



Unshapely Things

Mark Del Franco

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In the alleys of the decrepit Boston neighborhood known as the Weird, fairy prostitutes are turning up dead. The crime scenes show signs of residual magic, but the Guild, which polices the fey, has more "important" crimes to investigate and dumps the case on human law enforcement.

Boston police call in Connor Grey, a druid and former hotshot Guild investigator-whose magical abilities were crippled after a run-in with a radical environmentalist elf. As Connor battles red tape and his own shortcomings, he realizes that the murders are not random, but part of an ancient magical ritual. And if Connor can't figure out the killer's M.O., the culmination of the spell might just bring about a worldwide cataclysm.

Unshapely Things Details

Date : Published January 30th 2007 by Ace

ISBN : 9780441014774

Author : Mark Del Franco

Format : Mass Market Paperback 305 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, Mystery, Fiction, Magic

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From Reader Review Unshapely Things for online ebook

Kelly H. (Maybedog) says

I loved this book. It was a little slow paced in the beginning but that was fine because del Franco set up a complex world mostly by showing rather than telling. It started as an urban fantasy police procedural and it was well done. About halfway through the real action started and I couldn't put it down.

I love the main character. He's complex and I like the idea that he is disabled for someone of his race. He isn't so by our standards but he can't live in our world as we do. He is very much crippled and it's heartbreaking as we are shown rather than told. He doesn't whine but we see how it shattered him as he struggles with it day after day. The loss of his abilities was the loss of his world.

He and the other characters were very real to me and three dimensional. I particularly felt the reality of the two boys in love struggling to survive on the streets. The best part for me is that there was no sexism at all. None. Women could be attractive or not and there wasn't any of the feeling that the writer was picturing the women as they would look in a graphic novel. The men and women were equally strong and all the characters complex. I also like the concept of bigotry both between humans and all the fey as well as between each race of the fey. I really believed this world the author built and I'm eager to read the next one.

Aimee says

Unshapely Things by Mark Del Franco

Genre: Urban Fantasy

Rating: 4 stars

Connor Grey. What can I say? I like him. He's a "crippled" Druid who's retired from the "Guild" and working as a consultant for the Boston PD. He's very limited in his abilities and it seems he has just enough to constantly get himself in over his head.

Dead fairy prostitutes are popping up all over the "Wierd", hearts missing and no one has a clue as to how they got that way. Connor sticks his foot in it...almost literally and it's a downward spiral of plot twists and action for him that ends with one kick-butt fight at the climax.

This one read like a crime-solver mystery to me. There was a LOT of information being thrown at you from the get go. It's a very complex world that requires much attention. I loved it! My brain hasn't had that good a workout since.... well, it's been a while. I'm going to need to read some mindless fluff next to give my mind time to recover.

I really appreciated Del Franco's take on the Fey. Down to the little details of how they phrase their names in this society, like "Gamelyn Dannan Sidhe" denoting what race they are. It was an interesting twist on what I've read in the past. And I LOVED the Flits. I keep picturing these little Cornish speaking pixie-like beings armed with sarcasm and a sword.

Connor was a great hero. He was humbled by his lack of abilities, but was using the "disability" to take inventory of himself as a person...of who he was in the past, and who he is now. And his growth as a

character was enjoyable to read. I can't wait to see how he progresses with his new directions in the next book.

As for the negative. The only real complaint I could have was that it had the "first-book-blah's" in at a few points. I see that in a lot of firsts in a series. There's a lot of back story and information to impart in a limited amount of words. You have to build a new world for the reader and catch them up on everything and still try to keep the plot flowing. Not an easy task. So There were a few dry spots. Ah well, it was made up for by the end! What an amazing ending! Holy kickin-butt-not-expecting-to-leave-this-room-alive action! It's amazing what someone can drag themselves through when the end of the world as you know it is looming in the distance! I can't wait to see where this goes in the next one in this series, *Unquiet Dreams*.

Richard says

So, to start off I liked the sound of this book, from the description of the story and while it sticks to what it says it felt a little lacklustre and didn't quite work for me.

