



Moon Over Soho (Peter Grant)

By Ben Aaronovitch

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BODY AND SOUL

The song. That's what London constable and sorcerer's apprentice Peter Grant first notices when he examines the corpse of Cyrus Wilkins, part-time jazz drummer and full-time accountant, who dropped dead of a heart attack while playing a gig at Soho's 606 Club. The notes of the old jazz standard are rising from the body—a sure sign that something about the man's death was not at all natural but instead supernatural.

Body and soul—they're also what Peter will risk as he investigates a pattern of similar deaths in and around Soho. With the help of his superior officer, Detective Chief Inspector Thomas Nightingale, the last registered wizard in England, and the assistance of beautiful jazz aficionado Simone Fitzwilliam, Peter will uncover a deadly magical menace—one that leads right to his own doorstep and to the squandered promise of a young jazz musician: a talented trumpet player named Richard "Lord" Grant—otherwise known as Peter's dear old dad.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A terrific follow-up to [Aaronovitch’s] novel *Midnight Riot*, the debut of Peter Grant and his own weird London. Grant continues to learn the ropes of magical London, a process that takes him on a trip through Nightingale’s haunted past and into some of the most interesting places you won’t find on any official tour. Aaronovitch makes the story sing, building momentum until the ending is literally breathless.” --SF Revu

“A realistic modern-day police procedural populated by increasingly solid characters and written in the same consistently witty style as the first Peter Grant novel [*Midnight Riot*]. . . . One of the most entertaining books I’ve read in a long time.” --Fantasy Literature

About the Author

Ben Aaronovitch was born in London in 1964 and had the kind of dull routine childhood that drives a man to drink or to science fiction. He is a screenwriter, with early notable success on BBC television’s legendary *Doctor Who*, for which he wrote some episodes now widely regarded as classics, and which even he is quite fond of. He has also penned several groundbreaking TV tie-in novels. After a decade of such work, he decided it was time to show the world what he could really do and embarked on his first serious original novel. The result is *Midnight Riot*, the debut adventure of Peter Grant, followed by *Moon Over Soho*.

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chapter 1

Body and Soul

It’s a sad fact of modern life that if you drive long enough, sooner or later you must leave London behind. If you drive northeast up the A12 you eventually come to Colchester, Britain’s first Roman capital and the first city to be burned down by that redheaded chavette from Norfolk known as Boudicca. I knew all this because I’d been reading the Annals of Tacitus as part of my Latin training. He’s surprisingly sympathetic to the revolting Brits and scathing about the unpreparedness of the Roman generals who thought more of what was agreeable than expedient. The classically educated chinless wonders who run the British army obviously took this admonition to heart because Colchester is now the home of their toughest soldiers—the parachute regiment. Having spent many a Saturday night as a probationary PC wrestling squaddie in Leicester Square, I made sure I stayed on the main road and bypassed the city altogether.

Beyond Colchester I turned south and, with the help of the GPS on my phone, got myself onto the B1029 heading down the wedged-shaped bit of dry ground jammed between the River Colne and Flag Creek. At the end of the road lay Brightlingsea—lining the coast, so Leslie had always told me, like a collection of rubbish stranded at the high-water mark. Actually I didn’t think it was that bad. It had been raining in London but after Colchester I’d driven into clear blue skies and the sun lit up the rows of well-kept Victorian terraces that ran down to the sea.

Chez May was easy to spot, a 1970s brick-built fake Edwardian cottage that had been carriage-lamped and pebble-dashed within an inch of its life. The front door was flanked on one side by a hanging basket full of blue flowers and on the other by the house number inscribed on a ceramic plate in the shape of a sailing yacht. I paused and checked the garden; there were gnomes loitering near the ornamental birdbath. I took a breath and rang the doorbell.

There was an immediate chorus of female yelling from inside. Through the reproduction stained-glass window in the front door I could just make out blurry figures running back and forth at the far end of the hall. Somebody yelled, “It’s your boyfriend!” which earned a shush and a sotto voce reprimand from someone else. A white blur marched up the hallway until it filled the view through the window from side to side. I took a step backward and the door opened. It was Henry May—Leslie’s father.

