



The City and the Dungeon: And Those who Dwell and Delve Within

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The City is an immense metropolis of crystal spires and wondrous magic. Beneath is the Dungeon, a vast underground world, and a source of endless treasure guarded by grotesque and deadly monsters. No one knows where the Dungeon came from, or why.

Any who would dare face the dangers and riches of the Dungeon must first be transformed into a delver, a quasi-immortal creature whose every attribute is defined by numbers. Yet the "immortality" offered is but illusionary, for without consuming the crystal found only within the Dungeon, a delver will inevitably die.

One young immigrant braves the Dungeon to remit money to his family, only to find much, much more. Friends, power, and secrets of the Dungeon.

Perhaps even love.

The City and the Dungeon: And Those who Dwell and Delve Within Details

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Kithkannan says

Really fun and interesting

The author has created a really interesting world and setting, cool characters, and fun mechanics. There are some quirks that I'm not sure qualify as problems, but I will mention them.

1)The mechanics are only lightly touched on, you get enough to understand how they work on a basic level, but you never get drawn into the nitty gritty of how things work.

2) The narration is slightly jerky and VERY stream of consciousness. I'm not sure how much of that is a result of the authors inexperience, his style, or intentional as the book is framed as a letter to the narrator's family.

3) Many (most/all) of the fight scenes are VERY quick, there are some boss fights that are less than a dozen sentences, this seems bizarre considering how much time is spent discussing the notorious difficulty of bosses. I will say that there are unresolved plot threads that point to this being intentional and Part of the series arc, but I can't be sure one way or the other since those threads are completely unresolved.

All in all, it's a fun read and I'm definitely going to read the next book as well.

Bolajide Adeyoye says

Wonderful

I enjoyed this world..I got why a few people complained that you didn't explain things more, but I also have this feeling that if you'd gotten too bogged down in explanations this story wouldn't have been as good as it was. This world was the star of the show, the characters were alright, ditto for the plot, C+ to B at most....but honestly it's the world and the concepts that made this a 5 star book. I don't care that much about stats when I read a litrpg I care about the feeling of growth and progress...I loved the idea of a weird world of ominous monster machines and people who might also be machines as well...If this were a movie or a comic book no one would have been complaining or maybe they would have the story moved fast enough that it wouldn't have been a problem. The issue with books is that it's all words and concepts and even for me there were times where things would be introduced and I'd be left wanting to know just a little bit more...all the same it was darn wonderful and I think besides dropping a few more details when you drop those wonderful little nuances into things there's nothing I really feel like complaining about.

Curtis says

Fresh, Interesting, and Well-Done

LitRPG is a genre with a pretty common story template, so encountering something new is interesting. Encountering something new that is also well written, conceived, edited, and implemented is astounding. It's also very exciting.

Here then is a nicely polished gem that shows us a new world (based heavily on classic "Rogue" believe it or not) that is not only done well, but is fun to read. The characters, plot, and world are multi-dimensional, but this first book deftly reveals only part of the show. We're left thoughtfully nodding in appreciation and wondering about all the things that were (for now) glossed over.

I'm really looking forward to the next book, and if you enjoy LitRPG or just fantasy stories, you should check this one out. Highly recommended.

David Durkin says

Surprisingly well done

Wasnt what i expected, the begining was slow but ramped up the story in just such a smooth manner theres nothing to complain about. The writing was, surprisingly, great. The characters had motivation and pretty good backstory, and the entire plotline and setting was unique, especially for a niche stlye dungeon book. Glad to have read it.

Lunan says

I only got 40% through, so this is not a complete review.

It was too boring. Sorry. It is a very "grindy" book, with no change from chapter to chapter other than the color changing (from red to orange fx). The action is very much not shown, but told, and sometimes not even that.

The characters are not that great. I'm sure things would be revealed later, but that is too little too late. The world itself is interesting, but I don't think the author understands supply and demand. The blue (highest) crystals are worth trillions of the lesser, even though their demand seems to only be among those few people who can get them themselves (am I wrong, or isn't it only food?). Small spoiler: (view spoiler)

In the end I just read the last chapter titles and figured I knew what was gonna happen, and stopped reading. Not a terrible book, but as I said: Very "grindy" (which is sort of meta-funny, as you "grind" dungeons, but somehow I don't think the author was that meta, and if he was, it was still boring).

In the end I give it 2/5, because I held my hand over the 3/5 and it said "liked it" and I didn't, really.

Lucas says

Good!

This was an excellent, straightforward fantasy book about how, sometime in the future, an enormous dungeon takes up residence in our world and remakes it. Our tech is gone, our money is gone, our learning is gone, there is only dungeon loot.

The story was more about the dungeon and its effects on the world than about the characters. There was a MC, but he primarily exists to be your eyes in this society.

It is clear that the Dungeon is hostile and it/its creators have spent effort to make it addictive to those who enter it. But what is its agenda?

Read this! Pay money for it!

Douglas Mackay says

Good book

It had hits rough spots but I enjoyed it a lot. Can't wait for the next book in the series.

G L says

Definitely worth reading

Loved it, well written and fascinating concepts. Similar to Dungeon Born in how it incorporated game like elements without the usual lazy pop up screens and mysterious "system". My only complaint is that it is written in this weird tense like the narrator is recounting his life to someone (like the name of the wind series); I personally dislike that style of narration. Having the character comment on events as they are ongoing kind of diminishes the immersion.

