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Cal MacDonnell is a happily married New York City cop with a loving family. Seth Raincrest is a washed-up photographer who has alienated even his closest friends. The two have nothing in common--except that they both suffer from retrograde amnesia. It's as if they just appeared out of thin air thirteen years ago, and nothing has been able to restore their memories. Now their forgotten past has caught up to them with a vengeance.

Cal's and Seth's lives are turned upside down as they are stalked by otherworldly beings who know about the men's past lives. But these creatures aren't here to help; they're intent on killing anyone who gets in their way. In the balance hangs the life of a child who might someday restore a broken empire to peace and prosperity. With no clue why they're being hunted, Cal and Seth must accept the aid of a strange and beautiful woman who has promised to unlock their secrets. The two must stay alive long enough to protect their loved ones, recover their true selves--and save two worlds from tyranny and destruction.

Awakenings launches a captivating fantasy saga by an amazing and talented new storyteller.

Awakenings Details

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Author : Edward Lazellari

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From Reader Review *Awakenings* for online ebook

Mieneke says

When it was first published in 2011, I heard good things about Edward Lazellari's *Awakenings*, but I never actually managed to pick up the book. So when the offer of a review copy landed in my inbox, I wasn't slow to say yes. Going by my vague memories of reviews, the cover and the flap text, I was expecting an urban fantasy/crime story, but does *Awakenings* do what it says on the tin? The short answer is no.

The somewhat longer answer is that this book could be described as an inverse portal fantasy; instead of our main characters being transported into a magical realm, the magical realm infiltrates our world. It is an interesting reversal of the trope and I liked the effect it had on how the story is constructed and the true nature of our main characters is revealed. The downside of this was that for much of the story Cal, Cat, and Seth were mostly in a state of confusion about what was happening, which made some of the exposition a little murky or at least minimal. I still don't fully understand how the magic system actually worked, for example.

Awakenings is also somewhat of an epic quest: modern world edition, where saving the world and the hidden prince is the name of the game and a group of intrepid — or not so intrepid, in the case of Seth — heroes must band together and defeat the adversaries of the rightful heir. There are warriors, sorcerers, and healers, and even centaurs, trolls, and goblins. But while all of it is familiar, none of it is routine; Lazellari manages to make all of it seem unexpected and new.

My favourite characters are Cat and Lelani. I loved the way Cat decided to fight for those she loved and for her husband, even if it would have been easier and safer to have gone into hiding with her daughter. She's a calm, stable presence even during the most hectic of battles and she even is a good influence on the rather awful Seth. Lelani is the group's guide to what is actually happening, having been sent from Aandor to retrieve the hidden prince and his caretakers. She's such a straightforward character, who doesn't tolerate any nonsense, especially not from the wayward Seth.

Speaking of Seth, he was the character I was most conflicted about. He is odious, self-absorbed, and rather clueless—your textbook unsympathetic character. Yet Lazellari offers us glimpses of hope for Seth's redemption; when he is unexpectedly kind to Cal and Cat's daughter or when he decides to take a stand at the trees and protect his comrades. It will be interesting to see how Seth is developed in the rest of the story now he has been awakened to his true history. Cal is lovely, but also a bit bland, in the sense that his arc to me was the least captivating one. He comes across as your standard warrior hero, who is torn between worlds and wants to be just and do what is right. Where Seth's flaws will hopefully be smoothed down a bit in the future, I'm hoping that Cal will be revealed to have some blemishes to his perfection.

The quest Cal and company have been sent on was to protect and return the hidden prince safely. Yet that hidden prince is somewhat lacking in *Awakenings*. For me, Daniel felt somewhat under-developed and in some senses his storyline seemed somewhat superfluous to the narrative. He might be central to the quest, but he didn't really in this book, which read very much as a “getting the band together” story, a band Daniel never belonged to save as an object to protect, not as an active member. His history needs to be established and if it were to be crammed into the next book it might become an info dump, yet I wish Daniel's story would have had more body to it in this book in the current timeline.

Awakenings is an interesting start to the Guardians of Aandor and I'm curious to see where the story goes

from here, whether we crossover more to the other world or whether most of the narrative will still be set in our own world. I enjoyed *Awakenings* a lot and I'll have to keep an eye out for the second book *The Lost Prince*, which was first published in 2013 and will be published in paperback later this year.