He was a large man, and driving big trucks and hauling heavy gear had given him broad shoulders and heavily muscled arms. Too many transport café breakfasts and standing his round at the pub had put a tire around his waist. He had a square face and had dealt with a receding hairline by shaving his hair down to a brown fuzz. His eyes were blue and clever. Leslie had gotten her eyes from her dad.

Having four daughters meant that he had parental looming down to a fine art, and I fought the urge to ask whether Leslie could come out and play.

“Hello, Peter,” he said.

“Mr. May,” I said.

He made no effort to unblock the doorway; nor did he invite me in.

“Leslie will be out in a minute,” he said.

“She all right?” I asked. It was a stupid question and Leslie’s dad didn’t embarrass either of us by trying to answer it. I heard someone coming down the stairs and braced myself.

There’d been severe damage to the maxilla, nasal spine, ramus, and mandible, Dr. Walid had said. And although much of the underlying muscle and tendons had survived, the surgeons at UCH had been unable to save much of the skin surface. They’d put in a temporary scaffold to allow her to breathe and ingest food, and there was a chance that she might benefit from a partial face transplant—if they could find a suitable donor. Given that what was left of her jaw was currently held together by a filigree of hypoallergenic metal, talking was out of the question. Dr. Walid had said that once the bones were sufficiently fused, they might be able to restore enough functionality to the jaw to allow for speech. But it all sounded a bit conditional to me. Whatever you see, he’d said, take as long a look as you need to get used to it, to accept it, and then move on as if nothing has changed.

“Here she is,” said Leslie’s dad and turned sideways to allow a slim figure to squeeze past him. She wore a blue-and-white-striped hoodie with the hood up, drawstring pulled tight so that it hid her forehead and chin. The lower face was covered by a matching blue-and-white-patterned scarf and her eyes by a pair of unfashionably large sunglasses I suspected had been looted from her mum’s forgotten-clothes drawer. I stared but there was nothing to see.

“You should have said we were going out robbing,” I said. “I’d have brought a balaclava.”

She gave me a disgusted look—I recognized it from the tilt of her head and the way she held her shoulders. I felt a stutter in my chest and took a deep breath.

“Fancy a walk then?” I asked.

She nodded to her dad, took me firmly by the arm, and led me away from the house.

I felt her dad's eyes on my back as we walked off.

If you don't count the boatbuilding and the light engineering, Brightlingsea is not a noisy town even in the summer. Now, two weeks after the end of the school holidays, it was almost silent, just the occasional car and the sound of the gulls. I stayed quiet until we'd crossed the high street where Leslie pulled her police-issue notebook out of her bag, flipped it open to the last page, and showed it to me.

What have you been up to? was written in black Biro across the page.

"You don't want to know," I said.

She made it clear through hand gestures that yeah, she did want to know.

So I told her about the guy that had had his dick bitten off by a woman with teeth in her vagina, which seemed to amuse Leslie, and about the rumors that DCI Seawoll was being investigated by the IPCC about his conduct during the Covent Garden riots, which did not. I also didn't tell her that Terrence Pottsley, the only other victim to survive the magic that had damaged Leslie's face, had topped himself as soon as his family's backs were turned.

We didn't go straight to the shore. Instead Leslie led me the back way down Oyster Tank Road and through a grassy car park where rows of dinghies were parked on their trailers. A brisk wind from the sea moaned through the rigging and clonked the metal fittings together like cowbells. Hand in hand, we picked our way through the boats and out onto the windswept concrete esplanade. On one side cement steps led down to a beach carved into narrow strips by rotting breakwaters; on the other stood a line of brightly colored huts. Most were closed up tight but I did see one family determined to stretch the summer as far as it would go, the parents drinking tea in the shelter of their doorway while the kids kicked a soccer ball on the beach.

Between the end of the beach huts and the open-air swimming pool was a strip of grass and a shelter where we finally got to sit down. Constructed in the 1930s when people had realistic expectations of the British climate, it was brick-built and solid enough to serve as a tank trap. We sat down out of the wind on the bench that ran along the back of the alcove. The inside had been decorated with a mural of the seafront, blue sky, white clouds, red sails. Some total wanker had graffitied bmx across the sky and there was a list of names crudely painted down the side wall—brooke t., emily b. and leslie m. They were just in the right location to have been painted by a bored teenager slumped on the corner of the bench. You didn't need to be a copper to see that this was where the yooofs of Brightlingsea came to hang out in that difficult gap between the age of criminal responsibility and that of legal drinking.

