



The Damned Busters

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After accidentally summoning a demon, Chesney Anstruther refuses to sell his soul, which leads through various confusions to, well, Hell going on strike. Which means that nothing bad ever happens in the world... with disastrous consequences.

The Damned Busters Details

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From Reader Review The Damned Busters for online ebook

Justin says

So, this was an interesting and uneven novel. I've written a lot of reviews, but this is by far the most difficult because I didn't like or dislike the novel. I almost considered not writing a review at all because I was just so ambivalent. Matthews Hughes' **The Damned Busters** is a wholly original novel from Angry Robot Books. It is not however the novel I wanted to read. Let me explain.

Filled with fun cartoony characters, Hughes pits Chesney Arnstruther, an actuary of no particular distinction, who accidentally summons a demon, against the hordes of the underworld. Oops. Everyone gets dropped into a bit of a pickle when he refuses to sell his soul thus sending Hell into labor negotiations from... Hell. Shenanigans ensue as the denizens of Hell go on strike. As part of the bargain that puts Hell back to work, Chesney gets the use of his own personal demon who he uses to become a crime fighter.

For the first third of the book the shenanigans are a rousing success. Satan, a few angels, a televangelist, and Chesney all find themselves locked in a room hassling over a contract for Satan's overworked minions. It's so absurd it's brilliant. There is loads of snappy dialog and hilarious situations that could only come from unionized labor. Hughes does well in the space creating a series of encounters that are often laugh out loud funny.

The unfortunate part is the brilliance only lasts for the first third of the book. Once Chesney strikes his deal with Hell the book descends into a pretty boring crime fighter yarn. There are awkward stereotypical encounters with women. He is taken advantage of by a few not-so benevolent powerful people. Not only was the novel less interesting by this point - a lot of Hughes wit seems to fall away as well. What was a light witty novel that read more like a situational comedy, de/evolved into a metaphysical discussion about the meaning of existence.

By the end of **The Damned Busters** I was completely caught off guard by what was a very esoteric conclusion that left me unsatisfied. Like the second half of the book, this ending wasn't what I wanted to read. I felt betrayed by the promise Hughes made in the opening chapters when he failed to deliver the same level of wit and charm throughout.

I would almost recommend Hughes' novel based solely on the opening. The idea is incredibly clever and he writes it with rare aplomb. I can't help but wonder if **The Damned Busters** would have been better suited as a novella that ended when Hell went back to work. If that were the case I'd be giving it my highest recommendation. As it stands, I'm not sure it's a great investment of time.

Brian Clegg says

The Damned Busters follows in a noble tradition of humorous fantasies in which someone gets one over on the devil when entering into a pact - such stories follow on from what seems to be a very early form of fantasy story with a number of legends (usually explaining odd landmarks) using this plot line.

In Matthew Hughes' novel, comic-book obsessed Chesney Artstruther, an actuary on the high functioning end of the autism spectrum, accidentally summons a demon. His refusal to accept a pact results in a strike in

Hell, which leads to Satan agreeing to allow Chesney demon-powered super abilities in exchange for ending the strike.

Altogether this works reasonably well - Hughes has some clever twists on the pact with the devil riff, and keeps us engaged, even though the female characters are very old-fashioned: the overbearing mother, the girl he loves who is beautiful but shallow and the girl he will end up with who is bright and sassy. The writing style is good but sits slightly oddly with the setting - I assumed Hughes was English (he's actually Canadian) because the way it is written feels like an outsider's view of the US.

The ending is somewhat unsatisfying too, fixing a local problem but clearly leading on to further books (there's a trilogy). And compared with the greats of this genre there really isn't enough made of the limitations that come with such pacts. Chesney's assistant demon seems pretty much lacking in demonic qualities and is a nice guy really, while the open-endedness of the pact itself allows for far too much *deus ex machina* in the plotting. However, the underlying concepts of the rebellion in Hell and of the idea that existence is a story still being written are genuinely interesting, so it may be worth continuing to volumes 2 and 3.

Ben Babcock says

I have a thing for demon-summoning.

Wait, that didn't come out right. I don't have a *thing* for demon-summoning. As in, I don't like summoning demons. Actually, I've never summoned a demon, but I imagine that if I did summon a demon, I wouldn't much enjoy it. However, I suppose that there is a small chance that if I do, one day, summon a demon, then I might discover I enjoy it and start off on some kind of demon-summoning kick or addiction. At that point, we could say I have a thing for demon-summoning.