This book was provided for review by the author.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/11/26/...>

Do not let the blurb or the cover of *Awakenings* deceive you—its marketing actually belies a very interesting book, which turned out to be nothing like I expected. At first glance, you would be forgiven for dismissing this as yet another urban fantasy with undertones of noir and the supernatural. Dig a little deeper, however, and you'll find that the world is not as it seems. When it came to categorizing this book, I ended up tagging it Urban and Epic fantasy, because ultimately it encompassed elements from both genres.

As the story unfolds, readers are introduced to a cast of characters which include Cal MacDonnell, a New York City cop. Thirteen years ago, he woke up in a field with no memory of where he came from or how he got there. His entire life now revolves around his wife Cat and their young daughter Bree. Next is Seth Raincrest, a jaded self-centered slacker who has few friends and no prospects for the future. Like Cal, Seth can't remember anything before thirteen years ago, when he was found as a boy outside a burning house, his parents presumably dead inside. He spent the rest of his childhood in orphanages and foster care, and now struggles to make ends meet as an amateur pornographer. And finally, there's thirteen-year-old Daniel who lives with his adoptive mother and abusive stepdad. Despite his troubles at home and at school, all Daniel wants is to be a good person and help his friends.

For Cal, what began as an average night on the job quickly turns deadly as he and his partner are called to the scene of a disturbance. In a derelict building, they are suddenly ambushed by otherworldly beings who seem to know about Cal's past. Now his wife and daughter are in danger, and the night would have ended in disaster had it not been for the intervention of a mysterious red-headed woman named Lelani who claims to be a sorceress from another world. Promising to have all the answers to Cal and Seth's questions about their past, she leads them on a quest to regain their memories because hanging in the balance is the life of a child they must find before their enemies can get to him first.

As you can see, the story which initially presents itself as an urban fantasy quickly transforms into something wholly different. I've seen the term "inverse portal fantasy" used to describe books like this, and it is quite appropriate in the case of *Awakenings*. Gradually, the mundane world becomes permeated by elements more commonly found in high fantasy settings, such as wizards, centaurs, other creatures like gnolls, and politics from a feudal medieval realm. The result is this strange mishmash of different concepts and tones, featuring the modern existing beside the antiquated, or science and technology comingling with magic.

But of course, this hodgepodge of ideas also causes a fair amount of confusion, especially in the early parts of the novel, with the vagueness of the situation further exacerbated by the characters' amnesia because they are not aware of what's going on themselves. Another hitch is the lengthy setup and the amount of time it takes to introduce all the characters and their backstories. Not surprisingly, a book like this requires lots of groundwork before all the various plot threads can even begin to come together. And finally, there's the obvious drawback regarding reader expectations. If an urban fantasy fan were to pick up *Awakenings*, for

example, there's no telling how they would react to the sudden change in style and tone around midway through the novel, when the contemporary aspects start to give way to more epic fantasy elements.

The good news is, the writing is fantastic. Edward Lazellari does an incredible job juggling all the story's moving parts, ratcheting up tensions when required in order to draw the reader deeper into this dark mystery. His prose is also smooth and very polished, and if I hadn't known this was his first novel, I would have thought he'd been doing this for years. To be honest, I only really have one main complaint, and that was the ending. I found no closure in it at all, not even the slightest sense that any of the multitude of loose ends have been tied, making this entire novel feel like one long drawn-out prologue. I can't deny the lack of answers frustrated me, and it's just a shame that this is perhaps the book's greatest weakness, because otherwise everything else about it was rock solid.

Still, on the whole I did enjoy reading *Awakenings*. Despite the open ending, I'm intrigued by the ideas Lazellari has presented here, and also curious about what he has in store for his characters. By the looks of things, the next book *The Lost Prince* will be bringing even more of the storylines together, and I'm definitely looking forward to checking it out.

Theresa says

You might think, by looking at the cover, that *Awakenings* by Edward Lazellari is your standard paranormal fiction. But I was reminded of more traditional fantasy, in the vein of Terry Brooks in a modern setting, rather than something by Jim Butcher.

Cal McDonnell is a NY city cop who has no memory of his life prior to thirteen years ago. Despite his retrograde amnesia he has managed to carve out a meaningful life for himself that includes his job and a beautiful wife and daughter. Seth Raincrest also has no memory before thirteen years ago, but he hasn't had the same success in rebuilding his life. He ekes out a living as an amateur pornographer without forging any lasting relationships with anyone but his cat. But Seth and Cal share a past that is rapidly catching up with them as dangerous, and magic wielding, enemies from their former lives have found them and plan to attack before they can regain their memories.

