



The Dirty Streets of Heaven

Tad Williams

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Bobby Dollar is an angel -- a real one. He knows a lot about sin, and not just in his professional capacity as an advocate for souls caught between Heaven and Hell. Bobby's wrestling with a few deadly sins of his own -- pride, anger, even lust.

But his problems aren't all his fault. Bobby can't entirely trust his heavenly superiors, and he's not too sure about any of his fellow earthbound angels either, especially the new kid that Heaven has dropped into their midst, a trainee angel who asks too many questions. And he sure as hell doesn't trust the achingly gorgeous Countess of Cold Hands, a mysterious she-demon who seems to be the only one willing to tell him the truth.

When the souls of the recently departed start disappearing, catching both Heaven and Hell by surprise, things get bad very quickly for Bobby D. "End-of-the-world" bad. "Beast of Revelations" bad. Caught between the angry forces of Hell, the dangerous strategies of his own side, and a monstrous undead avenger that wants to rip his head off and suck out his soul, Bobby's going to need all the friends he can get--in Heaven, on Earth, or anywhere else he can find them.

You've never met an angel like Bobby Dollar. And you've never read anything like The Dirty Streets of Heaven.

Brace yourself -- the afterlife is weirder than you ever believed.

The Dirty Streets of Heaven Details

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From Reader Review The Dirty Streets of Heaven for online ebook

David Sven says

Its Control vs Chaos. Sam and Dean Winchester vs Leviathan. Ok, maybe it doesn't feature Maxwell Smart or two unemployed monster hunters – but the humour definitely falls somewhere between, and the makers of Supernatural could easily made this into a side episode with an Angel's POV. C'mon – angels vs demons. Heaven vs Hell. God's gone awol? Yep, Supernatural. Except a very annoying version of the TV show (which I watch religiously – yuk yuk yuk!)

I don't know what it is. Maybe urban paranormal fantasy just doesn't appeal to me. Or maybe it's the use of corny humour with a side of slap stick that's getting old. It certainly got old in this book. The tone of this book just didn't change it up at all. The first person running commentary was funny I guess, but how about some gritty urban fantasy. What about vampires who don't fall in love or glow in the sunlight or only drink rat's blood because they feel too guilty about human blood. No there aren't any vampires in this book! To be fair there was a *ghallu* that wasn't cute and cuddly and couldn't be reasoned with – but it's hard to take seriously when the main character is intent on making light commentary while his very existence is in danger.

Anyway, it wasn't too bad to start with but I didn't feel it really went anywhere. The ending was rather flat. I wasn't convinced that at the end of the book Bobby Dollar should have been allowed to break open a beer and kick his legs up so easily. There's a lot of questions that go unanswered which I assume will be dealt with in later books in the series – but it still ended weird for me. I mean, you get a breather now because WHAT has changed exactly? No No No.

If you like books like *The Rook*, you may like this – but I think *The Rook* was way better, and the light humour didn't butcher the tone as badly as this one from my point of view.

I thought it was ok at the start but I just wanted it to end in the finish.

2 stars is harsh but I can't give it a 3.

Allison says

More like 2.5 stars, but the last part dragged it up to 3. I'm halfway curious to see what happens, but don't know if I care enough to read the sequel.

Jacob Proffitt says

It's always risky when a talented author enters a new genre. Even if the motives are pure and they aren't riding the latest craze looking for bonus cash, it can fail as the author steps outside of their well-known norm. I'm happy to say that didn't happen with The Dirty Streets of Heaven by Tad Williams.

This book functions as much as a detective noir book as it does Urban Fantasy, really. Bobby Dollar, angel advocate for the dead, finds himself in over his head when he shows up to an adjudication where the soul at

the center of the proceedings fails to appear. Uh. Let me back up a bit. Bobby is an angel, though like most (all?) angels his memory doesn't extend past his becoming an angel. He has no memories of being mortal, though he's told that he once was. His current job is to show up when someone dies, confer with their guardian (who has been an observer of that individual soul since its creation), and then advocate before a divine power on behalf of that soul. His counterpart from hell will point out every ignoble deed and motivation while Bobby (and the other angelic advocates) looks on the bright side. A judgment for heaven is a win, purgatory is a delayed win, hell is a full-on loss. The system has gone without hitch for, as far as he knows, thousands of years. So when things go wrong, all hell (heh) breaks loose.

