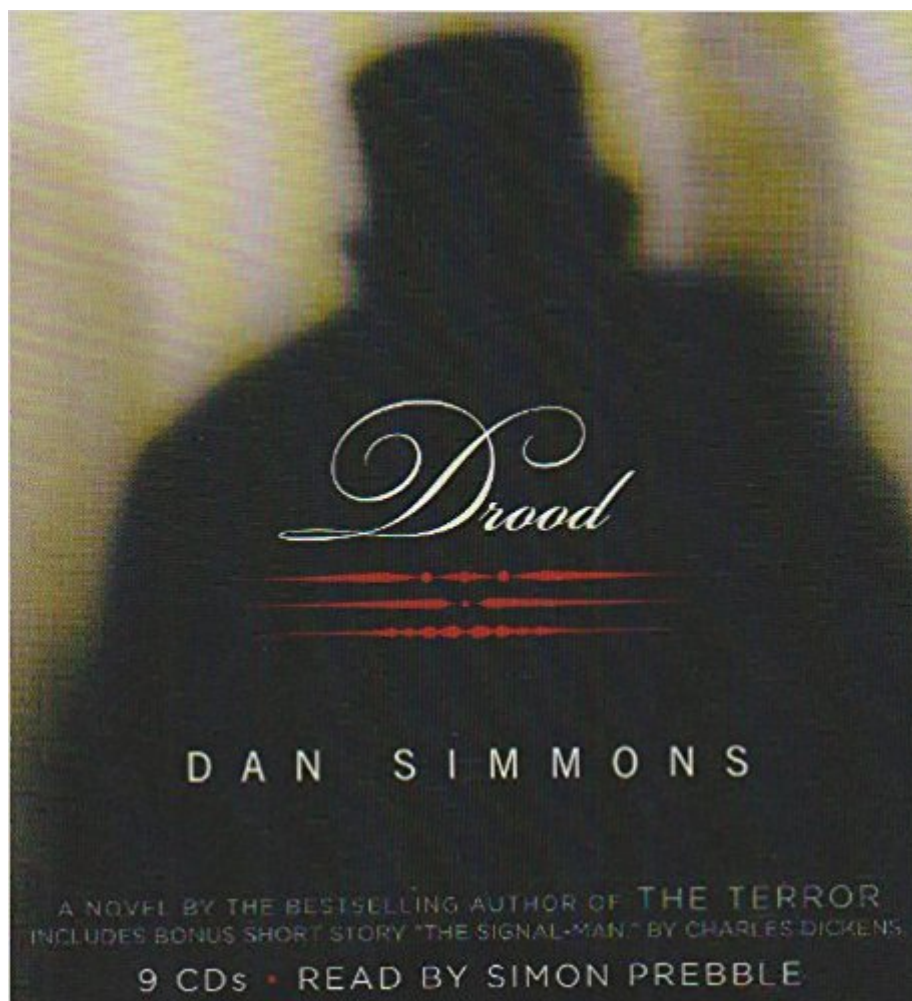


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Drood: A Novel



Synopsis

On June 9, 1865, while traveling by train to London with his secret mistress, 53-year-old Charles Dickens -- at the height of his powers and popularity, the most famous and successful novelist in the world and perhaps in the history of the world -- hurtled into a disaster that changed his life forever. Did Dickens begin living a dark double life after the accident? Were his nightly forays into the worst slums of London and his deepening obsession with corpses, crypts, murder, opium dens, the use of lime pits to dissolve bodies, and a hidden subterranean London- mere research . . . or something more terrifying? Just as he did in *The Terror*, Dan Simmons draws impeccably from history to create a gloriously engaging and terrifying narrative. Based on the historical details of Charles Dickens's life and narrated by Wilkie Collins (Dickens's friend, frequent collaborator, and Salieri-style secret rival), *DROOD* explores the still-unsolved mysteries of the famous author's last years and may provide the key to Dickens's final, unfinished work: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Chilling, haunting, and utterly original, *DROOD* is Dan Simmons at his powerful best.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Bestseller Simmons (*The Terror*) brilliantly imagines a terrifying sequence of events as the inspiration for Dickens's last, uncompleted novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, in this unsettling and complex thriller. In the course of narrowly escaping death in an 1865 train wreck and trying to rescue fellow passengers, Dickens encounters a ghoulish figure named Drood, who had apparently been traveling in a coffin. Along with his real-life novelist friend Wilkie Collins, who narrates the tale, Dickens pursues the elusive Drood, an effort that leads the pair to a nightmarish

