



Beneath the Skin

Jonathan Maberry

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Sam Hunter is a PI in the big bad city. When he takes a new case it's like he's accepting the client into his 'pack'. And Sam will do anything to protect the members of his pack. Dogs are like that. So are wolves. And so, too, are werewolves. Like Sam.

Sam is a benandanti, an ancient race of werewolves who fight evil. And evil comes in all shapes and sizes; it comes at people from all directions. The cases Sam takes range from saving the world from genetically-engineered super soldiers to saving a young boy from the very real monster in his closet.

The Sam Hunter Case Files gather together the weird, strange, funny, heartbreaking and disturbing adventures of a low-rent private investigator taking on very odd jobs. These stories include cameos by fan-favorite characters from Maberry's bestselling Joe Ledger thrillers and The Pine Deep Trilogy

Beneath the Skin Details

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From Reader Review Beneath the Skin for online ebook

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Audible Daily Deal Sale until 28Jan18 \$1.95

Beneath the Skin was the audible daily deal awhile back and I picked it up simply because I'd read zombie series I liked (which is odd since it isn't really my genre and it was YA) by Jonathan Maberry and I really have enjoyed Ray Porter's voice in a few other books.

There are five short stories included in the anthology and all are just a little bit on the strange side. These featuring a former cop turned semi-down and out PI who goes a little furry from time to time. I liked how all of the stories were well told and thought out even if short. There is a really good arc for such a short story and you get a good sense of who/what Sam Hunter is and why he does the job he does. I enjoyed the sass and snark of each of the stories.

I really thought while listening to these that there was a main series that they went with and I was ready to read a full length book with Sam as the reluctant hero. But to my surprise I found there is no such series as of yet. Well that is just too bad as I was ready to jump on board the Sam Hunter train since he seems to fight ex-husbands, vampires, demons, wolf gods and ghosts with a little bit of smarts and a whole lot of moxy.

I don't read a lot of short stories, that aren't related to series I've already read but this was an exception to that and I enjoyed getting to know Mr. Hunter. I guess I'll have to check out some of Jonathan Maberry's other UF series to get a good fix of Ray Porter's Voice.

Kev says

Enjoyable collection of short stories, with a pretty cool and snarky main character.

RJ says

Five short horror stories by the master Jonathan Maberry. I usually do not like short stories, but Maberry is an exception, especially with the extraordinary Ray Porter (aka Joe Ledger) as narrator. These stories highlight the character Sam Hunter who is a private investigator and also a werewolf. I'm sure the concept could be a standalone novel. Wonderful stories.

?Susan? says

I loved this creative blend of detective meets paranormal. The story and main character were very original and were well rounded out by great narration.

Dan Cummings says

I enjoyed this anthology, but to me personally, like all anthologies, they always feel too breezy and insubstantial to really get me excited, which is a purely my fault and not the author's. However, it is still a real gripe with *Beneath the Skin* because here, Maberry has a really good, likeable protagonist in Sam Hunter - who he obviously enjoys writing about judging from the number of short stories - and yet Maberry refuses to sit down and award the character a full novel. Several of the stories within have a great set-up, interesting antagonists, good build-up and with plenty of scope for a great supernatural action/adventure but then the nature of the novella rears its short and stumpy head and forces them into an abrupt fizzle of a climax. Now don't get me wrong, Maberry is clearly doing very well for himself and therefore this review is probably hollow and essentially white noise to him (fair enough) but with him having so much annual output from his novels and Marvel comics contributions and everything else, surely he could have found five minutes here and there to further develop just one of the novellas into a great standalone novel.

I have read the entire Joe Ledger series and yet, to me personally, Sam Hunter is a much more enjoyable and endearing character: flawed, vulnerable, witty and just about making it through his scrapes by the skin of his teeth (and claws) unlike Ledger who, despite the odds, always seems to breeze through his conflicts no matter how big and bad the enemy is. Obviously, this is only one man's opinion so feel free to ignore this and think I'm talking out of my (expletive), but I am hoping for the day when either Maberry offers up a worthy Sam Hunter novel or even introduces the character into his Ledger series as one of the DMS agents. Fingers crossed.

In conclusion, *Beneath the Skin* is an entertaining, fast, funny and exciting read with a very colourful and interesting - if teasingly shallow - universe.

Tracey says

I thoroughly enjoyed this short story collection. It had the right mixture of the supernatural and suspense. I can't wait to read other titles by this author.

Sinisa Mikasinovic says

Ooooooh I liked this very much!

I recently said how I'm not big into supernatural, and yes, specifically named werewolves there, but I may need to take that back.