Bobby finds himself at the center of a frantic search to find out what went wrong with the soul that failed to show—a search that intensifies when other souls start going missing as well. There are demons out to get him (for motives both murky and obvious), one temptress out for... other things... and even heaven isn't being terribly forthright as Bobby's superiors give him conflicting marching orders.

I had a great time with the story. Bobby's world is fully-realized. Everybody's motives gel like you'd expect. Even those whose motives we don't understand feel like they are internally consistent, even if hidden. It's a fast-paced whodunit with a unique supernatural twist and a thrilling ride all the way through to the end. I sincerely hope there are more books coming featuring Bobby and the rest of the gang at Compasses (the Earthly hangout of the advocates in St. Jude—and Bobby's friends).

A note about Steamy: There are a couple of sex scenes in the book, though most of them happen off-screen. One extended scene is quite graphic, however. In tune with the gritty nature of the book, not everything is roses and sunshine, though nothing that'd qualify as terribly “kinky”, I think.

Michael says

Bobby Dollar is an angel, his role here on earth is to advocate for the souls caught between heaven and hell. As a result of this, Bobby knows about sin, in fact, he wrestles with a few himself; pride, lust and anger. Whether it's pride or just instinct, Dollar can't trust his superiors or his fellow earth bound angels so when souls start disappearing, things are bound to get bad; end of the world bad.

Like the Dresden Files, The Dirty Streets of Heaven blends urban fantasy with hard-boiled crime. Bobby Dollar is a great character, but while he isn't fully hard-boiled he plays the role really well. I don't think I would want him to be more hard-boiled; as an angel he does need to have a bit of a moral compass and he does have to try to be good, so in this aspect I think Tad Williams got the balance right.

I've never been much for fantasy novels, but I really like these urban fantasy novels that take old hard-boiled and noir styles and blend it; I just can't get enough of them. I believe this is Tad Williams first attempt at this genre but he has done this masterfully; the conflict between heaven and hell with Bobby Dollar and not knowing who to trust makes this novel. I will admit the Angel and Demon warfare aspect of this book is what I enjoyed the most; Williams added some interesting concepts and blended some theology in as well and I think it balanced out nicely.

I wasn't sure if The Dirty Streets of Heaven was going to turn out anything like Dogma or The Dresden Files, but I think the author took parts of both that he liked and made it his own. It's dark and gritty, fully of sex and violence but there is also pop culture references and humour with this book. The humour within this book was great; it didn't over shadow the darkness of the novel and often came unexpectedly.

“You show me what someone listens to; I’ll tell you everything you want to know about his soul. (For instance, a bunch of Nickelback albums would have indicated he never had a soul in the first place.)”

I’m pleased this is the first book in a new series for Tad Williams; currently there are another two in the works and I am excited to be thrown back into this world. The more I discover these Urban Fantasy Noir novels, the more I want to read them; I really should read some more from the Dresden Files while I wait for book two. Does anyone have any recommendations for books like this, because I really enjoyed this book, more than I ever expected.

This review originally appeared on my blog; <http://literary-exploration.com/2013/...>

Eric Means says

I was distinctly underwhelmed, to be honest. I loved *The Dragonbone Chair* and the rest of *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* and have read and reread it over the years. *The City of Golden Shadow* and the rest of the *Otherland* series was likewise extensive, inventive, and well-developed.

DSOH, in comparison, feels as if Tad Williams dashed off a (relatively) short story with little to no editing in order to meet a contractual deadline or something. Some of the prose is just flat out bad (my least favorite line in the book: "The broken-hearted girl cried as if her heart had been broken." I wish I were making this up.) Very little of the prose has the elegance and descriptiveness apparent in his earlier work.