Thirteen-year-old Daniel Hauer is the adopted child of Clyde and Rita and to say he grows up in an unhappy home is an understatement. Clyde is a mean drunk who resents being Daniel's stepfather and looks for any excuse to take it out on Daniel physically. But what neither Daniel or his parents know about is his noble heritage; one that ties him to Cal and Seth. But the same people that are hunting the others are now on Daniel's trail, and the people who want to keep him safe don't have any idea where he is-- or what name he goes by.

Edward Lazellari has a deft writing style which makes "*Awakenings*" a very absorbing book right from the start. Throw away characters are given a distinct personality in a just a few lines and the mystery surrounding Cal and Seth's amnesia certainly keeps you turning the pages. However there isn't a lot of mystery-solving that goes on as the story progresses. We do find where Seth and Cal come from and why they have amnesia, but much more time is spent on the set-up of the story that the reader is left with the feeling that they should know so much more.

"*Awakenings*" is also busy book, in part because there are at least five disparate story-lines that all connect at various points along the way. That alone wouldn't make "*Awakenings*" a confusing book, but throw in

several interconnecting dimensions of varying magical and scientific resonance and some haphazard political machinations, and you have a book that can confound the most astute reader.

First, you have the p.o.v. of the three main characters, Cal, Seth and Danny, who are tied together by a mysterious past that is only partly explained throughout the book. Then you have the *bad guys*, led by the somewhat stereotypical Dorn who believes that a strong leader only uses fear as motivation. Then you have the *good guys* as initially represented by Lelani, a mysterious sorceress who tries to reach Cal and Seth before Dorn and his dangerous minions launch their attack. Adding to the various perspectives presented in the book are Cal's wife and a private detective hired to find Cal, Seth and Danny. It's amazing the book isn't more confusing than it is.

But if I had to pick the one thing that may have ruined the book for me, it's the fact that one of my literary deal breakers reared its ugly head several times in the book in the form of some politically slanted content. If I had to guess I'd say Lazellari is a very liberal guy. The first thing that jumped out at me was the fact that Cal's wife Cat seems somewhat fixated on her feminist values. Every time she muses on any situation that arises-- whether it's a crisis or not-- she definitely worries that her place in the world as a feminist is assured. Whether she goes back to work or ends up in the magical world Cal comes from-- she wants it known she's a *feminist*. And I have to say that, from my point of view, that even the most die-hard feminist isn't going to worry about such things when they're faced with life-altering problems: So it's not only unrealistic, but tiring. And heaven forbid you're a (gasp!) *republican*. Maybe it's me, but I find it strange to see more than one random comment regarding republicans pop-up in fantasy fiction: You'd think republicans don't read fantasy or something. Add to that a chapter that seems necessary only to insert some stereotypical slams against fundamentalist Christianity and you've come pretty close to a book that resembles Stephen King's recent work.

Another minor quibble I had with "Awakenings" was the issue of certain credibility gaps. For example, I'm pretty sure a four-hundred pound centaur isn't going to fit into the back of a Ford Explorer (with three or four other passengers). Maybe I'm just being petty, but I couldn't let that one go. Nor do I think the same centaur could get around a New York City apartment without knocking over a lot of furniture.

Despite the presence of some content that might normally make me walk away from a book, I finished "Awakenings" because the slant wasn't overwhelming and I wanted to see where the story was going-- so I have to say that Lazellari does a good job of keeping the reader interested. And I have to give credit to some really good writing when it comes to the action sequences. I thought the fight scenes were absolutely captivating. But in terms of payoff, there really isn't one where this book is concerned. Some of the back-story is sorted out but mostly the book reads like 350 pages of plot set-up. I really feel that the story could have been condensed into 200 pages, which would have allowed the narrative to progress more and prevent the feeling that you're only just getting to the meat of the story as the book ends.

The impression I was left with after finishing "Awakenings" was that Lazellari is a good writer who might benefit by toning down the politics, which might allow him to move the story more. Regardless of your political affiliation, it's distracting to have a story take unnecessary detours. To me it seemed as if he was pleasing himself by injecting some bias rather than writing to the story, and the book suffered for it.

