up spy thrillers and telling a proper story in its own right. *Box* isn't the most likeable hero, but then he isn't meant to be – I think he's Gatiss' darker side writ large, since I couldn't help but hear the author's voice very clearly throughout the first-person narrative. And I laughed out loud when *Box*, irritated by the villains' slowness of thought in realising a key plot point, deliberately blurts it out so that events can progress properly.

This is a long way from being to everyone's tastes. It is to mine, after a fashion. I wouldn't want every book I read to be like this but that's the point in me trying to read books from as many different genres as possible. And let's face it, the title works on so many levels that one can't help but conclude there's far more to this than meets the eye...

Xenopheles says

The second book was a long wait for me, and when we got it, I had to wait to read it! Wait through long days of my husband's exclamations of 'You bastard!', his gasps, his laughter...and then, finally, he woke me up one afternoon and BEHOLD! It was my turn! I curled up and *devoured* it in a matter of days, and did the same thing.

I adore writers that can make me audibly react to their writing--Mark Gatiss joins Plum in the very short list of authors that have achieved this honour. He writes the perfect yellow-backed novel. There is everything, including a feeling that boysex is completely normal (in fact, Husband pointed out, *Lucifer* treats boysex as more normal than sex with the ladysex)!

Rebecca Tayles says

Oops, didn't review this one. Perhaps because I'm still a little traumatised. Why does every side character I like end up dead??

That's not as much a spoiler as it sounds, I swear.

The second of the Lucifer Box novels is set post-Great War, making for a rather large shift in mental imagery from the last book. Lucifer, while still a marvelous dandy about town, has aged and survived a war that left many scars on him and those around him. He's also now in the US, away from his home soil of London, and the good old RA have changed somewhat too.

While this book has just as many twists, turns and red herrings as the previous, it didn't quite hit the mark like the first book did. Something wasn't quite right for me. Of course, that could just be the bitterness talking. The language was still as flowery and ridiculously tongue-in-cheek, and poked at the fourth wall a bit in a way I always enjoy. I found the time jump quite disconcerting, as I'd rather hoped for a continuation from the first, rather than a whole new cast and setting.

That said, a lot of the supporting characters were great, and utterly hilarious in some instances. Box has lost none of his daring, his cheek, or his ego, and he still appeals greatly as one of those main characters you're not sure whether to love or hate.

I'm still looking forward to reading the third and final book, but my admiration has dropped a little. Damn you, Mr Gatiss, for ruining my happy little fangirl dream.

mark monday says

BEWARE THE DEVIOUS BISEXUAL!

Oh dear, Lucifer Box has found himself in quite a spot of trouble all over again. Although murder and mayhem are surely de rigueur for a modish secret agent, assassin, internationally celebrated painter, and bisexual Lothario who *still* manages to maintain a youthfully svelte figure in his late 40s... one would still never expect to have to face off against the actual Lucifer, Prince of Darkness. That's not in the job description! I certainly felt quite a bit of empathy for poor Lucifer Box, as we share *distinct* similarities. Minus the secret agent, assassin, internationally celebrated painter, Lothario, and maintaining a youthfully svelte figure parts, of course... we are practically brothers from another mother!

I must say, to this day I have found scant evidence that male bisexuals even exist, except in books like this one, and *perhaps* pornography - if I were to ever view such an uncouth genre. Never! It is as if all the bisexuals of the world were women. Where are my brother comrades-in-arms? All of my once bisexual friends have long since married the opposite sex and have named their prior exploits "experimentation" - alas, and I say Fie on Experimenters! The true male bisexual is a rare breed indeed: a precious, *precious* thing. Much like a unicorn. Or griffin! Or perhaps a hippogriff.

Why just the other day, while strolling the urine-soaked and garbage-strewn streets of the Tenderloin, my *dear* friend K__ inquired whether or not I "was still bisexual". I could have smacked him smartly across his cheeky, chubby face, save for the fact that he is also my boss, so instead I settled for making a demeaning comment about how wonderfully predictable his life in the suburbs must be, and how he must feel scads of happiness when seeing the same wife and child day-in and day-out, 365 days a year. Such ignoble inquiries are par for the course for unicorns such as myself and dear Lucifer Box, and *must* be dealt with rigorously.

Why just the other week, my *charming* sister alluded to her ongoing delusion that I "must have so many options". I could have wrung her neck, except for the fact that she made this comment over a trunk call and also I could never actually wring her neck, as she is far too strong and my lovely, long-fingered hands - "a pianist's hands", as my dear mother once said - are far too delicate. Instead I sighed heavily and reminded her that for me, being bisexual only means that I view both genders with *equal* disdain.