The story is in the end fairly trite, predictable, and unfortunately unexceptional. There are some interesting ideas (earth-bound angels and demons serving as prosecutor/defendant in the soul's trial to determine its eventual destination, the ghallu, the Third Path, etc) but the book is too short, and the rest of the plot too simplistic, to do them justice. I'll probably skip the rest of this trilogy.

Shandra says

Initial thoughts: Well...this book started out soooooo strong for me!!! I was totally entranced and sucked in. But then...well, it went seriously downhill. It took me forever to finish this because I just didn't have the desire to pick it back up. Review to come at some point.

Review:

Actual rating: 2 I-Wish-I-Could-Get-This-Time-In-My-Life-Back stars. No spoilers.

I don't even want to write a review for this...

Maybe that's why I've put it off for so long?

I don't even know where to begin?!

I was in book heaven at the beginning!! This lasted until about the halfway point I think? The MC was strong willed, snarky, funny, a smart ass, and easy to identify with. The world building was so much awesomeness!!

The concept was new and different and refreshing and fun!!! I mean, a story about what happens after you die. A story about how your soul is placed above or below. An involved story about the different roles all sorts of angels and demons play in that decision making.

Alas, the strong start and the book heaven I was in at the beginning did not last. The MC has a strong voice as I mentioned. The love interest that comes in is soooooo out of character for him, I could NOT get myself to jive with it. The amount of huffing and puffing, eye rolling, and shouting *REALLY?!* was unprecedented. It was such an unbelievable turn of events, the rest of the book was lost to me. All I heard after that was:

I'm sad this book didn't work out for me. I really wanted it to.

Phrynne says

An interesting premise about earthbound angels whose job it is to help souls navigate their way to heaven after death. The main character, Bobby Dollar is a marvellous character. He's an angel with all the characteristics that that can bring plus he is smart, witty and able to fight his way out of a tight corner. Tad Williams writes the book with plenty of action and humour and it was certainly a way of passing several pleasant hours. I will be looking out for the sequel

Patrick says

Back in 1996, I was in the middle of a creative crisis. I'd been working on *The Name of the Wind* for a couple of years, and I was consumed with doubt.

The problem? My book was long and complicated. "Am I wasting my time?" I thought, "Does anyone even publish long, complex fantasy series these days?"

Then I picked up Tad Williams' *Dragonbone Chair*. Apparently people **were** still publishing long, complicated fantasy trilogies.

This knowledge relaxed me, and I kept on writing.

I kept reading Tad Williams, too. It was good stuff.

I followed him when he switched from writing Epic Fantasy into Sci-Fi. I read his stand-alone novels.

What I'm getting at here is that I really enjoy Tad's writing. I've loved it for more than a decade.

But seriously? I think this might be my favorite book that he's written so far.

I read a fair amount of Urban Fantasy these days. And so much of it seems like people trying to copy Jim Butcher with varying degrees of success.

And I get why. Jim Butcher is fucking awesome. I love the Dresden books.

But I get tired of reading books that want to be the Dresden files and fall short. Because they can't help but fall short. Because only Jim Butcher is Jim Butcher.

Similarly, I'm getting pretty tired of vampires and werewolves too. I'm not saying that I haven't seen it done well, I'm just saying that I've seen it done a lot.

It gets a little samey after a while. I get weary. I get bored.

But Dirty Streets of Heaven brings a whole new game to the table. Told from the point of view of an angel. Yes. Hell yes. That's something cool. That's something new.

And Williams does a brilliant job of it. You get a backstage pass into the afterlife. The mythos is fresh and original and the story is full of all the things I want, good characters, mystery, action....

And on top of it all, the voice of the main character is great. Tad Williams himself is delightfully a witty, sarcastic, and occasionally sharp-tongued. This is the first of his books where I've seen those characteristics peek through to a significant degree, and it's great.

What I'm getting at is that I really dug this book. That's it in a nutshell. Made me laugh. Made me curious. Impressed me with its cleverness. Made me hungry for the next book. Kept me up late at night when I should have been sleeping.

What else can I say, really? It's good. If you like good books, you should check it out....