What I mean to say is that I tend to enjoy stories about summoning demons. This is why the early seasons of *Supernatural* captivated me (I stayed for the later seasons because the narrative deepened and Castiel is awesome). *The Damned Busters* plays into this predilection of mine. From the get go, Chesney Anstruther isn't happy about accidentally summoning a demon. When his refusal to make a deal—which would cost him his soul, naturally—with this demon leads to a labour strike in Hell, Chesney finds himself in the middle of a very awkward negotiation. But it works out OK for him in the end, because he gets superpowers! Except it turns out that being a crimefighter with a demon sidekick is tougher than one might think (though if your answer was, "it sounds pretty tough", then I guess you're smarter than me—or just a smartass).

The first part of this book, which follows Chesney's incitement of the labour strike in Hell, is totally unlike the second part, which concerns Chesney's time as the Actionary. I've read several reviews that wish the first part had been jettisoned and one review that actually preferred it to the superhero narrative. I have to side with the former reviewers: the first part of *The Damned Busters* is slow and a little dull. As I read it I was thinking that it would make a better short story than a novel—indeed, from what I gather from the afterword, it *was* a short story that Matthew Hughes then expanded. Hell going on strike was a good short-story-length gimmick, but after the initial laughter died down, it quickly became tedious.

So thank God (who is Hughes, in this case) for the sudden changing of gears. Chesney's apology to Satan is part of the back-to-work deal. In return, Chesney gets a soul-preserving deal with a demon who becomes a kind of familiar to him. Thanks to the demon, Chesney has crimefighting superpowers and can rush about as

the Actionary, saving damsels in distress and generally feeling like his fictional hero, the Driver. He tries to impress the daughter of the head of the company he works for, but in so doing he comes to the attention of her father and his ambitions to fight crime as a political gambit.

Unlike the first part of this book, the second part develops steadily. At first Hughes delivers some of the same metafictional, self-aware banter and observations that populate superheroic fiction these days. Chesney's commentary on his evolution as the Actionary is pithy but nothing we haven't seen elsewhere. Fortunately, Hughes seems to recognize this, and the stakes get higher. He keeps us guessing as Chesney begins to recognize there is something more going on with Paxton's C group than just "meta-analysis" for the purposes of fighting crime. Indeed, Chesney isn't the only person involved who has a deal with a demon, and that makes things all the more interesting.

At one point early in the book, as Chesney watches the Reverend Billy Lee Hardacre mediate between Satan and the leader of the demons' union, he wonders if he is really the hero of the story after all. It seems like Hardacre is doing the important work. It's a valid question at this point, because Chesney doesn't seem like hero material. Indeed, he's a bit of a pig. But as the story develops, so too does Chesney—he's still a pig, but he's a more heroic pig, a character more worthy of carrying a story like this on his shoulders. Someone who deserves to thwart evil plans of world domination.

Alas, Chesney's development from zero to hero is the exception and not the rule. *The Damned Busters* suffers from flat characters all around. Aside from Chesney, they are all essentially *types* of one kind or another in their descriptions, dialogue, and actions. Both love interests, Penny Paxton and Melda McCall, are prime examples of this. Hughes plays up Penny as the conniving heiress who always gets her way—and that's all she is. Similarly, Melda is the tough-as-nails yet mercurial beautician who can handle herself but is attracted to the Actionary nonetheless.

In both cases, there's nothing really deeper going on here. Normally with minor characters we at least get a peek at their motivations. We learn about their relationships with their parents. Where's Penny's mother? What are Penny's aspirations, if any, beyond hanging around her father's office all the time? Does Melda have any dreams beyond the beauty parlour? We never get a glimpse at the *person* behind the character. This is a huge problem, compounded by the fact that as much as Chesney improves, he remains a frail protagonist who is, if sympathetic, not all that enjoyable a person to hang around.

The Damned Busters has its moments. It's humourous, and Hughes is great at using characters as gimmicks and devices. However, the book lacks any characters who generate enough emotional resonance to make the story more than interesting diversion. It's competent and enjoyable but could have been much better.

My reviews of *To Hell & Back*:

Costume Not Included →

Matt says

There's something addicting about Matthew Hughes' "The Damned Busters", the first book in his 'To Hell and Back' series that features insurance actuary Chesney Arnstruther and who, after accidentally summoning a demon and causing the legions in Hell to go on strike, becomes the novice superhero the

Actionary. At least for two hours every day, with the help of the rum-guzzling demon Xaphan.