Connor Grey is a ex superstar druid who is down on his luck after being attacked by a Radical Elf and losing most of his power in the bargain, leaving him for the intent and purpose of the magical community a cripple, he finds his superficial magical friends leave him high and dry now he's disabled and he scrapes by, by doing consulting work for the police and hanging out with the few friends he still has and whining about his own bad luck.

Now I think my problem is that the book tried to be too many things to too many people and I could draw comparison to a dozen or so other Urban Fantasy books that this book tries to take idea's from and make them its own but doesn't quite succeed. Cases in point:

Connor Grey, the main character, is a Druid (Iron Druid Chronicles anyone?)

Connor Grey is also a consultant for the normal Metropolitan police, but doesn't get along with his own kind or their authorities, and has a friend whose a Tiny Fairy (Dresden Files Anyone?)

Ok this third ones a long shot but.... The Main character is whiney as hell about his own situation every dozen pages or so (Cal Leandros anyone?)

Now to be fair on Connor while he's not exactly a druid as the Iron druids Atticus is, to be honest for a druid Connor's not much of one at all, he doesn't seem to follow any rituals or religion and he was in an accident that leaves him with close to no special druidic powers to flex to prove his druidicness.

The book feels a little stale but as a first book it doesn't hold up too badly, I was crying out for a bit more explanation about how all these supernatural people arrived, what the specific kind of abilities creatures might have, and a bit more interaction with the world at large but my wish wasn't answered here.

The murder mystery storyline tends to hold up but I think the book was aiming for a Noir type feel and falls down a bit there. I also felt that most of the actual sleuthing feels done by other characters that Connor just reads about on his PC.

So while I do sound negative about this book and reading what I've written it sounds bad even to me, I

wouldn't take my personal opinions as a definitive slate against it. In reality I've just read a lot better Urban Fantasies, and most of my current reading is from series' that have developed a lot over time and probably started out similar to this one hence the 3 stars, because that's what this book is really, an interesting but not inspiring start that we can hope improves over the series, I've seen there's more books out and ill keep them on my to read list and hope I'm right about them getting stronger as we go on.

Kathy Davie says

First in the Connor Grey urban fantasy series revolving around a powerless Druid in Boston.

My Take

It's okay. Del Franco has an interesting concept with a different perspective on the fae. Unfortunately, it's just a little too same-same. I do like the twist del Franco has given it with Connor beginning to see how arrogant and unfeeling he was when he did have all his powers. It could be interesting to read if only to watch him become aware and humble. Certainly a lesson we could all absorb in some fashion!

Del Franco initiates this series very nicely, setting the scene, establishing the characters, and introducing the issues swirling around the supernaturals and the humans. He provides all this seamlessly as part of the story--such a treat to *not* be treated to the info dump!

It's a touch of real with Connor struggling to survive on his disability check. An interesting change from the usual financial level of storybook supes with their tremendous wealth. Nor does one expect to encounter drunken fairies who work in this world as prostitutes.

Connor does whine on about his loss of power, but I do like that he's not letting it get him down. He's still out there trying.

I did like the quote at the end: "Never question life. Question its point all you want, but not life itself".

The Story

There's a serial killer out there murdering fairies. Not leaving anything behind by which the Boston PD or the Guild can track him (or her). It's typical investigative work. Digging, following clues that don't add up, which lead to clues that do. But it's all so nebulous and impossible.

Until suddenly the clues do start to make a horrible kind of sense. Some true, most not. The end result, however, if Connor and Murdock can't stop the murderer, could well end the world.

The Characters

Connor Grey is technically a Druid, just a powerless one. He's on a disability pension after a fiasco with an elf, **Bergen Vize**, and a nuclear reactor. He currently supplements his income by putting his knowledge of the supernatural in aid of the Boston PD. He's definitely come down in the world, living in his loft apartment in the Weird.

Detective Lieutenant Leo Murdock of the Boston PD hires Connor as a consultant on any cases involving fey that the Guild doesn't want to handle---most of 'em. **Commissioner Scott Murdock** is Leo's father. He doesn't like Connor, but does seem to have an appreciation. The Murdock family gets together every Sunday for dinner along with a slew of guests. **Captain Emilio Ruiz** is Murdock's boss and generally cool with

whatever Murdock's up to.