If you don't like good books, you probably shouldn't be following my reviews here on Goodreads, because those are the only books I'm really interested in talking about.

Mark says

For those used to Tad's more traditional Fantasy (such as Memory, Shadow and Thorn and the Shadowmarch series) this one is different. So different in that, had the name not been on the front, I wouldn't have said they were the same writer.

This is being widely seen as Tad's take on Urban Fantasy: you know, moody male with issues, living a tough life, with 'problems', usually of the supernatural type.

Not his usual, then: but it is good.

First thoughts are that Bobby Dollar, Tad's protagonist, fits right into the mould. Fast talking, snarky, yet engaging, the speed of the prose is rather jawdropping.

But what Tad brings that's new to the party is Bobby's world, a wonderfully realised background that is teeming with ideas, just dropped in briefly before getting back to the task in hand. It's the sort of thing Robert A. Heinlein was very good at: Tad here is very, very good.

In summary: Heaven, Purgatory and Hell exist in a continuous battle, although at the moment it's a Cold War type of co-existence. God exists, as does The Devil. In this existence there is a societal order, from

Principalities to guardians, archangels and advocates. Each person when they die has their soul judged by a judge, and there are representatives for either place who argue their case. Bobby (aka Doloriel) is one of these: an advocate angel on the side of Heaven. How he became one, who and where he was 'before' isn't clear: but he does what he does, as best he can.

Bobby's given the task of keeping an eye on a new Guardian, who's not typical. Moved from Records - Filing, Haraheliel (ironically nicknamed 'Clarence', which should amuse movie fans of Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*) seems to be unusual: an angel with moral standards who takes things personally.

When Bobby takes on a case and the soul goes missing before being judged, it drops him into a major crisis. That sort of thing just doesn't happen. When other souls have a similar fate, the problem is clearly much bigger than Bobby, or anyone else, realises.

It doesn't help that Bobby has the hots for the Countess of Cold Hands, Casimira (Caz), a she-demon from the other side whose interest in him can only really be seen as questionable. He's also been accused of having a valuable item that belongs to one of the Opposition's higher order, and is consequently being hunted down by an ancient Sumerian creature set upon him by an Opposition High Lord that can only be described as 'unstoppable'. Bobby finds himself under suspicion from both sides, whilst himself feeling set-up. He wants to know how and why.

This is light years away from Tad's medieval-mannerisms of *Memory Sorrow and Thorn* and *Shadowmarch*, so much so that, had I not been told, I wouldn't have said they were the same author. Many critics of Tad's earlier work, of which I'm not one, incidentally, talk about their over-complexity and enormous length. In comparison, *Dirty Streets* is tightly written, fast paced, contemporary, and definitely more adult. The characters smoke and drink, sleep around, curse and complain – much like you and me, except with the added responsibility of doing the Lord's (or the Opposition's) work. I'm sort of reminded of Black Sabbath's album cover to *Heaven and Hell* here.

My inner critic made me think that this tight focus could leave to a rather flimsy novel. I was pleasantly surprised that it didn't. Tad doesn't avoid the big issues – How do you get to Heaven? What is heaven like? What happens to atheists when they die? – but he does cleverly side-slip them, by pointing out that he's given up questioning and just accepts that you can't know everything, and that often things are rather vaguely remembered, if at all. It's rather like saying you don't need a detailed knowledge of anatomy or biology to be human, which is probably how most of us live our lives, anyway.

What works most is Tad's supreme prose. It is a rapid-fire, non-stop wealth of snarky comments. The text is full of memorable little quirks that are dropped in along the way that could be developed into whole other books, such as Bobby's background to his relationships with other angels and people. This is the first time I've heard a description of a person as 'hissing and clawing like a methedrine ocelot', and yet here we have it (on page 2.) It's funny, it's accurate, it's intelligent.

Through this rapid narrative there are intriguing glimpses of Bobby's world as we deal with his difficulties. Heaven exists, but the blissful people there have no idea of their previous life. There is a strict hierarchy of society, on both sides. The advocates don't know anything about whom they were 'before', and if killed can usually be resurrected in another body, though the process can be painful. Bobby and his best friend Sam served in the army together: known as 'the Harps', they are a sort of SAS-type squad who bring the term 'fighting the good fight' to another level.

