

Soulless by Gail Carriger

The heroine of this book is Alexia Tarabotti and she has no soul. In a world where having excess soul is the only way to achieve immortality, this is a very uncommon occurrence. Her soullessness makes her a preternatural, someone who can negate the supernatural powers of vampires and werewolves with just a touch. When she's attacked by a vampire at a party, she accidentally kills him and sets in motion a remarkable adventure to figure out some odd goings on with the supernatural in London society. It is quite a romp!

Soulless is one of my favorite books ever. One that I re-read pretty regularly. Gail Carriger has become one of my favorite authors and here she has created a delightful world that now spreads across several book series. This one being the first book in her *Parasol Protectorate* series, which spans five books. (I will say that Carriger's *Parasol Protectorate* and *Custard Protocol* series, as well as her self-published novellas, are most definitely written for adult audiences, with some **very** mature scenes. However, her *Finishing School* series is YA.) It's a difficult book to categorize, genre-wise, since there is just so much going on! Calling it a steampunk-y paranormal romance sells the book short, but it might be the easiest way to describe it. I think the alternate history aspect of the book is what drew me in initially, but the comedy is probably what brings me back to it time and time again. Right now, lighthearted and funny reads are absolutely essential.

Carriger has done an excellent job to make sure that every character in the book has their own clear voice and backstory, though there isn't a ton of world-building in this book. That trickles out throughout the entire series, which is really kind of nice. We do learn very early on that Alexia is prickly. And I think that's why I like her so much, I can relate. Alexia's best friend, Ivy Hisselpenny, is fond of ridiculous hats and perhaps comes off a bit insipid. Lord Akeldama is Alexia's closest supernatural friend, a sophisticated, gossip-loving vampire. The investigator tasked with helping Alexia with her mysterious vampire attack is Lord Conall Maccon, a gruff Scottish werewolf in charge of B.U.R. (the Bureau of Unnatural Registry). They are but a few of the many colorful characters inhabiting this world. The story is a real adventure from start to finish, with lush descriptions of the clothing and food of the time.

This specific edition of the book has lovely illustrations by Jensine Eckwall, which have an Edward Gorey quality to them. Gorey has always been my favorite illustrator, and his art would definitely complement Carriger's story, so I'm glad that Eckwall was chosen to illustrate this. The audiobook narrated by Emily Grey is also great. No matter the format, and no matter how many times I read it, this is one of the books that I'll always come back to.