Wolf Killer certainly helped turn things around.

Sam Hunter is a private investigator. Scenes inside of his office inevitably evoked *noir* scenes in my mind. I really enjoyed it now, despite never paying much attention to noir genre before.

But.. I guess I claimed the same about werewolves :-)

What's going on with Sam? Well, he's trying to keep a low profile, as far as a PI can do. Yet people keep coming to him, with weirdest job requests ever. Ever. "*Can you, please, kill me?*" weird.

There are five stories in total, for five of the jobs Sam took. And each one lasts for about an hour.

All are interesting, and all very different. We'll also have glimpses into Sam's past, and links or hints at Maberry's book series *Pine Deep* .

Haven't read anything from it yet, so can't really comment. Although it did sound like that's a *superweird* place where some really crazy things happen. Warrants a look, I'd say.

I looked and checked, but couldn't find Sam in the list of characters. Maybe I wasn't looking deep enough, or maybe he just isn't there. That would be a shame.

I listened to the audiobook version of the book. It's different than the printed one. Two first stories appear in both editions, but the rest that you're going to miss will make you pick up the other edition.

Audiobook stories:

Like Part of the Family

Toby's Closet

We All Make Sacrifices

Crazy Town

A House in Need of Children

Printed book has extra 4:

Three Guys Walk into a Bar

Dream a Little Dream of Me

The Unlearnable Truths

Goth Chicks

So I need to read. Dammit. I hate reading. There's never enough time!

I liked the first story the most. Perhaps because I had no idea who and what Sam Hunter is, so it came as a nice surprise.

But as I mentioned already - *weird* factor is strong in all of them. Real treat for fans of supernatural fantasy short stories.

Sometimes I think that if Jonathan Maberry falls over the keyboard and lies on it long enough to produce a couple of pages of text, and then Ray Porter stops by and reads it - I would proclaim it a literary masterpiece and rate it 5* :-)

It looks like Maberry's writing style just works for me. If you liked any of his other works, don't miss this one.

For the night is dark, and full of ~~terrors~~... well, werewolves :-)

Nathaniel says

Sam Hunter is another supernatural private eye in the vein of Jim Butcher's Harry Dresden or Kevin Hearne's Iron Druid (I forget his real name) or Daniel José Older's what's-his-face or John G. Hartness's so-and-so.

So, yeah. I can't really remember any of their names.

Back when I read the first Harry Dresden novel in the 2000s, I thought combining fantasy and hardboiled

was a revelation, sort of like combining Westerns and sci-fi in Firefly. Either the field's gotten a little bit crowded since then, or this was always a bigger sub-genre than I knew.

So how does Sam Hunter fare? Well, if you're going to rock the hardboiled genre, you've got to be able to turn a phrase. The voice in this books carries a lot of weight, and it's easy to get it wrong and veer into cliché. On this score, I thought Maberry did really well. The book wasn't anything like the mindbomb that Older dropped with *Midnight Taxi Tango*, but there were more than a few lines that made me nod my add in admiration.

One of the things that always grabs a lot of my attention with these kinds of books is the world-building. If vampires and werewolves are real--and if they are real in a world that looks basically like ours--how does that work? Very few of the books I've mentioned really address this, and it's kind of a convention of the genre. People don't notice werewolves in much the same way that spaceships get to travel faster-than-light in a lot of sci-fi stories without anyone spending a lot of time thinking about the time-travel ramifications. Still, I thought it was handled adroitly enough, with some cool back-story about the Benandanti that is both (1) cool and (2) a genuine myth. It's always neat when authors can tie their modern stories to authentic mythologies.

So why three stars? Well, it was nearly four. I went back and fourth a bit. It's like a 3.5. But I try to answer the star question according to the Goodreads prompts. 3 is "I liked it" and 4 is "I liked it a lot." And the thing that kept me from saying "I liked it a lot" was the the stories were a little too repetitive.

1. Someone does something bad to a child / woman
2. Sam Hunter gets angry
3. Bad guy underestimates Sam Hunter
4. Sam Hunter transforms into a werewolf and kills the bad guy
5. Sam Hunter rips up the check he was paid

I get that your hardboiled protagonist has to be jaded and cynical and all that, but Sam was just too much of a one-trick pony. Long passages about exactly how angry he was *this time* might have worked better if I was reading the stories one at a time, but reading them all in a row really made the repetition stick out too much.

Also, he ripped up / refused checks **twice**. That really rubbed me the wrong way. He's poor. He's got no money. It's just too melodramatic and unrealistic for him to be ripping up checks from his customers. I had the same reaction to the tagline about "once you hire me, you're part of my pack." I mean... how many people would that mean are in his pack by now? What if they don't *want* to be in his pack? Do they leave the pack once the job is done, or does he have to like... keep up regular contact or something? It just doesn't work.