Sometimes such an unremittingly bleak character or background can make a book difficult to like. Whilst there are times where the outlook can be described as bleak, there's enough humour to keep it going. And it must be said that there is some odd stuff in there, from the gruesomely unpleasant punishments doled out to agents of the Opposition who fail in their work to the cursed informant that Dollar uses who just so happens

to take the form of a were-pig from midnight to sunup.... Tad manages to elicit sympathy, horror and humour in such situations, not an easy thing to do.

There are a couple of minor niggles. I can't say I'm too impressed with the name Bobby Dollar, which just sounds too cheesy. There are a couple of times where Tad seems to be trying too hard, when the drop-ins seem superfluous to the tale at that point, though these are minor. The explicit sex scenes may not be everyone's cup of tea and are perhaps a little... overheated at times.

Generally though, this is a fast paced, classy piece of work. Despite my issues with the lead guy's name (Bobby Dollar: ugh!) the book itself is a whirlwind ride, touching on many of the tropes of Urban Fantasy and giving the reader that element of familiarity. However, unlike many that cover similar ground, where the literary mechanisms can be seen clicking the clichés into place, Tad manages to do something I thought almost impossible: write an urban fantasy that is both engaging and at the same time takes the reader somewhere new.

I had my concerns about this one: I needn't. Impressive stuff from a brilliant author, and easily one of the best urban fantasies I've read in a long, long while. As much as I like The Dresden Files, Jim Butcher's definitely got his work cut out for him to keep up with this one. Dresden, watch out: there's a new guy in town.

I really hope there's more to this world. Highly Recommended.

LittleMissBookworm says

Tad Williams' "Die dunklen Gassen des Himmels" ist der herrliche Serienauftakt einer wahnsinnig witzigen Urban Fantasy Trilogie.

Bobby Dollar ist Anwalt, ein Anwaltsengel um genau zu sein. Seine Aufgabe ist es, verstorbene Menschen vor den Richtern des Höchsten zu vertreten und für die Aufnahme ihrer Seelen im Himmel zu sorgen. Als ob ihm die Dämonen der Gegenseite diesen Job nicht schon schwer genug machen würden, verschwindet einer seiner "Klienten" einfach. Während Bobby versucht, diesen höchst seltsamen Fall von Soulknapping aufzuklären, hetzt ihm ein Höllenfürst einen uralten Dämon auf den Leib - der Ärger ist also vorprogrammiert.

Wenn ich nicht schon dank der Handlung von diesem Romans begeistert gewesen wäre, hätte mich spätestens der Protagonist zum Fan gemacht. Tad Williams hat mit Bobby Dollar einen sympathischen Kerl erschaffen, der weiß, wie man eine eigentlich recht tragische Geschichte unterhaltsam und witzig erzählt. Ich habe Tränen gelacht!

Dieser Serienauftakt besteht aus einer interessanten Handlung, einer Wagenladung Humor und einer Prise

Romantik - sehr empfehlenswert!

Felicia says

So I own all of Tad Williams' work in hardback, except for the book about the cats because I refuse to read books with dogs or cats as protagonists because EVERY TIME ONE OF THEM GETS KILLED AND I CRY. Ahem.

Anyway, having loved his more fantasy-based stuff, I was a bit hesitant to read this foray into an urban fantasy/noire world starring angels and demons. But OMG it is SO GOOD you guys. I couldn't sleep after I finished reading it because I was so sad about the characters' stories ending. Bobby Dollar went from being a protagonist I was puzzled about, to one I couldn't wait to see kick some butt. There is great mystery here as well as really strong world-building, and it sets up nicely for a follow-up without having an annoying cliffhanger.