There's something addicting about this book even while there's something... not good about it.

I realize how that sounds. I've been struggling with this feeling the entire book. The story is decent and clever, with a humorous style that channels Douglas Adams without truly capturing the magic Adams seemed to effortlessly put down upon the page throughout the *Hitchhiker's Guide*.

Perhaps just as Chesney is lost within the world of his comic book idol, Malc Turner aka The Driver, his adventures as the Actionary, and the events of the book from the moment he summons a demon on, are intended to emulate that comic book atmosphere with characters that are almost bland in their cartoonish, stereotype roles.

When he smashed his finger with the hammer, did drawing blood cause him to summon a demon, or pass out and dream all of this? Chesney does seem like someone who might faint at the sight of blood.

Good thing "The Damned Busters" is just addictive enough and ends on a cliffhanger that I can't help but be interested in the second of the trilogy, "Costume Not Included".

Joseph Heath says

A lot of this book is fantastic and right up my alley. It's one of the weirdest superhero origin stories I've ever read. It involves demons, God writing a book, and a guy hurting himself while building a poker table. The twists and turns this book takes are really fun and unexpected. The only downside to this book is that the author is not very good when it comes to women. The main character Chesney is kind of a stereotypical nice guy who can't talk around women and when he becomes the superhero, he suddenly has two women vying to be his love interest. Both of whom he has previously ogled while they were jogging. It's kind of gross and boring. And of course, one of them is uptight and rich and the other is down-to-earth and funny. Guess which one he winds up with? He also has a controlling stern mother who gets remarried in the book and her new husband basically tones her down. Which is also gross. But there's still plenty to enjoy. The actual superheroics part and how Chesney navigates his way around problems is really unique and interesting. I might check out the second part if my library has it to see if some of the more unfortunate bits get toned down, because I really enjoyed the rest of it.

Lorina Stephens says

It's hard to make me laugh. Call it a personal failing. But it's true. While other people gasp for air in a fit of jocularity, I'm merely smiling, wondering about the depth of the humour involved. *The Damned Busters: To Hell and Back*, by Matthew Hughes, is the first time since reading Terry Fallis' *The Best Laid Plans*, I actually burst into laughter while reading a book. The title alone was enough to pique my curiosity – an intriguing play on the 1955 British film about WWII RAF dam bombers.

Hughes' delivery is dry, unexpected, often with a remarkable turn of phrase. At first I thought I'd be reading a more accessible variation on Rushdie's theme in *The Satanic Verses*. And while there are similarities by way of the timeless opposition of the divine and profane, Hughes' story is utterly unpretentious, and

consistently, deliciously, irreverent. Because of that there were moments I was reminded of some of the famous scenes from Monty Python's Flying Circus. And then again, moments of Douglas Adams' whacky, surreal scenarios.

Past the first few chapters my opinion changed again, so that I thought I was reading a graphic novel minus the graphics. But the writing is so tight, and the character development so strong, even original, that the stereotypes of the superhero paradigm vanished. We're presented with a socially deficient actuary, in fact a very Canadian hero in that he doesn't consider himself heroic, nor necessarily does he do heroic deeds. He simply wants to aid in the pursuit of justice, a justice tempered with compassion and a bumbling, admirable, loveable naiveté that lands him in an unusual deal with the Devil and a strike in Hell, while Himself Above rewrites the epic saga known to mere mortals as Life. As our hero's slippery sidekick we're dished up a Cagney-esque, stogey-sucking, rum-guzzling demon that breaks most archetypal standards.

In the climax of all this zany narrative one is again reminded of classic literature in a scene that easily parallels Hades' abduction of Persephone. But in what appears to be quintessential Hughes facility, he turns that parallel into something completely unique so that we're left with an original, satisfying denouement and conclusion.

The Damned Busters should definitely find its way to your bookshelf or eReader if you're craving an entertaining and engaging bit of escapist literature.

Trevor S says

Highly, highly blasphemous (for better or worse) this is a book of great ideas and not so great execution. Essentially a guy accidentally summons a demon, puts hell on strike and makes a deal whereby he gets to become a super hero powered by a demon sidekick. It's an intriguing premise and Hughes fleshes it out with a lot of interesting concepts.