Stinkwort, a.k.a., Joe, is a flit who is attached to Connor. **Belgor** is an elf who runs a magic shop in the Weird. It's best to avoid most of his wares---they're fakes, but he does tend to hear things. **Tansy** is, was, Gamelyn's flit.

Shay and Robin are a human couple working the streets in the Weird.

Briallen verch Gwyll ab Gwyll is "one of the most powerful beings" Connor knows and she's a friend, a Druid, leader for the Druidic College, and an advisor to world leaders. She's one of the very few who have stood by Connor. **Gillen Yor** is Connor's healer at Avalon Memorial. He and Briallen have been trying to get Connor to do his therapy.

The **Guild** is a policing agency and diplomatic corps for the fey in all the major cities. The **Weird** is a downtrodden neighborhood by an abandoned pier that is home to a lot of supernaturals. It's where humans go slumming.

Keeva macNeve is a fairy woman and second only to **Lorcan macDuin**, head of the Community Liaison Office. Connor describes her as carnivorous; macDuin hates her. **Meryl Dian** works at the Guild maintaining the archives. Seems she's had a few negative encounters with Connor. **Dealie** is a fairy with a mentally challenged son, **Corcan**, who is half-fairy, half-elf. **Gerda Alfheim** lives in Germany with her half-fairy, half-elfin son **Gethin**.

Maeve is High Queen of the Seelie Court.

The Cover

The cover is certainly prickly with that strong bolt of lightning in the background as we catch Connor squatting on a rooftop overlooking Boston. In a black leather jacket and jeans, he's definitely got his eye on something.

I really don't know where the title comes from.

Ami says

Somebody is killing Male Fairy prostitutes, removes their hearts, and leaves a stone behind. Since the crime scenes show residual magic, Boston P.D. decides to call Connor Grey, a former Guild investigator, who is now crippled of his abilities after a run-in with a radical elf. With a help from few friends, including a spunky flit named Joe, a human detective Murdock, and a smart-mouth researcher Meryl, Connor tries to find who is responsible behind all the murders.

I always think that UF genre is a women's realm. There are so many female heroines in this genre. Finding a male hero is very rare -- and I think Harry Dresden (by Jim Butcher) is still the King. BUT, I found Connor Grey as a very good alternative.

To be honest, this book has that bumpy issue that I commonly find whenever I read an UF book. It might have something to do with my adapting to the *new* world as well as getting familiar with the terms and characters. I'm not familiar with UF books that features the likes of fey, fairies, druids, elves, and such (I'm

more into shapeshifters and vampires ^_^), so there are A LOT of information that I need to digest -- and not all of them are easy for me. It takes few days for me to finally able to finish

THAT SAID, I cannot stop reading -- which is a good sign of a promising book. I find Connor to be a likeable protagonist, and I find his struggle to be useful after losing his abilities as endearing. The secondary characters are also enjoyable, especially Joe and Meryl (hopefully they will still be around in the next books).

I'm definitely on board with the series!

Jensownzoo says

Although a standard explanation about why there are suddenly fairies and the like in the "normal" world, the protagonist is a new take on the topic. The protagonist is a disabled druid (with disability payments from the organization that oversees the paranormals) with little of his paranormal abilities intact. Like many urban fantasy protagonists, he is associated with the local police force (a consultant) and the novel reads a lot like a police procedural or mystery story...just with fairies, elves, trolls, and druids. Oh, and ancient Celtic gods (or actually the enemies of the ancient Celtic gods).

I really enjoyed this book. I will be reading the rest of the series as long as the quality holds. Del Franco has introduced an interesting character and world and I am looking forward to seeing what else he does with it.

Kristin says

I'd give this book a little more than four stars. The plot was interesting, the main character and his friends likeable and though you got hints throughout the book about who might be responsible for the murders of young fairy prostitutes in an area of Boston called the Weird, the conclusion did have surprises.