Otherwyrld says

An interesting first novel, and an interesting start to a series. Whilst the plot itself is nothing new, it all fits together quite nicely in such a way that makes you want to keep reading. Indeed, I read the book in just a few hours.

If there is a criticism, it that the book at times feels too much like a screenplay for a potential film. However, this isn't unusual in a lot of modern novels and doesn't detract from the fact that this is an entertaining story. I will be waiting the next book in the series with interest

Linda says

Okay, I am now halfway through The Lost Prince and enjoying it enough to realize that my original rating of Awakenings was unfair. I was just so terribly pissed off to be left hanging at the end of the book! All I can say is, the author had better finish up the last volume of the trilogy or I will be REALLY mad!

Original: I thought I would like this more than I did. Not badly written (faux Stephen King with a nice Harry Potter joke early on)but it just ENDS and there will be no closure unless I read the second (and probably third) titles in the proposed trilogy. Don't get me interested in characters and then just drop them!

Edward Lazellari says

I may be biased, but I thought it was darned good. :-)

A few readers are upset that the book supposedly ends "in the middle." But those that rated it low for that reason seem to also be saying they enjoyed what there was of it. The reality is that most publishers are not going to publish a George R.R. Martin-sized book (1,000 pages+) with an unknown author. So I sympathize with those frustrated by the unresolved ending. Perhaps there should have been a "Part 1" placed on the cover.

I'd like to note that Tolkien presented Lord of the Rings as one novel, and his publishing company decided to cut it into three books published in consecutive years, which is how we got The Fellowship Of The Ring, The Two Towers, and The Return Of The King. If you recall, Fellowship ends at the middle of the quest as well, but it does not make it any less of a great tale. Also... I was inspired to write Awakenings by Roger Zelazny's Amber books, a series of very short novels (about 200 pages), all ending in cliffhangers.

I believe that book one ended at the appropriate place, with all the characters coming to a new a pivotal point in their development. Certain mysteries were revealed, certain actions set in motion that propel the story to its next stage. I will try to write part two as quickly as I can without sacrificing the integrity of the story. I will also give part two a more definitive ending, keeping in mind that there is a third book to the series. Thank you so much for your comments, your support, and reading fiction at a time when we seem to be losing readers by the bucket load.

Edward Lazellari

Miriam says

DNF at page 93

This wasn't very good. I wouldn't say it was horrifically bad either, but the prose was tell-not-show, and I wasn't very interested in the characters, and for a rather violent action/fantasy not much seemed to have progressed plotwise in 93 pages, aside from a bunch of people we hardly meet getting butchered. There will be some reveals coming for the characters, but their content is pretty obvious for the reader so there's not a ton of suspense

If you're looking for grimdark-ish fantasy in a modern, urban setting this may be for you. I have lots of other books on hand that I'm more excited about.

Sarah says

3.5/5 stars

Awakenings, despite its flaws, is a surprisingly absorbing adventure. The writing is solid and fluid. The book itself has a raw quality to it that will appeal to many readers. Though Awakenings does read more like a prologue to a series, the series itself has huge potential to be a multi-dimensional epic fantasy. Awakenings crosses multiple genres from noir to contemporary and even has hints of traditional fantasy. Lazellari has great potential as a fantasy writer. The idea is fresh and new and even though the ending left me wanting and some of the characters were a bit two dimensional, I will anxiously read the other books in this series to see where Lazellari can take me next.

Read my full review here:

<http://bookwormblues.blogspot.com/201...>

Jeffrey says

A standard fantasy plot is the mundane person transported to a magical world, where s/he picks up magic and saves the day. Awakenings, a noir urban fantasy fusion with mystery elements turns that standard trope on its head. In this darkish fantasy, guards, wizards and the prince of the realm escaped from a war zone in the magical world to our world, but then had their memories wiped

Now, several years later, Daniel the prince is living in an abusive home, Cal MacDonnell, the head guard is a NYPD cop and Seth Raincrest, an apprentice wizard, is a pornographer. None of them have any memory of their past lives.

But two sorcerers enter our world to try to find the prince. The bad guys are led by Dorn, who hires Colby, an indicted dirty cop to find the prince. Dorn proves his evilness immediately by stealing Colby's beating heart right out of his chest in order to "motivate" him to help.

