



Sweet Silver Blues

Glen Cook

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It should have been a simple job. But for Garrett, a human detective in a world of gnomes, tracking down the woman to whom his dead pal Danny left a fortune in silver is no slight task. Even with the aid of Morley, the toughest half-elf around, Garrett isn't sure he'll make it out alive from a land where magic can be murder, the dead still talk, and vampires are always hungry for human blood.

Sweet Silver Blues Details

Date : Published May 1st 1990 by Ace (first published 1987)

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Author : Glen Cook

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From Reader Review Sweet Silver Blues for online ebook

Aaron Singleton says

SSB is the first installment of Glen Cook's Garrett series. Garrett is a "Confidential Agent" in a fantasy world inhabited by elves, gnomes, trolls, vampires, sorcerers, you name it. The entire series is like American P.I./hard-boiled detective fic combined with fantasy. When I first read the description I thought: "This is not for me." It sounded hokey. I am not into fantasy with elves, dwarves and the like.

But dammit, these books are great.

This book, as with all in the series, is told in first-person from Garrett's POV. He is a veteran of the Cantard Wars, a beer drinker, womanizer, brawler, and all around normal guy. Until he gets on a case. Then he becomes obsessed.

This book is filled with colorful characters, realistic dialog, and an involving plot hinging on a mystery. Even if you think this sounds silly or whatever, do yourself a favor and give it a try. You cannot go wrong here.

Oh, btw, for those who are new to the genre of sf/f-- ignore the cover. It is in no way representative of the book's content. Well, with the exception of Garrett himself maybe. Have fun.

Kaila says

I had a hard time deciding what I thought about this one. I really wanted to like it. Originally published in 1987, it's one of the earlier examples of urban fantasy, and that says a lot in itself. Although according to the Wikipedia the genre was officially acknowledged in the late 80s, I feel the late 90s is when it really came into its own, and it is still extraordinarily popular, especially with women (as evidenced by all the urban paranormal romance series out there). So I give him props for doing something relatively original at the time, even though private investigator is such a cliche in the genre now. But the book just couldn't quite keep it together.

The huge cast of characters and all the scheming they went through, while usually I enjoy some intense scheming, this time only served to disinterest me. Pretty soon I had to juggle half a dozen story lines and I didn't care about any of them, which made it more of a chore to read than anything because I had to keep flipping back to see who the hell he was talking about. There was a mystery to be solved in there somewhere but I didn't care about it. I can understand the seeds getting planted for sequels, but I was so bored with the story in this one by the time I got to the end, no sequel will come in sight for me. The women...oh god, the women. Even the one Garrett hates he can hardly take his eyes off because of her "lavish figure" or some such malarkey. Here's a nice quote from page 69:

"The boat began to drift away from the wharf. The women took my advice, sprinted and jumped. A delectable bundle of goodies plopped into my arms. Morley popped up and caught Rose, making suitable purrs at the advent of unexpected treasures...she made no effort to peel herself from me. I thought about pushing her away - sometime next week."

At this point, blatant sexism is practically what I'm used to in urban fantasy, but it still enrages me. The two

women are never more than annoying, chattering, and good looking background noise, who also happen to need rescuing now and then.

So besides sexism and a plot that I couldn't care to keep up with, there was also the issue of the writing style. Often something "subtle" would happen. The author would point this out to us, probably by Garrett looking significantly at a character or a revelation within the narration...only half the time, I was so confused as to what he was talking about, I would reread the scene a couple times to figure out what I had missed. This happened in action scenes as well, it felt like there would be whole sentences missing and it left me furrowing my brow in question. Once again, I feel this was a missed opportunity for me to get into the story. The author obviously wanted the reader to feel like they were solving the mystery by seeing something subtle in the descriptions he gave us, but it fell so flat as to render me confused and helpless, so I'd just plow on and hope it would be explained. Sometimes it was, sometimes not. By the end of the novel I didn't care anymore to try to find out.