The story follows a druid named Connor Grey who fairly recently lost almost all of his powers after an attack by an extreme environmental activist elf. After his accident, Connor is no longer able to work for the Guild, an organization which polices the fey, and survives on disability checks he receives from them and by occasionally helping out a human detective named Murdock. The book starts with Connor already helping Murdock on the case of the fairy murders and continues with his investigation into the victims and the strange manner of the killings. Though this is a case being worked by humans, the Guild only takes cases they deem important, the Guild does eventually become involved and when Connor is taken off the case, he continues to pursue the killer on his own.

One thing I really liked is that none of the characters are super annoying in this book, at least not to me. We're introduced to a number of different people who were in Connor's life before his powers were taken away, many of whom are trying to help restore them and who help him with this particular case. Outside of the Guild there's a flit named Stinkwort, who would prefer to be called Joe, no mystery there as to why, who helps Connor track down a witness to one of the crimes; Briallen, an old, very strong druid who actually trained Connor when he came into his powers at the age of 12 (I'll admit, I did occasionally want to smack her upside her all-knowing head, but still, I wouldn't call her annoying); Keeva, a fairy working at the Guild and who isn't particularly fond of Connor but stops by occasionally to reset the wards around his apartment

since he can no longer handle that simple task; Lorcan macDuin, the Guild's Community Liason Officer who doesn't like Connor at all; and Meryl, a strong druid who works at the Guild. Of course there are other minor characters throughout the book, but these are the major players.

Also, though not in the story but never far from his mind, is Bergin Vize, the elf who accidentally caused Connor's powers to seemingly become locked away in his own brain.

I'm not usually into the whole fae thing as they have so much mythology attached to them if you're not familiar with the different fae beings and their powers they can be sort of hard to follow, but del Franco does a good job explaining why fae and humans are together, due to something called the Convergence, the different fae involved and their respective powers and lets us see why there is prejudice from the sides of both humans and fae and even among the fae themselves.

Although the lack of powers makes Connor much more vulnerable than before, as he was an extremely powerful player at the Guild, he still has some powers as well as all of the skills he learned during his training as a druid and at the Guild. I like that del Franco shows us how Connor has changed since his fall from grace, having once looked down on all human and fae who were beneath him or who couldn't help his rise on the Guild ladder, he realizes that not only was he wrong, but that he is now on their level.

(view spoiler)

The end definitely sets up what the next book is going to be about (the fourth in the series was released earlier this year) and I can't wait to pick it up, especially if it's as good as the first book!

Shannon says

A great first book and a series I'll definitely continue with!

Connor Grey is a druid but he's lost his abilities. He's collecting a disability check from his old job but he still wants to help where he can. Connor has a good friend on the Boston police force named Murdock that he helps out from time to time and one night Murdock calls him to the scene of a murder. At the scene is a dead fairy prostitute, held down with ward stones and missing a vital organ. Unfortunately what Connor agrees to help his friend with is way bigger than he could have ever thought and it could come down to having to save the world.

I think for some people this book might move a little slower than they'd like. I honestly didn't have a problem with it even though normally I think I would. For some reason the pacing just really worked for this novel. Connor is made to feel real; he eats, sleeps, cleans, exercises, and hangs out with friends. All the mundane things that normally get glossed over in fantasy and paranormal books are interwoven throughout the book. That's not to say that Connor doesn't try hard to solve the mystery, but this story takes place over a month's time and it wouldn't make sense for him to be running from danger at every turn. He lives and breathes and uses the bathroom like everyone else. I honestly think this only made him more endearing to me.

I also really like the other characters in the book - Joe, the oreo eating flit, is especially hilarious. I also enjoyed Meryl, a smart-mouthed researcher with orange hair, and I hope she shows up in the next book. I

love the whole buddy cop friendship that Connor has with Murdock too.

This really was a great book and I enjoyed it a lot. The mystery plays out in a way that you're kept guessing until the very end and I liked the magic and lore that was throughout the book. I especially loved the characters though and I can't wait to read more about them!