Dorn's minions also go after Cal and Seth and try to kill them. Lelani, a centaur wizard, representing the

realm finds and saves them, but not before Seth loses his roommate and Cal his partner. While Cal is accepting and Seth is not as trusty, both come with baggage. Cal is married to Cat, a strong woman, and has a young child, and Seth has made a mockery of his life.

Meanwhile, the lost prince Daniel, has to try to deal with his abusive father, bullies in school and saving a girl from a mean boyfriend.

There is plenty of action as Cal, Seth and Leilani look for other guardians and come under fire from Dorn.

This very adult fantasy pulls no punches. Evil is clearly evil. Characters have depth and real human problems to deal with, while trying to come to grips with a life completely forgotten. This is not Harry Potter lite, but Lazellari tells a good hard nosed tale with real characters. The characters breathe on the page.

It's a good beginning to this series.

Jacob says

Kickass action scenes, intriguing plot lines, strong characters, an excellent urban fantasy that draws you in from the start! I'll be posting more about this one my website.

Stefan says

In August, www.tor.com posted an excerpt from *Awakenings*, the exciting debut novel by Edward Lazellari. That post fell smack in the middle of that site's Noir-themed week, so maybe it's not surprising that the excerpt was the novel's prologue, which introduces Colby, a down-on-his-luck private investigator who gets contracted by some shady — and, as soon becomes clear, truly terrifying — characters to track down a list of people for unknown purposes.

However, the noir-ish tone of that excerpt may be a bit deceptive, as *Awakenings* takes a completely different turn after that prologue, mostly focusing on different characters, broadening the scope of the story by a few orders of magnitude, and losing much (if not all) of the noir atmosphere. Don't get me wrong: I really enjoyed the prologue, but it didn't prepare me for the rest of the book, which is much more contemporary fantasy than true noir.

So, if you enjoyed the quality of the writing in that excerpt, you're in for a treat, but if the noir thing isn't your cup of tea, don't be discouraged because there's much more to *Awakenings* than a run-down PI in a grubby little office...

Once you get past the prologue, the novel mostly focuses on two characters who are, on the surface at least, very different. Cal MacDonnell (incidentally, one of the names on that list given to the prologue's private investigator) is a police officer in New York. He's successful, happily married, and has a lovely young daughter. Seth Raincrest, on the other hand, is a self-centered jerk who is quickly running out of friends, and who scrapes together a living by talking girls who need quick cash into adult photo shoots. Seemingly, the only thing Cal and Ryan have in common is that they both suffer from amnesia: they remember nothing that happened more than thirteen years ago.

As *Awakenings* gets started, it becomes clear that elements from their forgotten past are now resurfacing. This process will lead them on a journey that involves another dimension, an heir who may be a magical kingdom's last hope, and a number of human and non-human allies — as well as terrifying opponents who will stop at nothing to prevent them from their mission. Aside from Cal and Ryan's perspectives, some of the story is told from those opponents' points of view, as well as from that of Daniel, an adopted thirteen-year-old with a mysterious birthmark, an abusive stepfather and abundant troubles at school.

Even though it's hard to tell from the cover, *Awakenings* is actually the first book in a series. This is definitely one of those novels where I would have liked to see "Book One in SERIES NAME" on the cover, rather than having that information sort of hidden away at the bottom of the inside flap, as it is here. This would have given the reader the proper expectation: *Awakenings* is the start of a longer story and not a standalone novel. Initially the novel presents itself as contemporary fantasy, but you quickly get the idea that this entire story is mostly the opening chapter of what may turn out to be an epic fantasy that spans more than one dimension. You could call it a reverse portal fantasy, with people and magical creatures from another realm (or, to use the novel's term, another "brane") entering our reality, but the true situation is a bit more complex and suggests the possibility of some really exciting developments in later books in this series. I'm genuinely curious to see where Edward Lazellari will take this tale in future installments.

As a title, *Awakenings* is perfect for this novel, because the entire book revolves around characters coming to the realization that their lives up to this point have been, if not exactly illusions, at least just minor detours in a larger plot that started, from their point of view, a long time ago. The novel is about characters realizing that there has been a gap in their awareness and finding out about the events that transpired during that gap. Maybe most importantly, it shows them trying to figure out how to reconcile what they thought of as their normal, everyday lives with the greater destiny they are now suddenly part of. For a debut author, Edward Lazellari juggles the different arcs these characters go through with admirable skill, not only for the main players like Cal and Seth, but also e.g. Cal's wife Catherine, who suddenly has to come to terms with the fact that her husband has, through no fault of his own, a whole other life.