Dennis Hearon says

Let me preface this review by stating that I am a BIG fan of Cook's Black Company series and, as such, am predisposed to like Cook's work. Additionally, as a member of THE privileged class (i.e. a male, college educated, white, anglo/saxon, protestant with a middle class upbringing) I don't react with as much rancor to sexist characters as immediately, or as strongly, as someone who has battled the system to prove their merit in a world where the cards are stacked against them. I also must point out the obvious, that some of the sexist traits of the "protagonist" are part of the author's whole shtick in penning the novel. If you go back and review Bogart's portrayal of a detective in the Big Sleep or a tough guy in To Have and To Have Not and others through the lens of modern sensibilities, I dare say he will not fare so well. As such, I decided not to change my original rating of three stars. The book certainly was not great literature, but it passed the time sitting in a hospital sick room. I liked the "snarky" tone and the occasionally clever word play. Given the fact that the book was written 30 years ago, it was notable that rereading it did not evoke the same horror as revisiting another book for which I had fond memories, such as Heinlein's Puppet Masters. We are reading this book as part of my book club and I suggested it might not go over well following up Puppet Masters, but was overruled. Fortunately, I guess, I was called away before we got together.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

I definitely enjoyed this book, my first read by Mr. Glen Cook, and the first of many, I think. This series is a scrumptious idea: hard-boiled noir detective with faerie creature-infused fantasy, the setting not quite urban, and not quite traditional fantasy. Mr. Cook has made his own world here, and it's a fun world. I must admit that I was a bit confused at times. The characters speak in a 'cant' that took me to some time to get the hang of. Sort of like 40s movie speak, but unique to this story, with some fantasy/magic-specific references. The narrative is on the terse side, which I do like, but at times I did have to reread to make sure I was getting the drift.

The characters stand out, particularly Garrett. He's quite the tough guy, a wiseacre, who doesn't like to take orders, but will do so if the mission calls for it. He's not infallible, which is good, but he's very capable. He's not quite a boy scout, but he does have a deeply-held sense of honor that emerges on a fairly regular basis, despite his cynical narrative voice. The secondary characters are just as interesting. In this case, Garrett's

mentor is an undead corpse-like being who has lots of wisdom and smarts to make up for his decaying body. And his sidekicks are a vegetarian, lecherous elf/human hybrid, and three troll/human hybrid heavies with female names, and the inability to hold their liquor. The 'deadly dames' are two sexy gnomes, one with a bad temper, and another with a bad reputation that she happily earned. Garrett is on the hunt for his ex-flame who inherited his recently deceased friend's bequest of one-hundred thousand marks of coinage. He has to go to the toughest country in the realm, and deal with ferocious unicorns, a shifty centaur, and really nasty vampires, and other heavies of various species.

I definitely appreciate the fruits of Glen Cook's imagination on offer here, and the humor was great. It made up for my moments of confusion. Although Cook keeps the action nicely interspersed in with the often-times humorous narrative, the climax was fantastic in its intensity, as Garrett and his crew take on a whole nest of vamps.

Although I did love straight mysteries growing up, I love fantasy/paranormal mysteries even more. This book has not helped my addiction. I'm glad I've been collecting these books, because I want to keep checking in with Garrett, PI on his adventures in and around TunFaire.

Heather says

This book is amazing. It certainly wasn't what I was expecting. The idea of a Private Investigator in a Fantasy setting was too rich for me to pass up when I heard about it -- but I wasn't expecting it to be as funny as it was.

Garrett, a P.I. in TunFaire, is hired by a family of gnomes to find a girl who their recently deceased family member and friend of Garrett has left a substantial chunk of silver to. Garrett hires Morley as his body guard and a few grolls to make the voyage to "The Cantard" -- a nasty place by the way everyone seems to refer to it in the book. During their little adventure they have to deal with vampires, a shapeshifter, venagati spies, vampires, and unicorns.