And yes, he did break from the formula for the last (and best) story. Props for that. But it still relied to heavily on the assumption that Sam Hunter kill bad thing lots until bad thing go away.

Anyway, they weren't bad stories. But the plots were repetitive, Sam's emotional range was one-dimensional, and Maberry didn't build up any interesting recurring characters to add a little variety.

So, three stars. (3.5, if I could.)

Kim says

Sam Hunter is a detective in the great noir style. A former cop who was too rough on citizens he's now a

detective in Philadelphia, a city he likes for its general lack of snow. He is also a werewolf. But Jonathan Maberry, author of dozens of books on horror and other genres, joyfully rewrites werewolf lore as well as new twists on vampires and other horror favorites. Hunter, for example, can change on command with no waiting for a full moon. When he's not being a werewolf he still has a keen sense of smell and hearing, things it can be nice to have when you're a detective.

Hunter works his way through some of the staple tropes of noir fiction such as women threatened by ex-husbands, but also takes on more supernatural cases like a woman whose son comes out of his room with bruises and scratches every six days. Sometimes he solves his cases with intelligence and finesse. At other times nothing will do but that he transform himself to kick some bad-guy butt.

The eight stories in the book have a wide variety of bad guys and brings in characters from other books by Maberry just to liven things up. Maberry has won five Bram Stoker awards for his horror books and is listed as one of the top ten writers in the genre.

These noir stories don't have the full gravitas of a Hammett or a Chandler story but they capture the atmosphere and are fun to read. It's one of those books where I hit the last story and thought "That's it?" There's at least one other book with Sam Hunter and I'll be digging into that and other books from Maberry as soon as I can.

Melanie Clemmer says

This was an excellent supernatural twist on the "jaded Private investigator" trope. It was also interesting to have werewolves be listed as the good guys/ancient protectors of society. Fans of the Harry Dresden series and fans of HP Lovecraft would like these books.

Rachel says

This is a really fun collection of four (?) short stories read by Ray Porter. He has the perfect voice for it. Sam Hunter is a PI, so all these stories have a noir flair to them. My biggest complaint here is with GoodReads and the way they list these stories. Amazon (Audible) sells all the audiobooks separately and that's how I listened to them through Overdrive. But GoodReads only lists this collection, even though it's now owned by Amazon. That's annoying because I only get to list the collection once for my challenge even though I listened to 4 separate stories. Overall, these stories are worth listening to if you're trying to kill an hour or so and Ray Porter's voice is so good I'm contemplating switching over to audio for the Joe Ledger books.

Jason Parent says

These stories are all great... separately. And they were written and published separately, originally. Sam Hunter is an awesome character in small doses. Snarky, sarcastic, smug - what's not to like.

But combined, these stories contain a lot of repetition - how his clients are like his pack; how he has white knight syndrome; the broken female in need of his macho heroics; etc.

Also, if he is such a pack animal, why does he work alone? Why is he distanced from his family that he loves

so much? (perhaps part of a backstory not included here?)

And me, I like to see the werewolf tearing part these baddies, particularly those unseen in the closet (see through touch, scent, sound etc.). But Maberry spars us the fight scenes, the werewolf shredding bad guys to bits).

But hell, it's Maberry, so you know it's good and definitely worth picking up. I even got to find out what happened to Iron Mike Sweeney and Malcolm Crowe after the Pine Deep trilogy.

Jon Recluse says

I'm a huge fan of horror fiction involving private investigators and occult detectives, so this collection really hit the spot.

Sam Hunter is a private investigator who happens to be a member of a long line of werewolves who battle evil in all it's forms. A line that got a pass from the Inquisition.

He treats his clients like one of his own, summons his wild side when things get hairy.....and always tries to eat before shifting.

With cases ranging from vampires and werewolf super soldiers, to a boogiemer in a child's closet, Hunter won't give in until the fur stops flying.

And as an added bonus, there are appearances by Joe Ledger, Limbus Inc. and a visit to the town of Pine Deep!

Shawn Deal says

A wonderful collection of Sam Hunter stories. Loosely related to Maberry's Pine Deep series, as this character comes from there, this will give you the same vein as those stories. I am a huge Pine Deep fan and wish he would delve into it more. So I jump at every story that at least gets me close and this one did. I loved the hard boiled detective combined with the mystery of pine Deep. Really worked for me.

Sarah-Grace says

Awesome character. I wouldn't mind a novel length story about Sam Hunter :)