The novel has some weaknesses, but surprisingly few for a debut. The magic system (if "system" even applies here) seems a bit haphazard, but that may be because the majority of the players don't have their full capabilities (yet) and don't really understand what's going on for most of the book. There are one or two unfortunate puns ("eye of Newt Gingrich" as a spell ingredient being the worst one, even if it was meant as a joke) and one reference to chili — one of my favorite meals — which I will unfortunately never, ever be able to scrub from my brain again. There's some moral grey in at least one of the main characters, but as for the opposing side, they're all so purely evil that it's almost cartoon-level silly, especially when compared to the subtlety of the rest of the book. And finally, the ending of this novel is on the weak side and really nothing more than a setup for the next novel. I'm sure some readers will expect something a bit more explosive to wrap up this otherwise very exciting novel, especially those people who picked this up expecting a standalone novel rather than a series opener.

Those quibbles aside, *Awakenings* is an intriguing and inspired debut. It's not perfect, but it's more than good enough to have me eager to get my hands on the next book in this series. Edward Lazellari's prose is confident, his characters are intriguing, and he knows how to pace the story in such a way that your attention stays focused, even with the frequent changes in perspective. He drops several hints about the broad setup of his fantasy universe, but mostly plays his cards close to the vest, leaving the reader curious about where this story will be going next. Grab a copy of *Awakenings* if you're looking for a tight and thrilling contemporary fantasy that holds the promise of a dramatically widening scope in future novels. (Alternatively, grab it for the beautiful and mysterious cover illustration, which is yet another stellar job by Chris McGrath.)

(This review was originally published on www.tor.com on 8/31/2011 and on www.fantasyliterature.com on 9/8/2011.)

Andrew says

Dorn's attention wandered for a moment. When it returned, he surveyed the town around him. "I started this search for the prince cautiously, opting for a surgical approach in a world a barely understood," Dorn said. "A strange land of magical drought that I never knew existed. I've since found my footing, Colby—we're locating streams of magical energy here and there, buried deep. Enough to empower more ambitious sorceries. I'm reluctant because this place might yet have some uses for me and my ilk back in Aandor, but at some point, very soon, I will abandon my 'surgical' approach. And that will not bode well for the innocents of this world."

A New York police officer and a down-on-his-luck-and-barely-worth-a-dime porn photographer, both sharing a mysterious bout of retrograde amnesia that's wiped the last thirteen years from their lives; a beaten and abused teenager, adopted, despised by the family that's acquired him, with a ruling future more dangerous than he knows; a heartless—literally—detective on the ropes legally, desperate for one last job to give him the funds he needs to buy himself a clean slate; and a strange and vaguely detailed magical war that exists behind the scenes, threatening each one of them and the lives of their loved ones.

Awakenings, the first novel from New Jersey native Edward Lazellari, is an amalgamation of fantasy tropes paired with a gritty, urban setting—a grime-encrusted counterweight to the “my lord / my lady” primer coat. The threat to Aandor and the race to capture the prince, unaware as he is to his role in events currently transpiring, is an interesting, if not altogether original premise, and Lazellari does little to turn it into anything unique. Instead, the work is content to mine the barest bones of descriptive content: explanations of Aandor, of Lelani and her centaurian nature, and of the magic that she and Seth are capable of are fast and loose, doing little to build a confident structure to their existence.

Any world building is done with paper-thin context, matching the very paint-by-splotches personalities of the main characters (the self-hating pornographer who leaches off of others and shirks his responsibilities; the selfless and noble family-first cop, torn between duties). Unfortunately, this makes it difficult to feel any sort of attachment to this band of merry disasters, as they appear as little more than conceptual sketches.

The two largest hurdles for this book, however, are its writing and its forced visceral tone.

The writing is sometimes difficult to grapple with due to the shifting maturity in language. The word usage and very simple, clichéd exchanges feel aimed at a younger audience; the language and graphic descriptors, on the flip-side, feel targeted for a very male-centric, 18-25-year-old demographic.