Well at least she's nothing like poor Lucifer Box's sister, who turned out to be a trashy murderous Satan-worshiper. My sister would certainly never worship Satan - that would be *far* too louche for a dedicated wife, mother of two, licensed practitioner of Chinese medicine, and Los Angelene fashion plate. As my dear father is wont to say, "Worshipping Satan is *so* last millennium, and for losers". The acclaimed Monday lineage only engages in self-worship!

To sum up, this novel was fair to middling. It passed the time. It was what one calls a "bus book" - which means I read it in 15 minute increments whenever I found myself on a bus to and from what I suppose I call "work". Buses are surely the most plebeian of transports, and books are never welcome there, but I do enjoy mingling with the masses on occasion. Perhaps I shall discover a fellow bisexual busing one day? If so, I shall promptly ignore him, as bisexuality should *never* be encouraged. I would be appalled to see too many of my dangerous type running around rampant! We would rule the world, and that would be very bad news indeed for all of you sadly limited *non*-bisexual types.

Lianne Pheno says

<http://delivreenlivres.blogspot.fr/20...>

J'ai passé un bon moment dans cette lecture, mais l'intrigue est moins extravagante que dans le précédent et sur un thème vraiment hyper classique. On retrouve tout de même avec plaisir Lucifer qui est toujours aussi excellent comme personnage.

L'histoire se passe une 20^{ème} d'années après le tome précédent. Lucifer Box est toujours un espion au service de sa majesté, mais il est vieillissant et commence à le sentir. Il réussit ses missions in-extremis ou il se fait sauver par ses concurrents, bref, ce n'est pas vraiment la joie pour lui.

Depuis le tome précédent la première guerre mondiale à eu lieu et on est donc entre les deux guerres. La montée de l'extrémisme blanc se fait sentir de partout et Lucifer est en mission à New York, chargé de surveiller un groupe fasciste qui monte en puissance et qui se reconnaissent car ils s'habillent avec des chemises de couleur ambre ...

Je n'en dit pas plus pour ménager le suspense et vous laisser découvrir vous même l'intrigue.

Ces livres sont un parfait divertissement. Ils sont drôle, fun, et font passer un excellent moment. Après il ne faut pas non plus en attendre beaucoup plus. C'est du pulp dans toute sa splendeur, plein d'action avec une

intrigue qui va à 100 à l'heure. Si c'est ce que vous recherchez ce tome ne pourra que vous plaire, mais si vous attendez un sens plus profond ou une intrigue complexe et intelligente avec de multiples retournements de situations vous serez un peu déçus. (Non pas qu'il n'y en ait pas du tout mais ce n'est pas non plus vraiment le but ici.)

Là tout ici est vraiment le personnage de Lucifer. Je remet la description du personnage que j'avais mis dans ma chronique du premier tome parce qu'elle est toujours d'actualité : Libertin, dandy, peintre frustré, frivole par excellence. Lucifer Box est l'archétype même du playboy espion, flambant audacieusement, séduisant tout le monde, assassinant des traîtres et faisant excessivement attention à avoir une garde robe parfaite pour chaque et en toute occasion.

J'ai trouvé que le fait d'avoir fait vieillir le personnage était une bonne idée. En fait, mélanger son égocentrisme avec l'échec du fait qu'il a du mal à suivre le rythme donne un mélange qui lui réussit vraiment. Cela rend le personnage bien plus agréable à suivre et lui donne, en plus de l'extravagance, un côté comique.

Pour ce qui est du cadre on change aussi pas mal du premier tome, ici on est dans un New York art déco, on s'éloigne donc pas mal du côté steampunk. En fait je dirais même que ce tome-ci est bien plus fantastique. En fait l'intrigue tourne autour de thèmes ésotériques.

Bon c'est vrai que nazis + ésotérisme est vraiment vu et revu et si j'ai trouvé un point négatif à ce tome c'était bien celui-ci. C'est tellement classique que ça en devient affreusement cliché. Le livre en joue aussi, c'est évident, j'en suis consciente, mais il n'empêche que j'ai eu du mal à me rentrer dedans ici, avec un petit côté lassitude qui est très vite arrivé.

Au final j'ai bien apprécié retrouver ce Lucifer vieillissant, c'était vraiment fun, mais je regrette que l'intrigue soit aussi classique et n'ait pas su m'apporter ce côté différent que j'avais eu en lisant le premier tome. Ça j'en reste pas moins un livre très divertissant que je ne regrette pas d'avoir lu.

15/20

Katie says

I was hugely disappointed with this book. I enjoyed its predecessor 'The Vesuvius Club' so much that I raced through it in a day and went straight onto the second in the series. Unfortunately it suffers by comparison. A lot.