Nicole says

This was quite enjoyable. The main character, Connor Grey, is very likeable--although he keeps telling us what a jerk he used to be before his humbling injury. I think this book would appeal to people who used to like Harry Dresden but have come to feel he has acquired too much power and/or gotten too full of himself. Connor has serious limitations on his magical druid powers (at least at this point) and is trying to learn to deal with that. He can be sarcastic, but he's not as much of a smart-alec as Harry. And Connor has three female colleagues who all have much stronger powers than he does and whom he must ask for help. I also liked the plotting; the mystery was good and kept me guessing. It wasn't as lurid as the blurb might lead you to believe, and there was absolutely no explicit sex. Del Franco incorporates Celtic myth and legend into the story with some interesting, fresh twists. I also enjoyed the Boston setting.

I look forward to reading the next book in the series.

Carly says

****edited 12/04/13**

~3.5.

Connor Grey was once an incredibly powerful druid, but a work incident left him magically crippled, unable to perform the spells that gave him such high status in the fey world. Now living in Boston and working as a police consultant, Connor is trying to form a new life while fighting his bitterness against the fey guild and his once-inferiors. When a serial killer begins targeting fairy prostitutes, Connor is on the case--and soon embroiled in the fey politics he tried so hard to avoid.

...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.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

‘Unshapely Things’, the first novel in the six-book Connor Grey series, was a fun read! I had never heard of the series until I saw it recommended at my local library. A genre bender, it’s a murder mystery series set in a fantasy alternative universe with humans, fairies, elves and dwarves. There also are the cutest little things called flits - who rarely are larger than a foot tall. But they carry swords, and they are not to be messed with.

A thousand years ago an unexpected convergence of universes occurred which destroyed the world of the fey. Reluctantly, they live among humans now in neighborhoods in big cities. Each type of fey has a

different set of magical abilities. The fey are monitored by The Ward Guild which is governed by Queen Maeve, High Queen at Tara in Ireland. Anywhere fey are concentrated there is a guildhouse. A diplomatic corp as well as a police force work out of each local guildhouse.

Connor Grey is an ex-guildhouse police detective, once a powerful young druid with a high profile in society and the media. Now he collects disability at age forty and lives in poverty in a cheap apartment. He lost a struggle with an environmentalist elf at a nuclear reactor. The elf had a power ring which somehow bottled up most of Grey's druid abilities. To supplement his disability checks, he works as an amateur detective. He still partners often with human Detective Lieutenant Leo Murdock of the Boston Police Department. Since Grey's mysterious affliction has crippled his magical powers, he needs work to supplement his monthly disability check.

Most of Grey's previous friends dropped him after the power ring incident, but a flit, Stinkwort, continues to help him. Sometimes. If Grey has oreo cookies in his kitchen. Grey doesn't eat oreos, but he makes certain to stock them anyway. Flits for some unknown reason will attach to someone or a family, regardless of cookies, but Grey kinda likes the flit. Grey also has a powerful druid friend, Briallen verch Gwyll ab Gwyll, who once was his teacher. She is beautiful, and very old, so her druid powers, based on her personal essence, are enormous.

The druids often find themselves playing the peacemakers between the elves and the fairies, who hate each other. Elves and fairies had had a war long ago, and they are not exactly friends today. None of the races are entirely respectful of humans, and the humans are fearful of the fey, but all of the races know they must work together. Each of the fey groups have a royal aristocracy of their own, along with a lower class of regular fey, but there are poor young fey who have fallen into bad company or who have made bad choices, some of whom end up reluctantly as prostitutes with human clients. Others prostitute themselves for an adventure and fun, slumming.

Grey is called by Murdock to an alley by the docks in the Weird, the fey Boston neighborhood. Another dead fairy has been found murdered and mutilated. The strong scent of alcohol is coming from the body. "Damn fairies never learn. They so much as look at a bottle, and they're drunk, but they still keep drinking the stuff."

But these murders are awful. This is the third fairy whose body has been ripped open and the heart cut out, the wings held down by stones, and a stone placed inside the chest cavity. Grey can sense an essence charge, but not an extra-magical charge on the stones; however, he is beginning to feel there is a ritual occurring behind these murders. And strangely, he can sense a flit had been there. He can find nothing in his old leather-bound books of spells, so he hopes to contact Briallen.

Stinkwort stops by and tells him the entire community is upset, but he knows nothing about a flit having been there. They are all somewhat telepathic and connected.