Whatever the aim of the writing, the tone of the book is where it truly falls apart. The violence and actions of certain characters, even between humans and without mystical interventions, is extreme, cribbing more from comic-book dynamics than anything approaching reality. The confrontation between Daniel and his father Clyde is a perfect example:

Daniel slammed him square in the face with his bag full of texts and sent the man reeling backward, grasping for the banister but too drunk to find it. Clyde landed on his back on the edge of the first stair and floor. Sprays of spit shot from his mouth as he yowled.

"I'm gonna rip you apart, you piece of shit," Clyde bellowed. "And not gentle, like before!"

Daniel jumped from the middle stair and landed on his stepfather's breadbasket. He heard a rib crack, and Clyde vomited the contents of his stomach over his own face. He choked on his own puke as Daniel leaped off him and made for the exit, but not before a hand grabbed his ankle causing him to fall into the door headfirst. Daniel saw spots and struggled not to black out.

This goes on for some time, with increasingly gratuitous descriptors (and culminating with the third pant wetting of the book, which in and of itself is a strange visual element to repeatedly draw upon). As a result, *Awakenings*, which is the first in a series, feels trapped somewhere between adolescence and adulthood—wanting to show its rough and tumble side and give a little “fuck yeah!” to the fantasy genre, but lacking the maturity, restraint and detail to pry itself away from its fantasy forbearers and Dan-Brown-meets-Chuck-Palahniuk literary devices.

Karissa says

I got an advanced reading copy of this book signed by the author at Book Expo America. I was excited to read this new urban fantasy/fantasy by Tor. It was an interesting start to a new series, but it is just that a start. The story pretty much ends right in the middle of things.

The story begins with a number of men with the same last name being hunted down by unnatural evil beings. As things unfold you find that these men came here from another world and were sworn to protect a special child. But these men can't remember anything and the child is missing. A beautiful woman comes to round up the men and remind them that the fate of their kingdom rests on the shoulders of the missing child.

I really enjoyed the beginning of this novel. There were all of these strange and supernatural evil guys hunting down regular joes who had no idea what was going on. The plot gets more interesting as things unfold, then part of the way through the book it kind of stalls out. The main reason for this is that there are just too many viewpoints being covered and it is hard to keep track of them all. You hear from five to six viewpoints throughout and the book isn't that long.

The plot is well-wrought, intricate, and spinning out to epic proportions by the end of the book. The characters were all okay, but not completely engaging. The majority of the characters were somewhat unlikable; they just didn't come off as having a ton of personality and this is probably because of the constant switching of character perspective throughout the book.

This is a strange book because it starts in a modern city and ends in a fantasy-like world; it feels like you are reading an epic fantasy but it is an urban fantasy setting for the majority of the book. There is a ton of political stuff going on in the fantasy world and I had trouble keeping it all straight.

The book ends dead in the middle of the story which is obnoxious because this wasn't advertised as a series. I hate it when books do that.

Overall it was an okay book. It has an interesting world and plot and initially started out as an engaging book. The characters are hard to get into though because the book is constantly switching viewpoint; this made the story kind of choppy and hard to stay involved in as the book went on. This is definitely the beginning of a series since the book pretty much stops right in the middle of everything (I hate this!). Although the book is decently written, I probably won't read more of this series because I just wasn't that engaged with the story or characters by the end of the book.

Kmont says

I liked this one - with a few caveats. It's a superb story base, and considering it's the first in a new series, it's not too bad. There are several things I like the first in series to do in order to get me to feel hooked: well-developed characters, a very decent job building the world, and a snappy enough pace to keep the onset of yawns from beginning.

I want to say that this book accomplished all of these - to a point. There's a little lacking, I just don't know how to put it in words, which is so very annoying. All I can think to say ATM is that it all needed a little more oomph.

But I think I did come to care a little about a few of the characters, and the potential in this one overall is certainly enticing. I *do* want to know what happens next, so it was definitely worth the time.

I think the author's voice is nice and fresh, the style feels different, in a good way, gritty and nearly grotesque at times, but balanced with some gentler tones at times as well. That being said, I almost felt like I was reading an episode of Dungeons and Dragons or even a Piers Anthony title possibly (please don't slay me anyone, it's been so long since I saw/read anything to do with those works that it's more an obscure feeling than anything.). Maybe it was the juxtapositioning of people from "our" reality with other very traditional fantasy elements like centaurs, sorcerers, trolls, etc., and not to mention those parallel universes.

A satisfying enough story despite my wishes for more development across the board. Hopefully book 2 will help out there.

M Hamed says

abandoned at 50%