What made the first book such a good read was the dry humour of the narrative style and the characterisation of the delightfully bad Lucifer Box, but both of these key features were decidedly patchy in 'The Devil in Amber'. It has moments of brilliance (who could fail to be drawn in by the fantastic opening line, 'He was an American, so it seemed only fair to shoot him'?) but these are well-hidden among standard dross. Mark Gatiss seems to do a lot more telling the reader what was happening than letting us see it coloured through Lucifer's disdainful perspective. It was like reading a book written to be made into a film rather than read and appreciated as a novel. It remains a fun read, but I sincerely hope that the third installment lives up to the standards of the first book and not the second.

Steve Archer says

I can't believe how long it took me to read this as it's quite short in comparison to my usual reads. However I thoroughly enjoy the writing style and the somewhat "Tiger near death" approach Box uses throughout the story.

Sam says

Another brilliant book from Mark Gatiss. Very enjoyable. It seemed to go on and lacked the finesse of his first Lucifer Box novel, but was still a damned good laugh!

Apoorva says

Perhaps my favorite thing about the Lucifer Box series is finding Gatiss-isms, turns of phrase like 'strawberry jam on the pavement' and 'all the nice girls like a soldier', which have turned up in Sherlock. That apart, all the bisexuality is yet another reason I strongly feel John will be bi and Johnlock will be canon. Gatiss hasn't been shy about writing his Holmes-Bond character as bi, there's no reason he'd be shy about doing it on the big screen.

Emma says

I've been a fan of Mark Gatiss since The League of Gentlemen and more recently writing/starring in Sherlock, so when I saw a book by him in a charity shop I knew I should read it. It was a good book, full of his usual witty/humorous style. Kind of like a James Bond escapade with even more double entendre (if you can imagine such a thing). It all got a bit crazy plot wise near the end which I enjoyed less but it was a good read nevertheless.

Kittaroo says

Mi ero divertita tanto con " Il club Vesuvio" che questo mi ha un po' deluso.
L'ho trovato in alcuni tratti lento, nel complesso piuttosto banale.
Considerando la scrittura di Gatiss, non certo uno dei momenti più felici.

Dan says

I love Mark Gatiss' work and enjoyed the first Box novel so picked up this sequel.

Time has passed and Lucifer Box is feeling his age with his art career over and the likes of ambitious young Percy Flarge being the new norm of his secret agent work. Here Box is sent to investigate fascist leader

Olympus Mons in 1920s New York, where he finds himself framed for murder. Box is forced to flee for England and try and work out what exactly Mons' quest for world domination consists of.

I thought this fixed a lot of the issues with the first book. Box is older and more insecure here, which makes him a more likable character. I don't mind a charming egotistical lead but they are more interesting if they have a vulnerability. Box rarely feels on top here which is a nice change.

I also liked the plot. Obviously these books intentionally have outlandish plots but I think it works better with a hint of the supernatural. And Gatiss certainly knows his supernatural, really putting the horror into the dark scenes of this book.

It takes a different direction from the last book and I can see why some were put off by that. Personally I really enjoyed it.

Mel says

I came across this while looking for titles by Mark Gatiss on the library catalogue. I'd never heard of it before but I thought it sounded quite fun. It was totally Amazing! Imagine if instead of being a bit of a stuffy misogynist Dennis Wheatley had actually been a fabulous homosexual and you begin to imagine what this book is like. It is charming 20s style of pulp fighting fascists who are really occultists who want to summon the devil. The main protagonist is perfectly naturally queer, fancying both men and women without a second thought. It is just wonderful. I shall have to hunt down the other Lucifer Box novel. I wish Mark would write more!

Jeffrey says

Mark Gatiss' second go at the Lucifer Box character isn't as entertaining as the first, but provides an amusing distraction nonetheless.

Abandoning the dawn of the 20th century Edwardian trappings of Empire from *The Vesuvius Club*, this book finds Box in a post Great War funk. Down on his luck, art has moved on, beginning to feel his age, and challenged by a younger rival, Box is tasked by his superiors to investigate the fascist agitator Olympus Mons. But Mons has greater ambitions than the standard purity shtick.

Full of Gatiss' rich reclamation of period appropriate language, the initial foray is disorienting and it takes time for the reader to pick up the rhythm. Once settled, this narrative takes on a life of its own and provides additional benefit.

In retrospect, it's hard not to view Box as a representation of Great Britain herself. In this volume, Box is past his prime and humbled by the events of World War I. Yet he's still got the fighting spirit and can keep up his end in things.

The plot, on the other hand, doesn't hold up as well in this volume. Without revealing spoilers, the twist breaks with the conventions of the form so much as to be suspender snapping. It just doesn't jive as a whole. There may be reasons for it, related to works of the era, but I'm not familiar with the period enough to know

what Gatiss might be getting at.

Still, Gatiss' dialogue and narration provide light passing entertainment, despite its flaws.