As Grey continues to investigate the murder, all kinds of things begin to happen. The Guild steps in and wants him to stop -why?, and they send his druid ex-detective partner Keeva to warn him off. Then, the director of the local Guild, the fairy macDuiin personally gets Grey fired from the Boston police force. Meryl, an acquaintance who works in the Guild archives becomes suddenly reluctant to help him openly after having told him certain stones were stolen from the archives and two have been mysteriously returned before she apparently was told to shut up. Briallen tells him there are rituals involving hearts, but they are so terrible these spells could destroy them all. And everyone wants to silence the media from announcing the murders because of the upcoming Midsummer's Eve festival.

On top of all Grey's mounting troubles, another dead fairy is found, again ritually mutilated. Worse, the Boston Police and the Guild think Grey is the murderer! Oh oh. Sadly, a cute flit also has been killed. Stinkwort is inconsolable, and before Grey can control him, he has vowed revenge, pulling his sword and well, flitting off.

Things couldn't get more awful, could they? Yes, they do...

The story is a little slow in the beginning, but the world-building is interesting, for the first few chapters. As the plot unfolds, the pace of the mystery picks up until at the last chapter the crisis is literally one which might change the world! (view spoiler)

This is a fun beach read.

Kati says

I keep seeing people comparing this book to Jim Butcher's Harry Dresden novels. Well, yeah, it's similar - but only as far as the basic story wherein a crippled druid helps the local police solve magic-related murders. Other than that, it's like comparing apples to pears - both are fruit but they taste way different. I like Del Franco's characters/plot better than Butcher's. Don't know why. Connor Grey is kinda more likeable than Harry Dresden. And I love the supporting characters: the whole Murdock family, Briallen, Stinkwort but especially Meryl (she kind of reminds me of NCIS' Abby Sciuto).

The only reason why I didn't give it five stars was that the whole plot could have moved forward a bit faster.

Chris says

I originally read this in February 2008. Upon rereading, I definitely appreciated some of the more "old school" urban fantasy elements (harking back to Charles de Lint, Emma Bull, Terri Windling, Tanya Huff, etc), such as the involvement of the Fae and the city/urban environment seeming to almost be a character itself. In this tale of druid who's lost his powers and helps out the Boston Police Department as best he can, the urban fantasy elements pair interestingly with a first-person noir detective narrative (as with the Dresden Files).

On with my reread of the next two books, which is as far as I made it before running out of steam with the genre last time.

Brooke says

What's it about?

In *The Weird*, a neighborhood in Boston, fairy prostitutes are turning up dead. Their hearts have all been taken and left in their place - magical stones. There are two groups that cover crimes in Boston & *The Weird*: The Guild, who are the fey run law enforcement, and then the human law enforcement. The Guild, uninterested in these murders leaves the solving up to the humans. Working with the humans is Connor

Grey, a druid who was left crippled when he lost almost all of his powers in an accident with a radical terrorist elf. He was taken off The Guild, and put on disability. Connors got a lot to deal with while trying to solve this case: Not being respected by the fey community, not being liked by the humans, and not having his full magical abilities to put to use. By trading information with a few of his close allies Connor figures out that these aren't random murders, that the dead prostitutes are a part of a ancient ritual that will open a portal and destroy the world.

My thoughts?

First of all this book was released in 2007, and it has taken me this long to catch up on it! I love getting a taste of a guys perspective in Urban Fantasy, a genre where women reign supreme. Mark Del Franco has something great going on in The Weird, and that's hero Connor Grey. You gotta love him. He's on the outs without his powers, and many times hearing how he acted previously when he had his powers make it nice to see him knocked down a peg. He's surrounded by a great cast of characters. All three ladies he is FRIENDS with are intriguing and strong. Maybe a possible love interest in one? I vote for Meryl. Also, his friend Stinkwort, aka Joe, a Flit, is one of the best characters. What is it with small characters and their fantastic attitudes. Absolutely loved him Joe! His human partner and friend Murdock is straight forward, and is content to put Connor in his place whenever necessary.