R.J. Triveri says

2.5 Rounded Down

At first, I wasn't sure I would pick this title up from the strange title, but three things swayed me. I picked this book up after seeing numerous recommendations in the LitRPG subreddit. This was also a title I thought had potential on Kindle Scout. Lastly, this was done by a local author. On those three merits, I figured why not?

The story is a decent enough piece and carries along at a clip with enough variety to make things interesting. The word and concept seems interesting enough. In short, what happens to Earth after a dungeon appears and wipes out modern society. How will the people adapt and fight back. With magic provided from the dungeon, they find classes and build a city of delivers to fight it.

I wanted to give this three stars for potential, but too many issues with description, grammar, misspellings, and the like bothered me too much. Some of the many threads felt underutilized and some characters felt off

in one way or another.

As a whole, I think this is fine if you can get past a few error now and again, and the length is good. However, if you're expecting polish and precision, I can't say to pick up this book. I will say the story did keep me enough to give the second book a chance though.

Joshua Bauguss says

Good read that gets better and better

It was about half way thru that I couldn't stop reading. It was easy to set aside during the first half, tho still enjoyable.

The first half, things kinda felt rushed. I think that's because it's natural to compare to other books in the genre. The chars level really really fast. I was thinking the author was losing an opportunity. The first half of the book could easily have been one book with more detail added of the experiences that blew by.

After finishing, I think it was an overall very satisfying read. The groundwork has been laid for something more than just reading about a character level up.

Lots of satisfying characters in this. Look forward to the next book

Zachary Schillinger says

A novel with substance.

This book has an extraordinary setting which grows with the characters. There is backstory about everything from economics and politics to religions. This made for a thoroughly enjoyable read that was surprisingly fast paced.

Lurino says

It's complicated, but not in a bad way

I don't know whether to like or dislike this book. On one side, it's a simple light LitRPG, if it makes sense to you. No crazy statistics, no character sheets, just statements of levels and numbers which were closer to martial cultivation stories instead of the common LitRPG tropes.

The characters didn't have the time to grow in character, if that also makes sense, though they grew rapidly in levels and power. Often, too rapidly and conveniently that I wondered if this is lazy writing or a perfectly good way to write a light novel.

I think the story would make more sense being a martial cultivation story than a LitRPG, and maybe you

should approach it as a light martial cultivation story set in a dungeon delving RPG background

GaiusPrimus says

Saw this on my Amazon feed and decided to pick it up. Am sure glad I did.

The pace of the story was just right, completing the arc but leaving plenty of untied ends to get you hooked for the next installment.

Really a great addition to the genre.

Chris Evans says

This book is a mixed bag. It's got a decent setting, an interesting plot, and a pretty good magic system. There were times I was thoroughly invested in learning more about it all. Unfortunately, the writing is just too amateurish to ignore at times. So much of it feels rushed, bouncing from one thing to another with little buildup or explanation, need a thing, got the thing. Battle is coming, battle is over. Part of it could possibly be explained away by the whole framing device being letters home, but a lot of the story seems to forget that these are letters home and goes into unusual detail for that. I listened to the audio book, so maybe there's a delineation between letters and normal story, but it isn't clear when that's happening in that case.

I ran into issues with the economics and point of the setup they have. At one point, they go into why they can't just let reds have enough gems to live, and how they're artificially inflating prices to force reds to train and get stronger... It almost makes sense, but quickly falls apart. If you want reds to train and get stronger, have a training program for them to do so. Why is this not a thing if that's what you want? As it stands, it's just a free for all and most people just die and a lot of those who make it farther have made some sort of massive mistake in leveling. Why haven't the houses created an academy or red training program where they sign a contract, get food and gear and help leveled to whatever level they need them to get to?

What's the deal with the gems too? I get they say blue is worth like 1,000,000,000 reds but why is it worth more? Does it carry 1,000,000,000 times more power? Why are they worth so much more than gold? None of the economics here make sense and come off as extremely artificial and fragile (impossibly so).

Also, the sudden romance arc introduced at the end was out of nowhere and off putting because of it. I'm torn on whether or not to continue.

Vincent Archer says

One of the best litRPG novels today...

What if RPG rules existed in our world? Not some fantasy world, or virtual computer universe, but in the reality of Earth. That's the idea behind The City and the Dungeon, and the settings in which Alex Kenderman, a young man from Denver goes in search of fortune for his family.

Schmidt sets the world building slowly, in little touches, because the focus is and remain the characters; the main party and the House Black. Rather than succumbing to the usual trope of placing plain-looking RPG UI, the game mechanics are placed as realistic features, in the background of the events.

And the result and consequences of ultra-high level "characters" are starkly placed and pursued. At one point, Alex considers the fact that he consumes thousand of times the GNP of the entire USA every day, just to keep alive... and its not that much of a problem for him. The great contrast of the young immigrant trying to make a new life and the man who cannot come back "home" is nearly perfectly done.

If you dislike the whole litRPG genre, this is possibly the only book you may read. It is open-ended, but has no cliffhanger, no existential threat hanging, so you can enjoy it entirely even if you never read another.