Glen Cook does an amazing job with this. Garrett is a very witty character. I found myself unable to wait to turn the pages and find out not only what events would happen, but how Glen Cook chooses to describe the events that transpire and the witty rapport between Garrett and Morley -- the half-darkelf muscle-for-hire.

I still like the book, but I think it was a bit short. It didn't take me long to read it at all, partly because of its length and partly just because I was enjoying it so much. As I said earlier, I enjoyed Garrett's wit throughout this entire book. The way he describes the events that take place in the book are usually pretty funny and kept me laughing every other page.

Drawbacks are that sometimes I couldn't figure out what was going on because of that wit. Instead of describing the goings on in a straightforward type of manor, he would put things a different way using metaphors. If I didn't understand those metaphors then I had no idea what was going on in that particular scene. This really only happened a few times, but I kept feeling like I was missing something. There was especially one event where Garrett has an epiphany about where to look to find this girl they're after. It seems like he "feels" this sort of line that goes from one place to another place that he's in the middle of. But I never figured out why or what was going on there. Maybe I just missed something or wasn't paying attention when I read that part -- I don't know.

Glen Cook really has a way with keeping secrets from his readers. Garrett notices something or Morley tells him about something and he makes mention of it in passing to clue you in that it's there, but that the details of whatever it is will be disclosed when they are pertinent -- he just doesn't want you to know everything just yet. And I think he executes this rather well most of the time.

I almost felt like more could have been done to improve the book, but I'm still quite satisfied with it anyhow and I do recommend it to those who enjoy witty sarcasm in their books.

Carol. says

It's likely a sign of aging, but my brain kept distracting me with that song from the nursery rhyme about mares eat oats and does eat oats.

Mares eat oats and does eat oats,
And little lambs eat ivy

The song slurs it all together:

Mairzy doats and dozy doats and liddle lamzy divey
A kiddley divey too, wouldn't you?

So every time P.I. Garrett's sidekick Morley Dotes appeared, a half-elf notorious for his fighting and gambling, I found myself starting to rhyme, clearly making it impossible to view him with a shred of trepidation. Is it too much to ask if Cook would rename the character?

This is the first in a series starring Garrett, an ex-soldier trying to make a living as a detective. The twist is that the setting is a fantasy world peopled with gnomes, elves, vampires, unicorns and centaurs. Don't worry, this isn't Rainbow Fairyland colored in pastels; we are talking about Glen Cook, after all, so the gnome ladies have nasty tempers, the vampires are all cold predators, the unicorns hunt for meat, and the centaurs have a tendency to work the angles. Initially, Garrett does some investigating around town, but it isn't long before he hooks up with a friend, Morley Dotes, to provide him with some muscle. Morley convinces him to hire on three grolls (goats gruff?) instead of pack mules. It's a fun plot that centers on tracking down a mysterious dame for an inheritance, a woman who just happened to be Garrett's first love.

Cook's trademark paucity of details is a perfect match for the hard-boiled detective. I disliked the Black Company series for its lack of world-building and environmental-social context, but it works well for the detective caper. Language is enjoyable, and for me, one of the redeeming aspects of the book. Cook uses a modified period cant that sometimes requires a moment of double-think to interpret. For instance, there's a fight: "A club whipped the air where my head had been. I have the guy a kick in the root of his fantasies, then clipped him in the cheek as he bent to pray." Garrett's the a peculiar way of talking elevates it a bit above simple farce.

Names aside, characterization is acceptable, even if they all resonate anti-hero. Again, trademark of what I've read of Cook's, where even people with more noble intentions are complicit in illegal and ethically questionable actions. Garrett's slightly more on the positive side of the moral line--while he'll lie to almost everyone (except The Dead Man) with utter sincerity, he never killed anyone. Except for in the war. Until

recent events. But he didn't mean it. However, it is worth noting the women are the worst sort of stereotypes: shrewish castigating woman; saucy barmaid with a temper; gentle unobtainable beauty that needs rescuing. *Oink!* Garrett and Morley are slightly more complex with back stories lending positive aspects to dubious actions. On the other hand, the majority of antagonists are confusing, involved in a barely comprehensible political maneuvering. It echoes the hard-boiled detective, where the investigator is caught in events larger than his limited scope.

