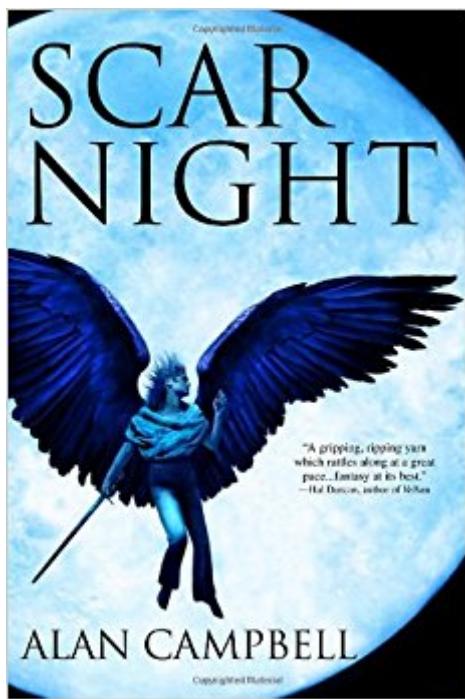


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Scar Night



Synopsis

Suspended by chains over a seemingly bottomless abyss, the ancient city of Deepgate is home to a young angel, an assassin, and a psychotic murderer hungry for revenge or redemption. But soon a shocking betrayal will unite all three in a desperate quest....The last of his line, Dill is descended from legendary Battle-archons who once defended the city. Forbidden to fly and untrained even to wield the great sword inherited from his forebears, he has become a figurehead for a dying tradition. Now he lives a sheltered existence in one of Deepgate's crumbling temple spires under the watchful eye of the Presbyter who rules the city. Spine assassin Rachel Hael has better things to do than oversee the Presbyter's angel. Each dark moon she must fight for her life among the city chains, hunting an immortal predator with a taste for blood. But when a traitor brings enemies to Deepgate's doorstep, Dill and Rachel are forced into an uneasy alliance with the city's oldest and most dangerous foe. They must journey down into the uncharted chasm to save their sprawling metropolis and themselves from annihilation. Once they descend however, they learn that what lies below is far more sinister than what they've been taught to expect.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Oftentimes when the term "fantasy" is bandied about, people conjure up immediate Tolkien-esque images: wizards, Elvish warriors, Rings of Power, trolls, and other elements of the genre that have become very typical. It is because that imagery is so commonplace that when someone comes along like, say, Mervyn Peake or China Mieville, and darkens the notion of fantasy with grit, gloom and intensity, readers really take notice. Alan Campbell may soon tire of comparisons to Peake and

Mieville, but that doesn't mean they are not deserved. Campbell weighs in to the fantastic, giving us the dreary and spectacular city of Deepgate in his debut novel, SCAR NIGHT. This endeavor, upon first inspection, could have been buried by its premise, but instead Campbell deftly weaves a startling and mysterious story through the dark streets of an equally mysterious city and leaves readers groaning for the sequel. Deepgate is like no other city you've visited. It hangs suspended over a black abyss that is supposedly the realm of Ulcis, a God known as the Hoarder of Souls. Great chains hold the city in place...though what they're connected to none can rightfully say. Airships bring business and travelers to and fro, though why anyone would come here is another story. Deepgate is a wound, a dilapidated and sinister city where every road is an alley and every walk out is a potential last trip. Then there is Scar Night. The foolish fail to stay hidden behind locked doors, for on this night, as she has for thousands and thousands of years, the angel Carnival comes to Deepgate to feed. While this all may seem enough for a novel, there is oh so much more. Enter Dill, the last archon and now just old enough to begin his duties.

I picked this book up because it had a concept I've never seen before, and the author made it work very, very well. The idea of a city, suspended over a seemingly bottomless abyss full of ghosts, twisting and groaning on its rusty chains and fraying ropes that do not always hold being the BEST place to live throws you into a completely foreign world that I've not seen the like of. And don't forget to surround this city by deserts and other inhospitable regions peopled by radicals opposed to everything the city stands for. It is a dark place. Despite Campbell's periodic references to the brightness of the sun and the cloudless skies it always felt to me like they were in a pit or a cave. Perhaps this was a result of the underlying despair of the "last" angel Dill and his inability to meet his self-imposed expectations, the novice Spine assassin who wants and loathes her job simultaneously, the vampiric angel Carnival who enjoys the hunt and the kill every month until the deed is done and then she loathes herself, the bitter and slightly mad poisoner Devon who believes the whole city owes him an impossible debt and knows nothing will bring his beloved wife back, and the obvious despair of the man who lost his daughter's soul to a murderer and is consumed with first of all avenging her, and then bringing her back. Campbell seems to take a somewhat dim view of organized religion and his gods are much more like those from Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia than any now worshipped.

I agree with the reviewer from Beaverton, OR - although the ideas presented in this book are intriguing, it does feel like a video game. The characters are mostly one-dimensional, the action is

uneven and the dialogue is stiff. That said, the idea is quite intriguing and I hold hope that future books in the series will help Campbell's vision to come clear. As another reviewer said, the city in chains, on chains, over the abyss, is a bold statement and the story feels very dark. I can imagine the many buildings - all crowding together and continually building up and up so the richer people can be up in the sun - the constant creaking of the chains, the rust and decay everywhere . . . it is a richly imagined world. Dill, the last angel in a long line going back to the great angel and battle Archon Callis who helped first drive the barbarians away from the city 2000 years ago, chafes against his duties in the temple and longs to be a battle archon, as his ancestors were. However, the priests of Ulcis, the god of chains and the Soul hoarder - especially the head priest, Presbyter Sypes - claim that the barbarians would never dare attack the city again and are kept under control with the constant barrage of poisons and toxins the people of Deepgate keep sending at them in their airships (similar to dirigibles) as created by Devon; plus they fear the loss of their last angel - so they keep Dill in isolation to "protect" him, keeping him innocent and naive. Devon, the head poisoner, is slowly dying from the constant exposure to the toxins he is responsible for creating, and bitterly mourns the wife he lost to the same type of lingering death (from the sound of it, she may have been the former Head Poisoner).

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