Unfortunately his characters don't fare so well. For the most part the male characters, from the hard boiled police lieutenant to the reborn (and reborn again) tv evangelist are at least interesting clichés, but the female characters (all 3 of them!) are purely one dimensional cardboard cut-outs - the hypocritically self righteous Letitia, the self-centeredly self righteous Poppy and the 'lovably' self righteous Melda.

I did enjoy the book (It's worth noting that I always sound much more negative when discussing books/films/couches than I really feel) and it's a promising start to a series, just hopefully the characters will be able carry their own weight as the series progresses.

Lightreads says

[Advance reader copy – the book is due out at the end of May].

I bounced *hard* off this one. And it's not because I read in audio without access to the art. No, we were actually doing really good for the first quarter with the story of a hapless, nerdy (as opposed to geeky, I know my classifications thank you) actuary who accidentally summons a demon and causes a labor strike in hell. It was funny, it was whacky, it was sneakily quite sharp about good and evil, the writing was crisp.

And then the whole thing jolted sideways into stupid self-indulgent masturbatory superhero fantasies. I had a

sinking feeling when the blonde bombshell appeared, flipped forward, went *hell no*, and backed away fast.

I could unpack why this went so suddenly toxic. I could talk about how incredibly fucking *over* I am these sorts of self-consciously self-mocking books about geeky sci-fi nerds who want to be superheroes, but when they get a chance to it's not as easy as it looks and they have embarrassment squicky adventures but through accident and cleverness end up getting the keys to the city and access to the walking vagina of-the-moment anyway. I could talk about how what I find most obnoxious is the underlying narrative of power, how this white, middle-class, well-educated guy feels so *oppressed* and powerless and emasculated, and how he gains power by hitting some people and sticking his dick in someone. I could talk about how this feel-good redemptive underdog crap is actually a deeply toxic story that lets a bunch of privileged people feel smug and authentically downtrodden.

But I am so over this book in all of its seventeen thousand incarnations, I can't even be fucking bothered to finish it and confirm my worst suspicions from the forward glances I took.

Joshua Unruh says

This is a tough one to review. I suppose uneven is the word to start with. It's almost like two separate stories that don't have much to do with one another except that one is the circumstances by way the other is able to happen. I know, that sounds like it should be connected but it's sorta like using the story of a sperm cell fighting its way to an egg in order to set up my life story. Related, sure, but not exactly the most obvious plot move.

The first quarter of the book is the set up. It has some humorous bits, but it's mostly an excuse for the author to enjoy how clever he is. I didn't really care for this part of the story at all and spent most of the time wondering when and how we were going to get to the book they talk about on the back cover.

The rest of the book is a somewhat standard superhero story but told through the eyes of a person who is a functional autistic. He doesn't understand people, he doesn't understand social mores, and he doesn't really understand "how the world works." But he does understand comics and therefore thinks he's ready to fight crime even if it is with the assistance of Hell.

That part of the book was fun and interesting and often genuinely funny. Unfortunately, with the first quarter in front of it, I can't really recommend the book. Or if I do, it would be with the suggestion that the mileage will vary wildly on the first quarter of it. Regardless, I'm not sure I'll be reading any more of the proposed trilogy. I guess that says as much as anything.

Nikki says

This book is pretty much just light, irreverent fun. Think along the lines of Good Omens, or something like that. Some of the ideas are fun, though since I've read Good Omens -- and some of Terry Pratchett's other work -- the style and ideas weren't entirely fresh. Still, combining that with the superhero aspect made it more fun, especially for someone who has recently got (back) into comics. I also enjoyed that the superhero character is a number-crunching actuary *before* he's a superhero, not as a cover for it. And he loves both jobs.

I noticed another reviewer being dubious about the involvement of female characters here. There's a certain amount of stereotyping, which is probably to some extent drawing on the traditional role of women in comics, but there is one woman who impressed me: Chesney's mother. She has a relatively small part to play, but I liked the calm way she accepted what was happening and understood herself, and faced it.

I've bought the second book, but it's definitely on the "light reading" pile.

Nathan Shumate says

Humor is such an individual thing that it won't surprise me if many people enjoyed *The Damned Busters* more than I did. Not that I didn't enjoy it; I thought it was good, if not great. Don't wanna get involved in grade inflation among book reviews, so can we say three-and-a-half stars out of five?