I have to wonder if Morley's silly naming was intentional; it was such an unusual name within the book's world as well. In fact, the entire book has a fantasy-farce feel, reminding me (here we go again) of M.Y.T.H. Inc. Link / Myth-Nomers and Imperfections, like part of the point is playing with literary conventions and having fantasy characters behave in inexplicably modern ways. For instance, there was a long-running joke between Garrett and Morley about vegetarian diet versus carnivore, and the effects on the bowels and mood. It was amusing enough for a short time, but eventually the style tends to grate on me. A single book is a perfect dose (Doze)--it is not a series I'd read in entirety back to back. Frankly, I rather like Lee Martinez or Pratchett's take on the genre if I feel like reading farce.

Ultimately, while I did buy it--it isn't carried by my library system--I'll likely donate it to the library so someone else with more affection for the genre can enjoy.

Three stars.

Cross posted at <http://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2013/0...>

Olga Godim says

A hardboiled detective story in a fantasy world.

Plot

Garrett, a human PI in a world filled with elves, centaurs, gnomes and other assorted non-humans, is hired to find a beneficiary of his late buddy Denny. Denny left a fortune in silver to a woman no one in Denny's family has ever seen. The search leads Garrett to confrontations with spies and vampires, as several conspiracies interlock and explode in his face. Corpses pile up, but of course, as the novel is the first in a successful series, Garrett comes out on top. He finds his damsel and triumphs over his enemies.

Characters

Garrett is a former soldier, tough, rough and utterly manly. No shred of culture or education, but he is street-smart, brave, and honest. To a degree. His helpers in this adventure are a keen fighter Morley, a vegetarian half-elf with an agenda of his own, and three grolls – some half-breed creatures, strong like behemoths and with about the same level of intelligence.

Most of the supporting extras are men (or rather males) of various species. None described as nice. Actually, no one nice seems to live in the dirty world of Cook's invention. I wouldn't want to ever visit there.

The only three women appearing in the cast are two shrews (one a bit better than another) and one victim (the one Garrett is searching for). None described in any way complimentary, except the surface prettiness. None can take care of herself. All of them need the macho guys to protect them.

Overall impression

The pacing is fast, the language clean and sparse, and the story reads easily, but I can't say that I liked it much. Everything – the world and the characters – is primitive, one dimensional, with no hidden depth. If it was a comic, it would've been in B&W, with no colors needed. I read other novels of this subgenre, including Frank Tuttle and Alex Bledsoe, that I liked much better. On the other hand, they wrote their books several decades after this one was published. As one of the first in the subgenre, this novel wasn't bad at all.

Stephen says

My apologies to the **legion of Dresdenites** who may be about to **burn** me in **effigy**...but **Garrett's files** are far more entertaining to peruse than those of Jim Butcher's more famous creation. And while I enjoy many aspects of the Dresden stories, Harry himself annoys the bejesus outta me and taints my happy when I read them.

I had SO MUCH MORE FUN with this story and this character.

Garrett is a hard-boiled, freelance Private Investigator in a world in which humans live and work alongside a variety...and I mean a **VARIETY**...of different fantasy races called "breeds." Garrett's a smart, sarcastic "ex-marine" who quips and comments his way through the narrative and had me laughing out loud on more than one occasion. He's the glue that holds the wild plot together and his tone is perfectly paired with the plot.

Speaking of the plot...

PLOT SUMMARY:

Garrett is hired by a gnome business man to locate a mysterious woman, whose been named the sole beneficiary of his son's will. To complicate matters, solving the mystery will require Garrett to return to the **Cantard**, the front line of the ongoing war between the two main empires of the world, and where Garrett served his time as a marine.

Prior to venturing into the Cantard, Garrett recruits some "help" in the form of (1) a legendary dark elf bodyguard/assassin and (2) a pair of HUGE "beer drinking" Grolls (*see above quote by way of explanation*) to act as muscle.