The case, hearing the back story on the Fae races, and about Connor's past were all interesting. Although, sometimes the descriptiveness got to be a bit much. I'm on the side where there is such a thing as TOO much detail, and it seemed like since this was the first book in a series Mark wanted to set up The Weird so that he didn't have to do it in future books. At least I hope that's what he did. I'd compare the characterization in this series to the Dresden Files, and the world building to Kim Harrison's Hollows. Both very good series, so Connor Grey is in good company, but maybe not on the same level yet.

Overall this was an enjoyable read for when I found myself in a reading slump. Now I'm back on the reading train and chugging right along!

There are the books so far in the series in order:

Unshapely Things (Connor Grey, Book 1)

Unquiet Dreams (Connor Grey, Book 2)

Unfallen Dead (Connor Grey, Book 3)

Unperfect Souls (Connor Grey, Book 4) will be released January 26, 2010

Ithlilian says

I like that goodreads has a button that says "I'm finished" because I am definitely finished with this book. I'm not surprised that I didn't like Unshapely Things since I tend to dislike male led urban fantasy books, but I didn't dislike it for the reasons I normally do. Usually the main character annoys me to no end in male led urban fantasy, and that was not the case here. Connor Grey isn't too much of a swaggering idiot, but he isn't very deep or complex either. His sidekick detective is also not immediately appealing as a character. The problem is, nothing drew me into Unshapely Things. Connor's backstory isn't immediately given, so there was no draw there. The characters aren't impressive, so that didn't help. The world presented is similar to many other urban fantasy novels I've read, no points gained there. The mystery isn't jaw dropping or though provoking. In short, there is no reason to read this. On top of that, everything is really bogged down by an overdose of explanation. Many urban fantasies can fall into the over explanation trap, and that is the case

here. I get that the authors want to explain the world to us, but let it unfold from the characters and the surroundings, don't have every being the character runs into explain what they are and where they came from, especially when all they are is an elf. Seriously, I find the urban fantasy genre to be hit or miss for me. A book has to have realistic dynamic characters or a page turning mystery to be successful, and this has neither. I don't care how much action there may be in the last 100 pages or who is killing prostitutes, because the author didn't make me care. The dialogue is simplistic and boring, the mystery is lackluster, the characters are made of cardboard, and it's just not worth wasting time on for me. I'm sure others may like it, as many others enjoy many urban fantasy books out there, but I need substance, not filler, and *Unshapely Things* is a whole lot of nothing to me.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

For a full review, check the Bitten by Books website: <http://www.bittenbybooks.com/>

Mike (the Paladin) says

Originally reviewed 2014. Found a typo.

I'm going to say about this book what I've said about others...I wanted to like this book. I mean I really wanted to like this book. I'm always looking for good Urban Fantasy reads and this one looked promising. There's a nice number of books in the series and people have been rating them highly.

Oh well. I almost went two stars here. In many ways the book is more mediocre than actually poor. The thing is I finally laid it aside as not worth my time to finish. When I do that I go to 1 star.

By the way, this wasn't the first time I laid the book aside. I kept laying it aside and reading other things. Then I'd go back to it hoping...really hoping I'd get interested. I just never did.

There are a few likable characters here. One is a sad young witness who's life is difficult anyway, another is a fairy who's a little edgy and dangerous, then there's our protagonist. He's okay...but he never really drew me in.

You've met this guy, or at least versions of him before. He used to be much more powerful...but "something" happened and now his power is a shadow of what it was. He's hanging on at the edges of things doing what he can.

The world "we" live in is now "this one" after the *Convergence*. See the world of Faerie has somehow *converged* with the world of humans.

They (that is the people of that world which in the book is the same as this world except...oh well, you get the idea.) still debate about which is the "real world" it sort of depends on where you come from...

Anyway the worlds have Converged so now all kinds of people, creatures and things walk, creep, run, flit,

jump and crawl among "us humans". The old prejudices and bigotries are still around of course...but now we have what Huck Finn would call "a whole raft" of new ones. Fairies look down on humans and other fairies who associate with humans, humans seem to hate everybody (well the bigoted ones) and then of course there's the long simmering war between fairies and Elves...

Sounds like the proverbial page turning thrill ride doesn't it.

It's so slow that I occasionally laid it aside to actually try watching paint dry. Snail races at times have more action. This is not a thriller...sorry.

