

***Legion: The Many Lives of Stephen Leeds* by Brandon Sanderson**

Omnibus containing the novellas: *Legion*, *Skin Deep*, and *Lies of the Beholder*

“I am perfectly sane. My Hallucinations, however, are all quite mad.” Thus we are introduced to Stephen Leeds, a man with remarkable money, remarkable powers of deduction, and a remarkable mind that has baffled all who try to analyze it. You see, Stephen has multiple hallucinations of different people with different personalities and different specialties. Many a psychologist has tried to diagnose Stephen’s disorder, but none of the diagnoses fit. He’s not schizophrenic and he doesn’t have Dissociative Identity Disorder. As far as anyone can tell, he’s a perfectly normal VERY wealthy man who just happens to see people who aren’t there. Oh, and these people help him solve crimes.

Each of Stephen’s hallucinations has a different specialty. He’s got a therapist, a Nigerian ex-policewoman in forensics who has OCD and is an extreme germaphobe, a French computer genius, an older POC historian with schizophrenia, a Polynesian survivalist and boy scout leader, an ex-Marine with a gun fixation, a megalomaniac photography expert who is utterly convinced that he’s the Emperor of Mexico, and many more eccentric helpful characters banging around in his brain and following him everywhere. Most people think talking to yourself makes a person crazy, but Stephen takes things to a whole new level, holding doors open for his hallucinations and ordering extra seats and food for them when they travel by car or by plane, yet nobody can deny that he *always* gets results. He knows things he probably has no business knowing, deduces things that boggle the mind, and *always* gets to the bottom of any case he’s given.

So what if he’s a 40-something recluse who lives alone in a gigantic mansion with only a butler for company, orders an extra (seemingly empty) cab every time he has to take an Uber, and makes reservations at restaurants for six other people who never show up? Everyone knows that the wealthy have strange tastes.

But in Stephen’s mind, it all makes sense. With an entourage of at least four hallucinations following him at any given moment (to say nothing of the 30+ others that reside in the mansion), he can’t exactly order a table that doesn’t fit them all, or try to cram them all into a single car. Besides, more often than not, they’re useful! His hallucinations provide him everything from insight into human interactions to odd facts about everything around him, to personal security and safety. Stephen has come to rely heavily on his hallucinations for almost everything, just as they rely on him for their existence.

In the first novella, Stephen and his team get hired to investigate a stolen camera. Ah, but this is no ordinary Nikon Z8. *This* camera takes pictures of the past. The company that was funding the project already knows who stole it – after all, the inventor of the camera is the only one who was ever able to get it to work properly. And now the inventor is on a mission to prove the existence of Christ with photographic evidence – a feat that, if successful, would change every religious community and its

beliefs forever. But the inventor and his camera are both nowhere to be found, and there's someone else who's looking for both the camera and the man...and they have other plans for such technology.

In the second novella, we deal with an even stranger sort of theft – after all, who in their right mind would want to steal a corpse? But of course, no case is a normal one if it's been brought to Stephen's attention. The missing corpse belongs to a scientist who was studying biochemistry and engineering, and who worked for a company that had discovered a way to turn human cells into a digital database. What other things could be possible when you can turn your thumb into an actual thumb drive?! However, the young deceased scientist may also have discovered a way to cure certain diseases through viral spread – and quite possibly (though no one is certain) to spread certain deadly pathogens as well. Having possibly injected this information along with who knows what other secrets into his cells and then (quite inconveniently) having fallen down a flight of stairs to break his neck, the company is desperate to regain control of the missing body. But with the corpse gone, and no one able to figure out how it was stolen, and with no apparent record or way for a thief to get in and out of the morgue, Stephen has his work cut out for him to stay on his employer's good side and out of the reach of the competition's bullets.

In the third novella, Stephen has been having some trouble with his Hallucinations. Several events detailed in the other two novellas have been bothering him of late, particularly two specific instances with his ex-marine bodyguard hallucination named JC. An interview with what Stephen thinks is another newspaper reporter is not doing anything to help his thought processes. However, when Stephen receives a cryptic text message with only the word "Help" from his MIA ex-lover in the middle of the interview, his whole world is turned upside down. Now Stephen and his hallucinations are on a race against time to find this girl before all of Stephen's hallucinations are either killed or turned into horrific mental nightmares that want to kill *him*. It doesn't help matters when, in the middle of this trouble, Stephen gets dragged into a scheme to turn prisons into virtual reality containment units.

I loved this book! Brandon Sanderson is, as always, a master of words and the fantasy genre. I loved this awesome mix of a private investigator-type novel with speculative elements, and I had fun learning about the hallucinations and considering the psychological twists and turns that the novellas offered up for me to ponder. This quick dip into a mystery/thriller type urban low fantasy tale was a very fun and fast-paced change from what I'm used to seeing from Sanderson. But no less intriguing, well-developed, and well-written than any of his other works. I hope he eventually decides to dig into the genre again, perhaps to give us another *Legion* story or three.