I don't want to spoil anything, but if you are a Jim Butcher fan, or a fan of those noir detective novels from the 30s, this is a great blend of the two. What I particularly love about the writing is that every character is memorable. Even bit players come in with amazing personality and strange quirks, so you remember them long after their chapter is over. And frequently I would laugh out loud at some of the lines, there is a wicked sense of humor in this book.

Definitely recommended, 100%!

Nick T. Borrelli says

Oh man was this a miss for me. I have to preface this by saying that Tad Williams is probably my favorite fantasy author of all-time. The guy can do no wrong. Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn is phenomenal and the Shadowmarch series is not far behind in quality in my opinion. I was a bit skeptical about him delving into the urban fantasy realm. I say this because Tad is such a damn good epic fantasy writer. He's so good that he dominates that segment of the fantasy genre. Nobody writes with the beauty and originality of Tad in an epic fantasy setting. But since he's one of my faves, I finally relented and wanted to see what all of the Bobby Dollar stuff was all about. Well, I didn't like it that's for sure. To be honest, I'm just not an urban fantasy type of guy. It never clicked with me as a genre, so I was going into this series already with a check mark in the negative column. Then I started reading and realizing that Tad should just stick with epic fantasy (which I'm glad he's doing by revisiting the world of Osten Ard). The things that bothered me about The Dirty Streets of Heaven are: The slapstick and overly-forced witty dialogue. Oh man was this laid on thick. Bobby is just too cool for school and he can't wait to tell you about it. The dialogue is just one cleverly sarcastic statement after another. I also found the world not that interesting to tell you the truth. The angels and demons were kind of cool, but again, they were cookie-cutter for the most part each imbued with their own heavy-handed clunky wittiness as well. When I finally finished the book I was relieved and my image of Tad Williams is such that me feeling this way should never be the case. I've always relished and savored each and every Tad book that I've read and I felt kind of sad when I put down this book. I felt almost like somebody suggested that he try to write an urban fantasy series because it was a genre that grew in popularity very quickly. However, my impression of Tad writing urban fantasy was validated - a square peg trying to be rammed into a round hole. I love the guy and I will be eagerly anticipating the continuation of the Osten Ard books this coming May but man, this was a train wreck. It is safe to say that I most certainly will not be finishing the Bobby Dollar series. This experiment failed on a grand scale for me.

Jason says

4.5 Stars

Dirty Streets of Heaven, the first book in the Bobby Dollar series by Tad Williams is a real surprise. Tad Williams has always been one of my very favorite authors, from The Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn series, to the Otherland Series, to all his other top notch fantasy reads. Williams is a gifted fantasy storyteller that has a huge following. In this book he departs from his genre for the first time and delves into the streets of Urban Fantasy. Thankfully, this is not another vampire or werewolf series, it is centered on an Angel named Dollar, who really stretches what most would deem angelic.

This book is a cross between the Mercury series by Robert Kroesse (but not the satire or comedy that it is), The Daughter of Smoke and Bone series by Laini Taylor (but not as deep, emotional, and painful as it is), and The Dresden Files by Jim Butcher (not as developed or as cool of a lead). It is however a breath of fresh air in that it is an urban fantasy action series that is all about its world building and setting. Williams goes into great details to shed some light on the hierarchy of things in Heaven and in Hell, and then even shows how ignorant most are. I loved all the details that Dollar went into and the conversations and questions that he asked to try and figure out his place as an angel in the whole big picture. Life is a mystery even to your guardian that is looking over your shoulder.

The pacing is fast and furious and Williams does a nice transition from the epic outdoors of his fantasy novels down into the wet and dirty streets in this book. I loved all the chase scenes, the hellbeast, the demons, and the mythology behind Heaven and Hell. I have always been very interested in the biblical horror subgenre but can easily see myself loving this type of urban fantasy too. Bobby Dollar is a likable angel, just not to the degree that Mercury is from Kroesse, hopefully more novels will change that for me.

Tad Williams is an author that should be read by all fiction readers. He has material for young adults, fantasy lovers, graphic novel readers, and now this, a really cool urban fantasy about an angel named Bobby Dollar...Highest recommendations!!!