In addition to the main thread, there are at least half a dozen sub-plots that will keep you on your toes, but the author does a nioe job of never letting the story get bogged down. The pace remains brisk while Cook still manages to provide a wonderful introduction to the larger world in which this story (and the sequels take place).

I thought the balance in this regard was excellent.

THOUGHTS:

As someone who enjoys fantasy stories that contain a variety of different races shown in fresh ways, I had a

lot of fun with Cook's original take on some standard fantasy tropes. Most of the "breeds" can mate with humans and other "breeds" and so you get a very cosmopolitan society. Here's a list of just a few that I thought were cool:

Grolls: See above...this description gives you a good idea of Garrett's "tone" throughout the book.

Vampires: these are the vicious, nasty version that are neither cute nor sparkly.

Loghyr: A "living" corpse (possibly immortal). Killed 400 years ago and possessing a genius intellect and psychic powers.

Dark Elves: fast, strong and deadly...Bruce Lee with pointy ears.

Unicorns: Not your typical beauty as these are vicious, nasty meat eaters who kill without the slightest provocation...mostly just for fun.

Centaurs: Liars, cheats and con-men.

Plus, *gnomes, witches, pixies, giants, shape-shifters, wizards* and more.

Bottom-line, I had a ton of fun with this book and can't wait to read the sequels, which I hope are just as good.

4.0 stars. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!!

The Shayne-Train says

DNF'ing at 65%.

I tried, really I did. I should have loved this. I'm into mystery/noir, I'm into fantasy, and I'm highly into the cross-genre mash-up of them both. Plus, I'm a big fan of Glen Cook from his *Chronicles of the Black Company* books. So wtf happened?

It just didn't.....*grab* me. The world-building was pretty slick, and it had the banter down pat, but....meh. Just meh.

Maybe because I've read some pretty amazing noir and some pretty amazing fantasy over the past few months, and my delight needed something MAJORLY done right to overcome my high expectations. Either way, I'm pretty bummed. I thought I'd found a new 14-book-or-so series to sink my teeth into. But now, sadly, I move on to something else.

April says

Oh, boy. I can't say how awesome I thought this book was. As an opening drum-roll, it works very well. Introducing characters in a way that lets them live in the history they have together seems to be a specialty for this author. The only thing I can't decide is which character is my favorite. Is it Garrett, who can slug it out with Saucerhead Tharpe just before talking dirty-lawyer speak? Or Morley, who could charm the pants (literally) off just about any woman and still manage to nag Garrett about eating his veggies? Then there's the triplets from different moms, a bunch of gnomes in a shoe shop, carnivorous unicorns, and a conspiracy with international ramifications...

So of course I love it. On to the next.

Michael Hall says

This turned out to be a very fun book to read despite my initial thought that the circumstances seemed a bit contrived and overblown. It also suffers from maybe a little too much detail and far too many names at once for a first time visitor to this world. It does take a few chapters to grow on you, but once it does it becomes a very engaging noir-detective story set in a fantasy (urban) world of continuous war, intrigue, supernatural, and a wide range of humanoid life. Somewhere in the middle of the book I mentioned it to a friend and described it as what Jim Butcher's Dresden Files would have been if written by Terry Pratchett. I see this series having much more entertainment value than the Dresden books, and a more subtle and engaging intelligence than Pratchett's body of work. Quirky yet full of convoluted plot twists that despite all cynicism was still able to surprise me. I'll definitely be reading more of these and hoping Mr Cook is able to live up to the potential that lurks within these pages despite the 'first book in the series' roughness that keeps me from rating it higher.

colleen the convivial curmudgeon says

I went into this book not only hoping, but expecting, that I would like it. I liked the idea of the noir-style detective story in the fantasy setting, and the notion of it being different from most urban fantasy's in that it's set in a fantasy world as opposed to our own. Plus it came recommended.