I was disappointed in it. I wanted to like it. I always like to find another good UF series.

Sadly, this ain't it. Can't recommend it, sorry.

Lorelle says

Every time I spy a book with a lower rating, I'm hopeful I've just come upon a little unexplored gem...this is not to be the case. There's lots of info dumps, it's an uninteresting world (I'll endure the hard yards for a really cool world), and Connor Grey is dull. There was not one secondary character that I was clinging onto for dear life like I normally do. I skimmed the last 50 pages, but at least I almost made it, so a 3. I don't think I'll rush to go for number 2 unless I have a load of encouragement.

Tammy says

I really liked this book. Connor Grey is kind of an asshole, but he's aware he's been an asshole and he's actively changing. He had privilege in his world, the kind of privilege that was innate--it came with his druidic power. Now that he's lost that power he's getting a great look at how the rest of the world lives, and at the person he used to be. Then there's The Weird, which is a bad Boston neighborhood inhabited by fairies, dwarves, elves, and everyone else who's not quite welcome in society. It's perfectly plausible that a neighborhood like this would spring up if all of a sudden The Convergence happened and we were faced with these new magical races.

I like the plot, the murders, the people Connor knows. I especially liked Shay, the androgynous human, who ends up being a vehicle for Connor to understand himself and the murderer, and maybe a little bit about the world around him. I wish Shay would stick around, and maybe he'll show up in some future book. Or maybe he'll get out of The Weird and make a great life for himself. Joe the flit is a particular favorite of mine. He is never exactly what I think he is, and what I think that means is he never falls into a stereotype but is a very well-rounded character.

Reading this book along with the other urban fantasy I've been reading--especially The Dresden Files--showed just how different this book was. You know, because you're told, that Connor has had relationships with certain women, you know he's sexually attracted to women he meets, but it never feels oppressive or icky. Maybe some of that is because Del Franco himself is gay, or maybe it's just because he's a good writer with a healthy respect for everyone.

I heartily recommend this to you all. You'll get a healthy dose of elves, fairies, and magic, but you'll also get a man looking for his place in the world by recognizing his own privilege and being conscious of and caring about the differences of others.

Naiya says

Connor Gray had been on the fast track in the Druidic Ward Guild (think magic Interpol)—right up until he chased down an neo-environmentalist elf terrorist in a nuclear reactor. That day, Connor lost his magic, condo, and career. What he gained was a dark shadow in his brain on an MRI and a certain lack of job prospects.

Now he serves as a washed out consultant for the Boston PD, having gone from running high-profile investigations to an hourly, minimum rate. But what Connor still has is his instinct for the weird. And there is nothing normal about the murders in the back alley's of Boston or the meaningless ritual markings the serial killer is leaving behind. But the Guild has more 'important' cases and the investigation falls to Connor.

Written from a first person POV, *Unshapely Things* pairs its sardonic narrator with some great world building that will tickle the fancy of lovers of alternative history and magic speculative. See, it's a modern world out there. It's a world in which Fey Summits are being held in Ireland, hosting talks between the Seelie Court and the Teutonic Consortium to resolve the autonomy of elfin and dwarvish colonies in Eastern Germany. It's a world in which elves are still trying to live down their support of the Third Reich and mass produced magic wards are sold in the local grocery stores.

A word of warning though: do not go into this book looking for romance. In overall feel, *Dresden Files* (Butcher) meets the *Hollows* series (Harrison) and then get dunked into the real detective genres a la Agatha Christie. Me, I loved it.

But why only three and a half stars? One star got knocked off by Connor's almost too-convenient cadre of friends who made his life much, much easier. Yes, the guy is dirt poor, but when it comes to having established allies, it's almost cheating when your friend and mentor is Most-Powerful-Witch-In-The-Western-World. Another half a star fell off the perch for a more ambiguous sense that I wasn't pulled along by the story as strongly as I wanted to be. I didn't even realize I hadn't gotten book #2 until I started typing up this review; that's been corrected now, of course.

Unshapely Things is an intriguing debut novel with a solid plot and a solid series premise (and promise).

You can read the full review here.