Leslie pulled an iPad clone out of her bag and fired it up. She typed in keyboard mode and the iPad spoke—somebody in her family must have installed a speech synthesizer. It was a basic model with an American accent that made Leslie sound like an autistic surfer dude, but at least we could have an almost normal conversation.

She didn't bother with small talk.

"Can magic fix?" she asked.

"I thought Dr. Walid had talked to you about that." I'd been dreading this question.

"Want you say," she said.

“What?”

Leslie leaned over her pad and stabbed deliberately at the screen with her finger. She typed several separate lines before hitting return.

“I want to hear it from you,” said the iPad.

“Why?”

“Because I trust you.”

I took a breath. A pair of old-age pensioners raced past the shelter on mobility scooters.

“As far as I can tell magic works within the same framework of physical laws as everything else,” I said.

“What magic do,” said the iPad, “magic can undo.”

“If you burn your hand on fire or electricity it’s still a burn—you fix it with bandages and cream and stuff like that. You don’t use more electricity or more fire. You . . .”

Had the skin and muscles of your face been pulled out of shape by a fucking malevolent spirit—your jaw was all smashed up and the whole thing was held together with magic and when that ran out your face fell off. Your beautiful face. I was there, I watched it happen. And there was nothing I could do.

“Can’t just wish it away,” I said.

“Know everything?” asked the iPad.

“No,” I said. “And I don’t think Nightingale does either.”

She sat silent and unmoving for a long while. I wanted to put my arm around her but I didn’t know how she’d react. I was just about to reach out when she nodded to herself and picked up the iPad again.

“Show me,” said the iPad.

“Leslie . . .”

“Show me.” She hit the repeat button several times. “Show me, show me, show me . . .”

“Wait,” I said and reached for her iPad, but she pulled it out of my reach.

“I have to take the battery out,” I said. “Or the magic will blow the chips.”

Leslie flipped the iPad, cracked it open, and pulled the battery. After going through five phones in a row I’d retrofitted my latest Samsung with a hardware cutoff that kept it safe but meant that the case was held together with elastic bands. Leslie shuddered when she saw it and made a snorting sound that I suspected was laughter.

I made the shape of the appropriate forma in my mind, opened my hand, and brought forth a werelight. Not a

big one but enough to cast a pale light that was reflected in Leslie's sunglasses. She stopped laughing. I closed my hand and the light went out.

Leslie stared at my hand for a moment and then made the same gesture, repeating it twice, slowly and methodically. When nothing happened she looked up at me and I knew, underneath the glasses and scarf, that she was frowning.

"It's not that easy," I said. "I practiced every morning for four hours for a month and a half before I could do that and that's just the first thing you have to learn. Have I told you about the Latin, the Greek . . . ?"

We sat in silence for a moment, then she poked me in the arm. I sighed and produced another werelight. I could practically do it in my sleep by then. She copied the gesture and got nothing. I'm not joking about how long it takes to learn.

The OAPs returned, drag racing past on the esplanade. I put the light out but Leslie carried on making the gesture, the movements becoming more impatient with every try. I stood it as long as I could before I took her hand in mine and made her stop.

We walked back to her house soon afterward. When we reached her porch she patted me on the arm, stepped inside, and shut the door in my face. Through the stained glass I watched her blurry shape retreat quickly down the hallway. Then she was gone.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brian Nelson:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a expertise or any news even a concern. What people must be consider while those information which is in the former life are difficult to be find than now's taking seriously which one is appropriate to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you find the unstable resource then you have it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen throughout you if you take Moon Over Soho (Peter Grant) as your daily resource information.

Maria Smith:

Typically the book Moon Over Soho (Peter Grant) will bring that you the new experience of reading the book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. In the event you try to find new book to read, this book very acceptable to you. The book Moon Over Soho (Peter Grant) is much recommended to you to read. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more easily to read the book.

Gayle Meek:

You are able to spend your free time to see this book this reserve. This Moon Over Soho (Peter Grant) is simple to create you can read it in the area, in the beach, train in addition to soon. If you did not have got

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Joseph Cole:

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