



## A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller

By John Connolly

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**A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller** By John Connolly

**“Connolly again displays his mastery at combining the hard-boiled with the supernatural.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred and boxed review)**

Dangerous and driven private investigator Charlie Parker returns in the latest gripping thriller of internationally bestselling author John Connolly’s series, in which ungodly fears haunt a strange and isolated community.

Jerome Burnel was once a hero. He intervened to prevent multiple killings, and in doing so destroyed himself. His life was torn apart. He was imprisoned, brutalized.

But in his final days, with the hunters circling, he tells his story to private detective Charlie Parker. He speaks of the girl who was marked for death, but was saved; of the ones who tormented him, and an entity that hides in a ruined stockade.

Parker is not like other men. He died, and was reborn. He is ready to wage war.

Now he will descend upon a strange, isolated community called the Cut, and face down a force of men who rule by terror, intimidation, and murder.

All in the name of the being they serve. All in the name of the Dead King.

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## **A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller** By John Connolly Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Connolly again displays his mastery at combining the hard-boiled with the supernatural." (*Publishers Weekly* (starred and boxed review))

"There are a few authors whose novels are my own personal equivalent to comfort food. Stephen King is one; John Connolly is another." (*Michael Patrick Hicks Reviews*)

"The beauty of John Connolly's Charlie Parker novels is how the characters continue to evolve." (*The Jacksonville Times*)

"John Connolly is one of the best writers working today . . . *A Time of Torment* may be his best work to date. And that is no small feat." (*Umney's Alley*)

"The Charlie Parker series is my favorite series of all time. In any genre. Perhaps because it doesn't fit neatly into any one genre. It's gritty crime novels with supernatural elements and a mystery that spans across the entire series." (*Cynthia's On Pens and Needles*)

"John Connolly takes the reader kicking and screaming to places they probably didn't know existed . . . . If you love thriller mysteries with an air of the mystical, then you need to read *A Time of Torment!*" (*Literarily Illumined*)

"John Connolly writes with his always superb, poetic prose, and its beauty is in wonderful contrast to the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle (one bad guy has dentures made of razor blades), horrors he describes." (*Criminal Element*)

"It doesn't get any better than this. Seriously . . . . [*A Time of Torment*] shines and depresses, overjoys and frightens, from page to page, paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence . . . . you will want to go back to the beginning and read every word of this series, in sequential order, upon completion of this latest installment." (*Bookreporter.com*)

"This eerie thriller has made a forever-fan of me . . . . You may write, and I may write, but nobody else will ever, ever be able to write like Connolly. Our story is part of the Charlie Parker series, but I have not read any of the others and found I was able to hop into this story as a single read with no difficulty." (*Seattle Book Mama*)

"Suspense fans won't want to miss Connolly's *A Time of Torment*. It's gripping and gritty all the way through." (*Night Owl Reviews*)

### About the Author

John Connolly is the author of the Charlie Parker series of mystery novels, the supernatural collection *Nocturnes*, the Samuel Johnson Trilogy for younger readers, and (with Jennifer Ridyard) the Chronicles of the Invaders series. He lives in Dublin, Ireland. For more information, see his website at [JohnConnollyBooks.com](http://JohnConnollyBooks.com), or follow him on Twitter @JConnollyBooks.

## Chapter

### I

They're circling now, then falling, descending in a slow gyre, dropping so gently that their approach can barely be discerned. They are hawks in the form of men, and the one who leads them is a being doubly transformed: lost and found, human and bird; youngest of them, yet strangely old. He has endured, and in this endurance he has been forged anew. He has seen a world beyond this one. He has glimpsed the face of a new god.

He is at peace with himself, and so he will wage war.

Faster they come, the spiral narrowing, the three almost as one, their coats mantling in the chill fall air; and not a whisper of their approach, not a passing shadow nor a sparrow startled, only the stillness of a world waiting to be shattered, and the perfect balance of a life, perhaps, to be saved and a life, perhaps, to be ended.

The clouds part, pierced by a shaft of light that catches them in flight, as though they have attracted, however briefly, the attention of a deity long slumbering but now awake, roused by martial clamor and the raising of armies in the name of the Captain, the One Who Waits Behind the Glass, the God of Wasps.

And the old deity will set His child against them, and the hawks will follow.

IT WAS A LONG time since the Gray Man had considered the possibility of being caught, for the Gray Man did not truly exist. He had no physical form. He dwelt alongside another, sharing the same skin, and only at the final breath might there have been a glimpse of the essence of his true nature, although even then he preferred to remain unseen, concealed by darkness. He was not above causing pain, although this was as much a matter of whim as any particular tastes that he might have possessed. A death was only the beginning, which was why he had survived undetected for so long. He could make a kill last for years. Physical pain was finite, for ultimately the body would surrender the soul, but emotional agony was capable of infinite variations, and the subtlest of modifications might release from the wound a new torrent of distress.

In the persona that he presented to the world, the Gray Man was a reverse chameleon. His name was Roger Ormsby, and he was small, colorful, and greatly liked. He was in his early sixties, with an impish humor. His hair and beard were white, but neatly trimmed. He proudly carried before him his little potbelly, like a happily expectant mother demonstrating the pleasure she takes in her burden. He favored red suspenders and vests of unusual design. He wore tweed in winter and linen in summer, preferring creams and tans but offsetting them with tastefully bright ties and handkerchiefs. He could play the piano, and waltz and two-step with ease, but inside Ormsby was a foul thing animating him as a puppeteer works a marionette, and only an expert might have detected the sterility of his renditions of beloved classics as his fingers moved across the keys, or the joyless precision of every move he made on a dance floor.