Chesney, an introverted actuary, accidentally summons a demon (bashed his thumb, bleeds on a five-sided table, and utters a string of nonsense syllables which unfortunately correspond to an invocation — boy, if I had a dime...). Having no use for the demon, Chesney dismisses him, which is the straw breaking the camel's back on an ongoing labor dispute in Hell. The upshot is, to get the whole mess unraveled, Satan has to offer Chesney a "freebie" — whatever he wants, without the collateral of his soul. So Chesney decides to be... a costumed crimefighter.

What follows is largely misadventures, as Chesney discovers that (a) crimefighting isn't as clearcut as shown in the comics (or "comix" as Hughes consistently spells it, which adds an unwanted Robert Crumb flavor to it) and (b) ethics are complicated when the powers of Hell are used to do good.

Hughes' prose is amusing without being as precious and twee as, say, Eoin Colfer. I did feel the whole thing was uneven, possibly needing another draft for focus (that's not counting the unresolved plot threads which leave it open for the planned sequels).

Disclaimer: Because of the unelected dweebs at the FTC who wouldn't know the First Amendment if it wore a thong and gave them a lap dance, I must hereby announce that the media reviewed herein was received gratis from the distributor of said media with the understanding that I would comment on said media in this blog.

seak says

An actuary, and one well suited to his job in every way, inadvertently summons a demon while erecting a poker table and hammering his finger. While less than amenable to the idea of selling his soul, especially with incontrovertible proof that there actually is such a thing as eternal damnation, he sets into motion a set of events that has extremely humorous consequences.

To say that the author, Matthew Hughes, can write is like saying...well... I was going to go for some sports analogy, but that just doesn't quite work, this is a fantasy book for crying out loud. Let's say it's like saying an Ogier can build a house or since he's the Jack Vance guy - it's like saying Cudgel is quick on the uptake.

He's a genius and the first third of this book definitely proves it. It's witty, clever, funny, and just plain

amazingly well-written. Chesney Arnstruther, the heroic actuary, is not only an oddball, but extremely relatable. The world he's created with heaven and hell and their relationship to our world is not only understandable, but believable and simply hilarious - I would almost say along the line of **Good Omens** by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett.

I don't want to give away too much about the world and what makes it comical as it spoils some priceless moments, but essentially Heaven and Hell are sitting on each and every mortal's shoulder. The demons tempt, but stick to what they're told while the angels just say the opposite. Literally, all they do is say the opposite.

With the heights that the opening third of **The Damned Busters** reached, the final two-thirds in comparison were quite dismal. In reality, I really enjoyed the last two-thirds, they were just not nearly as good as the opening. The superhero part was really entertaining and I really wanted to see how that worked (and you'll see, it's pretty cool), but it just didn't compare and I feel bad that I couldn't get past that.

The best way to explain this book may be with ratings stars. The first third was easily 5 stars. The mid-third was more around 3 stars and the final third about 3.5 stars. Thus, you may see my conundrum when giving an actual rating to the entire book and so I settled on 4. Highly recommended if only for the first part.

4 out of 5 Stars

Ginger Nuts says

After accidentally summoning a demon while playing poker, the normally mild-mannered Chesney Anstruther refuses to sell his soul... which leads through various confusions to, well, Hell going on strike. Which means that nothing bad ever happens in the world – and that actually turns out to be a really bad thing.

There's only one thing for it. Satan offers Chesney the ultimate deal – sign the damned contract, and he can have his heart's desire. And thus the strangest superhero duo ever seen – in Hell or on Earth – is born!

Before I make my thoughts on this know, I have a confession to make. I used to be a big fan of authors like Terry Pratchett, Robert Robert Rankin and Tom Holt. So much so that there was a time when I rarely read anything else. In the hay day of comic fantasy there was a period where there were more books to read than I had time for. It has been about 16 years since I last read Terry Pratchett and Tom Holt and about 8 years since I last read Robert Rankin. I just slowly but surely got burnt out on them.

So I was a bit hesitant to crack open this book. There's still a lot of books I really want to read so taking a chance with this book had me a bit worried. I decided to give it hour and see how it went. A good six hours later I realised I still had all the house work to do, and I really should go and pick up the boy child from school. Yes the book is that good. You maybe wondering why I even wanted to take such a punt on a book, to be honest it was two things, the synopsis of the book sounded like fun, and I really really liked the cover.