Experiment BL626 says

CAUTION: Long Review

The Dirty Streets of Heaven was unoriginal and underwhelming. It was another urban fantasy about angels and demons, meaning I didn't expect the series to break new ground. Nonetheless, the countless flaws in the book underlined how much originality the urban *fantasy* lacked.

The World Building

+++ the twist

TDSH put a twist on the eternal war between Heaven and Hell. Violent confrontations are prohibited, instead angels and demons fight for human souls in a supernatural court of law that is held immediately after a human death, an event commonly known as Judgement. Heaven in TDSH was like a government where bureaucracy reign supreme, while Hell was like a corporation where power is the only thing that matters.

The twist was interesting but its development made the world building mundane.

+++ Heaven

The story heavily took place in a fictitious California city where Bobby live and work. The rest of the time, it took place in Heaven — the only "magical" part of the world TDSH introduced to the reader. The story developed Heaven to be this mysterious and esoteric place high on the clouds. However, I found the place listless and unimaginative, dull as a gray sky.

Simply put, the only "magical" part of the world in TDSH was hardly magical.

The Characters

+++ Bobby

TDSH was told in 1st PoV from Bobby's side, a character who was every bit a cliché of an urban fantasy male protagonist. Bobby had scruffy look, a hero complex, an underdog persona, a snarky sense of humor, and an issue with commitment in romance. He attracted danger like he attracted women, which is to say little in the beginning but way more than he can handle later on.

To be fair, Bobby was smarter than some of the other urban fantasy male protagonists I have read. But I must reiterate: Bobby was cliché as rice is white. Even his full name "Bobby Dollar" is super common.

It wasn't till late in the book when I learned Bobby had a past as an angel avenger that Bobby began to distinguish himself, if only in a small way.

+++ Monica

Monica is Bobby's fellow angel and ex-girlfriend. They were pretty much each other's booty call, but the way Bobby regarded Monica was stupendously disrespectful and sexist. He tiptoed around her because he thought she wanted to get him back. He thought she was using sex as a way to pull him back into a relationship — as if women cannot have sex simply because they enjoy sex.

Yes, Bobby was two steps short of a bastard with Monica.

For the first third of the book, Monica was Bobby's main "love interest" (to put it kindly) but she was quickly overshadowed by the Countess of Cold Hands. And then the undercurrent of the misogyny in TDSH became a rampaging river.

+++ Caz

I loved the way the story introduced the Countess of Cold Hands: a potential villainess who is a force to be

reckoned with. She was my favorite character in TDSH, but of course the book had to go and drive that one great thing about it off a cliff and into the rampaging river of misogyny.

The way the story developed Caz made her the worst character in TDSH — worse than character who betrayed Bobby at the end, worse than the character (Clarence) who was so annoying and dimwitted that I wondered why he just didn't die already. Gone was the kick-ass she-demon who wielded her sexuality as a weapon, replaced was an atrocious damsel in distress who used her sexuality as a shield. Readers learn how she was stuck in an abusive relationship one after another, that even then as a human her life was hell. Only difference between then and now is that she is literally damned to Hell which obviously changed shit.

Oh no, the book didn't stop there with Caz's fuck up of a character development.

Guess what Bobby did to her after she opened up to him? He had sex with her. Repeatedly. Girl comes crying to him, instead of consoling her, instead of offering solutions, he have sex with her repeatedly to make the pain go byebye. The fact that Bobby continued to push for an intimate relationship with Caz despite her refusal, ignoring Heaven and Hell's rules, disregarding how she's on the enemy side and how she'll be in a shittier situation — as if her afterlife wasn't already shitty enough — if her relationship with him were discovered revealed the depth of Bobby's sexism.

I stood corrected. Congratulation, Bobby. You are a complete bastard. Come and get your kick in the crotch.

I was struck aghast. The scenes with Caz and Bobby were so dreadful to read that I had to skim.

The Writing

The writing was fine, but the pacing was detracted by the enormous amount of expositions. Not that the expositions weren't interesting to read, but they didn't enhance the story. It was rather indicative of First Book Syndrome, i.e. too much world building not enough plot happening. There were long scenes of action, but they were few and far. The pacing was humdrum and left me 2-3 steps from landing into Boredom Nation.