Ormsby did not discuss politics or religion. He took only frivolous subjects seriously, and as a consequence was much valued as a dinner guest. He was a happy widower, faithful to the memory of his departed wife to the extent that he would do no more than flirt with the less lonely widows of Champaign, Illinois, but not so in love with the ghost of his departed spouse as to allow the loss of her to cloud his spirit or the spirits of

others. He was always in demand as a companion for theater, movies, and the occasional light opera, and the absence of a sexual component to his relationships meant that he moved in and out of social situations with ease. He was a Friend of the Library, a member of the Audubon Society, a regular fixture at lectures on local history, and a generous—but not overgenerous—donor to good causes. True, there were some who disliked him, for no man can be loved by all, but in general such naysayers were regarded by the majority as willfully ornery, unable to accept that someone might simply be a force for contentment in the world.

And so Roger Ormsby bobbed through life in his vibrant plumage, advertising his presence, hiding nothing, but when he closed his front door behind him the artificial light in his eyes was suffocated, and the face of the Gray Man was pendent like a dead moon in the blackness of his pupils.

This is what Roger Ormsby did—or, if you wish, what the Gray Man did, for they were two aspects of the same entity, like a coat and its lining. He typically targeted his victims carefully, spending months in preparation. He had been known to engage in crimes of opportunity, but they were riskier now than they once were, because cameras were everywhere. In addition, it was difficult to gauge just what one might be appropriating in such a situation, for Ormsby required a very particular set of social circumstances from his victims. They couldn't be loners, isolated from their families and friends. He did not desire discards. The more beloved they were, the better. He wanted offspring who were cherished. He wanted teenagers from happy homes. He wanted good mothers of children beyond the age of infancy. He wanted emotional engagement.

He wanted many lives that he could slowly and painstakingly destroy over a period of years, even decades.

Ormsby made people disappear, then watched as those who loved them were left to wonder at their fate. He understood the half-life of hope: it is not despair that destroys us, but its opposite. Hope is the winding, despair the unwinding. Despair brings with it the possibility of an ending. Taken to the extreme, its logical conclusion is death. But hope sustains. It can be exploited.

Ormsby's actions had caused some to take their own lives, but he considered this a failure, both on his own part and theirs. The ones he killed were merely the first victims, and also the least interesting to him. He liked to watch those who remained as they tried to cope with what had been visited upon them. He knew that they would wake each morning and briefly forget what they had lost: a mother, a son, a daughter. (Ormsby avoided taking adult men. He was stronger than he looked, but not so much that he believed he could tackle a grown man, especially not as he grew older.) Then, seconds after waking, they would remember again, and this was where the pleasure lay for Ormsby.

He was not above goading, reminding, but that was a dangerous business. He had sent items to relatives in the mail—a necklace, a watch, a child's shoe—to enjoy the commotion that followed. He had forced children that he had taken to write letters to their mothers and fathers, informing them that they were in good health and being looked after. (Adults, too, might be persuaded to write similar missives, but only under threat of physical harm.) He might wait years before sending such notes, depending on the age of the child and the reaction of the parents. He dropped the letters in mailboxes far from home, often when he was on vacation, and always ensured that he was not overlooked by cameras.

The Internet made it easier for him to monitor the progress of his real victims, but Ormsby was wary of leaving an electronic trail. He concealed his searches amid random examinations of newspapers and magazines, often in public libraries or the kind of cybercafes frequented by immigrants. He did not attend public gatherings for the disappeared, or church services at which the congregation prayed for their safe return, because he believed the authorities monitored such events. It was usually enough for Ormsby to know

that the suffering he had inflicted continued unabated. If nothing else, the Gray Man had a vivid imagination. This was how Ormsby could survive for so long without killing: as the years went by, so too his store of victims increased. He could dip in and out of destroyed lives. He was an emotional vampire.

Now, as he drove home, he thought that this metaphor had a pleasing precision under the circumstances. He recalled a scene from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in which the Count returns to his castle and throws to his three vampire brides an infant contained in a sack. At that moment, the trunk of Ormsby's car also contained a child in a sack. Her name was Charlotte Littleton. She was nine years old, and represented one of his rare crimes of opportunity: a child playing with a ball as the afternoon sunlight died, an open gate, the ball drifting into an empty street of big houses set back from the road . . .

Good fortune: God—if He existed—finding His attention briefly distracted.

And inside, the Gray Man danced.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Archie Moriarty:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite book and reading a book. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled *A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller*. Try to the actual book *A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller* as your buddy. It means that it can being your friend when you sense alone and beside those of course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you. The book makes you more confidence because you can know every thing by the book. So , we need to make new experience and knowledge with this book.

#### **Alfredo Dunn:**

Do you one among people who can't read gratifying if the sentence chained inside straightway, hold on guys this kind of aren't like that. This *A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller* book is readable by you who hate the straight word style. You will find the facts here are arrange for enjoyable reading through experience without leaving even decrease the knowledge that want to deliver to you. The writer regarding *A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller* content conveys thinking easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different by means of it. So , do you nonetheless thinking *A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller* is not loveable to be your top checklist reading book?

#### **Sylvia Dozier:**

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the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to recognise the core of this e-book. This book will give you a wide range of information about this world now. In order to see the represented of the world with this book.

**Tania Hansen:**

In this particular era which is the greater man or who has ability to do something more are more special than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple strategy to have that. What you need to do is just spending your time little but quite enough to enjoy a look at some books. One of several books in the top listing in your reading list is actually A Time of Torment: A Charlie Parker Thriller. This book which is qualified as The Hungry Mountains can get you closer in becoming precious person. By looking upward and review this e-book you can get many advantages.

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