Matthew Hughes has entered the the all ready crowded comic fantasy market, with his own unique voice and

style of humour, he will soon elbow his way right to centre of the genre. The story itself is fun, witty but more importantly it is full of heart. This is and i hate to use the term a nice book, full of fun, and an charming take on the role of sin. Hughes writing is both funny and clever, with some great descriptive passages. he has a style that instantly hooks the reader, that manages to balance the fine line between being a funny novel, and novel that is just full of jokes. The humour goes from raising a wry smile, to full on belly laughs. However novels like this live or die on the strength of the narrative.

The story never feels forced, or just as the framework to hang the humour from, you could cut the humour from the story and you would still have a rather fine piece of fiction.

I will be picking up the next instalment of this series without a doubt. A highly recommended read.

It is available from all good book stores, and all online book retailers.

Gef says

Have you always dreamt of being a superhero? Sure you have. What? You haven't. Well, screw it, go with me on this anyway.

Chesney Armstruther is an actuary for a large insurance firm (if you're a layman like me, that means "statistician") whose life is in a rut. Heck, maybe his life is the rut. Rigidly devoted to numbers and the odds, while at the expense of a social life, Chesney finds poker with a few of the boys to be his best bet at gaining a few friends. But, before he can host his first game in his small, dreary apartment, he accidentally summons a demon from the pits of Hell after hitting his thumb with a hammer and uttering some nonsensical profanities. The demon insists Chesney sign over his soul in payment for summoning it, but Chesney refuses, pointing out he didn't actually summon anyone. This snafu leads to Hell's minions going on strike because of the contractual dispute, which in turn leads to Satan negotiating a settlement with Chesney in order to get things moving again. What is Chesney's end of the settlement?

Chesney Armstruther is going to become a superhero.

The absurdity of this fantastical premise was too good to pass up when I heard about it. The book, however, is not what I expected and I wound up reading what was more of a metaphysical satire than a hero satire, with a tone that came off as a bit uneven the longer it went. The book starts off strong, and Chesney's rather dry and dispassionate demeanor plays well in his protagonist role. The villains, as they were, also worked nicely, with the Devil and Chesney's unscrupulous boss either working against him or manipulating him as he tries to figure out how to be a superhero--two hours at a time each day.

As the novel progressed though, I found my affinity towards certain characters diminishing, Chesney included, or never liking them in the first place, like his love interests, Poppy Paxton and Melda McCann. The most comically endearing character was, without question to me, Chesney's endenture sidekick Xaphan, a wisecracking hellion with a penchant for rum, cigars, and 1920s gangster lingo.

Xaphan, in a lot of ways, acted as an animated deus ex machina, and several of the scenes where he helps Chesney muddle through his powers, responsibilities, and tough decisions were the best part of this book. And because of that, the divergence from a story about a wannabe superhero to a story about a pawn in a tug-of-war between Heaven and Hell was more palatable than it I thought it had any right to be.

I guess my criticism boils down to my preconceptions as a reader simply not being met. It's a good book and offers an interesting story, but it doesn't feel like the book gets to the heart of the matter until well past the halfway mark. If you enjoy a good dose of humor in your action novels, this is a pretty good book to consider, but don't trick yourself into thinking it's a superhero novel, as it only flirts with that premise long enough to go where it seems the rest of the series is headed.

Rusty says

What an odd novel. A pulpy superhero story and a deal with the devil story.

Our hero made a five sided poker table for he and his poker buddies. He cut himself, gibbered incoherently, and a demon showed up, contract in hand, as an answer to his summons.

See? The poker table was a pentagram. The gibbering was a demonic chant. The blood was there... it was all a big misunderstanding. The rest of the story is how our hero, an actuary with a touch of autism perhaps, no social skills and a history of comic book fandom, becomes the ACTIONARY!

So, all the ladies have alliterative names, they get in trouble a lot, the Actionary rescues them. He tends to be very clever about how he deals with demons and the devil, finding a way to get what he wants without sacrificing his soul, but he can't talk to a lady without getting arrested for assault.

I liked the concept of this WAY more than the execution. The main character wasn't very likable, or interesting, to me. I didn't really care about what he wanted, and he seemed a bit spoiled to me. He also seemed to have a sort of blasé attitude about meeting angels, demons, and the criminal elements of the world through the tale.

In the end, I can't say I'd want to read any more of this, but again, I really enjoyed the concept. Some folks might enjoy, but I felt it was too much effort to read.