Sadly, the biggest issue was the lack of a resolution. The villain was revealed and then the villain left and that was that. The final showdown between Heaven and Hell never happened. The suspense building up to it left me vastly disappointed. Not to mention that climax was so anti-climatic that it took me a couple pages afterward to realize that the scene I have just read was the climax.

In Conclusion

Big disappointment. The blurb misled me.

When the souls of the recently departed start disappearing, catching both Heaven and Hell by surprise, things get bad very quickly for Bobby D. *End-of-the-world* bad. *Beast of Revelations* bad.

No, it didn't. It got bad but no way did it got *that* bad.

You've never met an angel like Bobby Dollar.

No, but I have read other urban fantasies with that cliché of a male protagonist before.

And you've never read anything like *The Dirty Streets of Heaven*.

Actually, I kinda have:

Brace yourself—the afterlife is weirder than you ever believed.

Uh. It's Heaven and Hell. How is that weird?

I rate TDSH 2-stars for it was okay. I do not recommend the book unless you're specifically looking for another Urban Fantasy series with a male lead. It was not the worst Urban Fantasy series with a male lead I have read, but it was definitely not the best either. Readers sensitive to misogyny should look elsewhere.

Pedro António says

(2.5 stars rounded up to 3)

I'll start by saying this is my first novel by Tad Williams. The Dirty Streets of Heaven (TDSOH for short) is this month's book for the Sword and Laser bookclub and having heard good things about the author I decided to give it a shot.

Spoilers will be kept at a minimum as the review is aimed at those who have yet to read the book and want the opinion of someone who's new to Williams' work.

The prologue is full of action, which led me to believe it was setting the tone for the whole book. Turns out it was just a taste of what can happen in this world and not what the first third of the book is actually about. For a book this long I kept getting the feeling that not much was actually happening. I'm all for long, rich descriptions and Williams matches the likes of Tolkien and Jordan in length but with none of the depth, to the point where I'd lose interest in what was being described and just wanted the plot to keep moving. Even though a lot of the things being described actually started out interesting and/or meaningful, I find that Williams rambles on a lot.

The rambling is all the more apparent due to how little depth all the characters have. None of them get any semblance of evolution throughout the whole book, they are what they are. It gets to the point where all the characters just feel static, waiting for Bobby Dollar, the main character, to come so they can do their thing. I was definitely not moved by the characters and by the end of the book I can't say I cared about any of them, including Bobby.

There's two sex scenes in the book, and they generally don't really change the way I feel about a book, but they're so forced in TDSTOH that I hope they just weren't there. They're also REALLY long for no good reason. (and what's with the calves fixation!?)

The whole relationship with (view spoiler) feels completely out of place and was actually detrimental to the story.

The main thing that prevented me from lemming the book was the amazing humor. There are a lot of pop culture references and witty comments throughout the whole novel, which had me laughing out loud more times than I can remember. Some examples of the type of humor you can expect from the book:

"You show me what someone listens to, I'll tell you everything you want to know about his soul. (For instance, a bunch of Nickelback albums would have indicated he never had a soul in the first place.)"

"No other bosses but mine and my opponents' can have your soul jerked out of your body and sent to the deepest fiery pits to suffer for eternity. Unless you work for Walmart."

The mystery that makes up the bulk of the plot was actually quite interesting though the twist at the end was quite predictable. Speaking of the end... I must say I expected more. We're promised a lot at the start but not given nearly as much as I think we should've from the first book in a trilogy. We're given what I'd expect from a 10 book series, and it pains me a bit because the concept of the book is actually really good, just not executed nearly as well as it could have.

As a whole I can't say I haven't enjoyed TDSOH, mainly out of the interest of solving the mystery and liking the humor quite a bit, though I can see the paperthin characters putting a lot of people off, especially since this is supposed to be a trilogy.

I can only really recommend this to people who can enjoy a book solely for its humor and main plot, because there isn't much else to TDSOH.