But it just didn't work for me. The characters never clicked for me - I was never invested in them and didn't particularly care about either the outcome or the story or what happened to our erstwhile heroes along the way. And I never really got the humor I was told was there - except a few bits with the grolls.

And the story itself was slapdash and convoluted. One reviewer said that it felt more like short scenes stitched together instead of a fully cohesive narrative, and I think that's a really good assessment. And there were just so much going on, being thrown in almost randomly, but I never felt any real suspense or tension from the odds. For instance, (view spoiler)

Overall, I was just disappointed in the overwhelming meh-ness of it all.

Unfortunately, I bought the omnibus but, honestly, I have very little interest in continuing with the series. *le sigh*

Scott Marlowe says

Rating

Review

*** This review originally appeared on Out of this World Reviews. ***

Sweet Silver Blues by Glen Cook is the first of the Garrett, P.I., novels set in Cook's pseudo-urban/traditional fantasy world. Glen Cook is perhaps best known for The Black Company series. Unfortunately, Sweet Silver Blues follows in that series' knack for introducing confusion and leading the reader on such a herky-jerky path that it's nearly impossible to see how one dot is connected to another.

That being said, it's not all bad. Cook presents a colorful array of bruisers, Garrett is about as moody and cynical as any private investigator has a right to be, and the case he set's himself upon is solid and straightforward. But the pursuit of clues is a slow one as Garrett and his motley companions travel abroad to the Cantard, a sort of front where a war is being waged. Monsters abound, including some of the more well-known types—elves, centaurs, unicorns, and vampires—along with some that are new, like the grolls that accompany Garrett. There's plenty of backstabbing and double-crosses, and a climactic, no-holds barred finale. But it takes a long time to get there. The novel weighs in at a modest 311 pages; not long by any means, but, still, it could have been about 50 pages shorter.

Although I was not completely satisfied with the storytelling, I did finish Sweet Silver Blues (if that means anything). I also only read the first of The Black Company books, which were also written by Glen Cook. I think this series is going to get the same consideration. I think I have to conclude that me and Cook are just not compatible.

Bookwraiths says

A detective novel based in a fantasy world with a tough guy who is also a wise guy. Add to that an author who has always had the ability to convey humor in the most awful of battle situations (see the Black Company novels), and this looked like a great read. In all honestly, it was a good book. Unfortunately, I am one of those people that doesn't really like detective stories whether they are based in real life, 19th century London (see Sherlock Holmes), or fantasy worlds. So don't let the 2 star rating keep you from giving this book a chance, because for me to give a detective novel a "like" probably means it was a damn good read.

Carly says

****edited 12/15/13**

In any reasonably thorough exploration of the space of Urban Fantasy, the bizarre combination of hardboiled noir detective stories and fantasy, Glen Cook's Garrett, PI series is definitely a necessary read. From my understanding, Garrett is one of the first urban fantasies written. It certainly is a landmark in the genre.

One of the things I loved most about the story was the world. Garrett's world is significantly more creative than the UF norm: a low-fantasy merging of our world with a secret society of individuals with special powers. Garrett lives on a totally original, fully-fledged fantasy realm where magic is the norm and dark elves, ratmen, ogres, and more coexist with humans in noisy, busy, and overcrowded cities. The atmosphere of cities themselves, especially TunFaire, where Garrett lives, feels a bit like Anhk Morpork: a cheerful, amoral chaos where mythical creatures rub shoulders with practical magical inventions. The world also has a complex history: there is an ongoing war between two of the human-inhabited countries over an area of

silver mines, since silver is a necessary ingredient used by wizards in their spells. Cook does a fantastic job twisting common mythical creatures into new, creative, and realistic-feeling versions. For example, unicorns are vicious creatures that travel in packs and hunt humans.

...And that's all I'm going to post here. **The rest of my (rather verbose) review is posted over here at Booklikes.**

Why? Because I disapprove of GoodReads' new policy of censorship, and will no longer allow my full reviews to be posted here.