world beneath London's streets. Collins begins to wonder whether the object of their quest, if indeed the man exists, is merely a cover for his colleague's own murderous inclinations. Despite the book's length, readers will race through the pages, drawn by the intricate plot and the proliferation of intriguing psychological puzzles, which will remind many of the work of Charles Palliser and Michael Cox. 4-city author tour. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this creepy intertextual tale of professional jealousy and possible madness, Wilkie Collins tells of his friendship and rivalry with Charles Dickens, and of the mysterious phantasm named Edwin Drood, who pursues them both. Drood, cadaverous and pale, first appears at the scene of a railway accident in which Dickens was one of the few survivors; later, Dickens and Collins descend into London's sewer in search of his lair. Meanwhile, a retired police detective warns Collins that Drood is responsible for more than three hundred murders, and that he will destroy Dickens in his quest for immortality. Collins is peevish, vain, and cruel, and the most unreliable of narrators: an opium addict, prone to nightmarish visions. The narrative is overlong, with discarded subplots and red herrings, but Simmons, a master of otherworldly suspense, cleverly explores envy's corrosive effects. Copyright ©2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sherlockian scholar David Marcum has noted that only a single generation separates the world of Charles Dickens from the world of Conan Doyle. That fact is evident in Dan Simmons's literary horror novel *Drood*, for its characters (most prominently an Iago-like Wilkie Collins and his hero and nemesis, the more famous Charles Dickens) haunt the same dismal London alleys to be prowled, a decade or two later, by Sherlock Holmes, Inspector Lestrade, and Jack the Ripper. Moreover, Collins's private investigator from *The Moonstone*, Sergeant Cuff, preceded Doyle's creation by some nineteen years, while Cuff's real-life model, Charles Frederick Field, was borrowed even earlier for *Bleak House*. Obviously, finding Conan Doyle connections is not Dan Simmons's point; nor is his monster Drood (a very different being than the feeble Edwin in Dickens's last, unfinished novel) really the point either. Rather, *Drood* is at its heart a long—much too long, alas—meditation on the corrosive effects of hubris, envy, misogyny, and other typically Victorian flaws. The book exhibits the same virtues as *The Terror*, Simmons's 2007 re-creation of the lost Franklin Expedition, e.g., exhaustive research, marvelous scene-setting, well-developed characters, and the understanding that (as

Stephen King would tell us) true evil arises less from outside forces than within ourselves. Yet, whereas Simmons had the vast Arctic for his canvas in *The Terror*, *Drood* plays out in the drawing rooms, theaters, graveyards, and—yes—even sewers of London. This more restricted setting accentuates the novel's flaws. There is simply not enough plot here for eight hundred pages, and the story bogs down much too often as the author regurgitates factoids turned up in his research. Yet, those who persevere with *Drood* will be rewarded, for its final twist takes a step back from the supernatural and rises to real pathos. Along the way, readers will learn a great deal more of *The Inimitable* and the author of *The Moonstone* than they probably knew before. Sadly, that knowledge may prove somewhat disillusioning, for Simmons reminds us that immortal authors were not always admirable men.

Dan Simmons sure has a talent for writing. This was the second book of his that I read and both were so well crafted that I came away highly impressed by his skills as an author both times. This book is more about Charles Dickens than it is about the title character, *Drood*. Mr. Simmons recreates the Victorian Era very realistically. Wilkie Collins is the narrator. And he spins a fantastic tale of pride, evil and probable insanity. The character of Wilkie Collins reminded me of the character that Edgar Allan Poe created to narrate his story of *The Tell Tale Heart*, however you never quite know for certain if Wilkie Collins has a firm grasp on reality. I enjoyed this book all the way to the last page.

Dickens died before finishing his final book, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, but what if *Drood* were more mysterious as a figure in Dickens's life? Narrated by Wilkie Collins, a close friend of Dickens and a fellow novelist, we learn much about literary envy, rivalry, and competition even as the events grow stranger, darker, and more horrific. Brooding and grotesque things lurk in the fog, a fog both on the land and in Wilkie's drug-addicted mind, as Dan Simmons uses Dickens's life as an armature on which to hang pulp horrors and noir twists & turns. Echoes from *Lon Chaney in the lost film LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *H Rider Haggard*, *Fu Manchu*, and many other pulp references add to the ambience. Recommended for those who enjoy Victorian historical fiction with a dark fantasy/horror gloss.

This book stole my vacation. I was on a cruise sitting on my balcony and I couldn't put this book down. Utterly engrossing with its macabre darkness and just plain creepy characters tied up with real life people. The blend of history and fiction is so well done that you start to wonder if some of the

horror of this book actually happened to Wilkie Collins or to Charles Dickens himself. This book made me a huge fan of Dan Simmons

I like Dan Simmons, I really do, but after 500 pages, I just threw 'Drood' aside. I couldn't abide another paragraph about the drug-addled Wilkie Collins! I found the first third of the book immensely interesting - especially when Dickens was the focus, but the fact that neither Collins - or anyone around him - wanted to grapple with the fact that he was a functioning addict prone to nightmares and illusions is just too much to accept. Admittedly, it wasn't until the early 20th century that laudanum became a controlled substance in the UK and US, but nonetheless, these are supposedly intelligent people who seem absolutely clueless about the effects of laudanum and opium. And as others have pointed, the book could have been trimmed by a couple of pages and still been very effective. I think Simmons simply lost control of his narrative and his editor simply didn't have the gumption to take the book away from him like any good editor would have. VERY DISAPPOINTED

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