



The Secret World Chronicle

Mercedes Lackey , Steve Libbey (Contributor) , Cody Martin (Contributor) , Dennis Lee (Contributor) , Adam Higgins (Narrator) , Laura Patterson (Narrator) , Veronica Giguere (Narrator)

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Emerging mysteriously during World War II, metahumans became icons of the best - and worst - humanity had to offer. Yet sixty years later, the world still suffers from war, greed and madness. Worse, man's nadir of systematic cruelty returns with bizarre new weapons. The metahumans of Earth must find a way to defeat this powerful foe and discover what lurks behind the scenes - a secret world hidden from our own. Mercedes Lackey, one of fantasy's most beloved voices, and new talent Steve Libbey bring you a podcast series that catapults the classic superhero into the 21st century.

Book One: Invasion starts the series off with a bang - a set of coordinated attacks by Nazi warriors in futuristic battle armor. We meet our cast of heroes in the midst of chaos: Belladonna Blue, a young azure-skinned healer; Victoria Victrix Nagy, a geomancer fighting panic attacks; Handsome Devil, whose luck is metahumanly good; Red Saviour, strident leader of an anachronistic Soviet team; Red Djinni, the shapeshifting criminal; and John Murdock, a fugitive super-soldier. Watching over them all is the Seraphym, descended from the Infinite to protect humanity.

As the heroes fend off the blitzkrieg attack, they are left wondering what secrets have erupted from this hidden world, and whether, once unleashed, they can be contained. For there are clues that all is not what it seems...

The Secret World Chronicle Details

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From Reader Review The Secret World Chronicle for online ebook

Melissa Hayden says

Tough choice on stars for this one.

FULL REVIEW

The world is safe with Metahumans working for ECHO and keeping it so. Then, one fine day, we see the attack of Nazi Metavillains and Meta...not human, not meta - something else...attack the city of Atlanta and all around the world. New heroes, and villains, surface to help current Meta's and those that are attacked and trapped. Although, there is one super-villain that has resurfaced after sixty years, to turn himself in...for protection? What's to come? What does he know?

This book is from a few authors working together and a few vocal voices and many Metahumans are introduced. Some of those Meta's become more than we thought, a few don't make it through. We get to see the day of the attack through several Meta's eyes. What they were doing that day before all went wrong, and how they fared through the fight. At first I felt Mercedes excelled in the battles and Steve Libbey rocked the characters along with action. Then as the stories progressed the two authors, along with Cody Martin and Dennis Lee, started to blend together as. It became harder to tell the difference as the world grows and so many details to track. The three narrators bring the stories alive. Veronica is amazing at different accents needed for different characters. All the narrators are amazing. The one with Handsome Devil, early on, felt to have stepped into his persona well. Veronica feels to take on every character and their personality, which amazed me when she was reading a few together. She converted between them with ease and perfection.

We get a history of each superhero, and even a semi-villain (more a bad guy in way of robber). We see how there lives turned to Meta or how they lived and feel before the attack happens. Even while the attack their reactions relate to their history.

I loved the intro and prologue. I did find, at times, there were some low points in the different stories for me. Lots of details of city setting and little things in lives, but a story has to start somewhere and build the characters. When the invasion happened with each Meta, I was drawn to the action and learning of these strange Nazi-Meta's. I think I might have remembered and understood a few scenes better if I had read the book. I felt there was a great deal of details I should have picked up, and replayed a few scenes to try and catch it all. I know this is a braided story line set in the same world, but at times it felt as things were rushed. This is the first book, the one that the 'huge happening' occurs - it's setting the stage for us.

The cast is rather large. Which, as I usually say, a large cast means lots to kill off. There are some that don't make it, but the cast is still a magnitude that can make it hard at this point in the series. Lots to remember, and I know I don't remember it all. There are POV's from heroes in US and Russia.

I will say, there will be at least one Meta that will stick in your mind. There are different personalities, and a cast this big, yes there will be one. I think my favorite Meta, at the end of this book, is Handsome Devil. He cracks me up and the luck he has, it is fun to watch. I liked the view of the world through his eyes and his reactions to all that's happening.

This book sets the stage and raises questions in my mind for things to come. There is lots happening here. A great deal of details. A massive cast to remember. Hard to remember and track it all, but a start to an interesting world and creation. I'm curious enough to carry on with the next story.

Jason Pitre says

This is an excellent novel of superheros, nazi aliens and all sorts of fun. The characters are dynamic and true to life in their own ways and the chapters are just plain fun. It can be found for free in excellent audiobook form at secretworldchronicles.com and I heartily recommend it for one and all.

Laura says

If this book is any indication, I am really going to like this new series.

It reads like a comic book but there are no pictures. The heroes are believable in a comic book kind of way. The reader really has very few clues as to why the enemy attacked but the reactions of everyone else is believable. Some rose above to become heroes while others took the opportunity to "better" themselves by victimizing others.

I'm really looking forward to reading this series.

Brian Foster says

In Invasion: Book One of the Secret World Chronicles, Ms. Lackey et al tells of a world where superpowers are common. When Nazis attack with super advanced technology, however, everything is thrown into chaos.

Why to buy this book: The plot isn't about an alien invasion, per se, but, if you like that genre, you might like this book. Similarly, if you like books about people with super powers, you might like this book. This book apparently has something to do with a role playing game called City of Heroes. I'm not familiar with this RPG, but, if you're a fan of it, you might like this book.

Why not to buy the book: While any of the reasons above may cause you to like the book, I find it hard to believe that you actually will. The plot is weak and disjointed. It feels like a bunch of vignettes thrown together. Likewise, none of the characters drew me in. I found it easy to put down and hard to finish.

Bottom Line: I try to save two stars for works that are pretty dreadful. This one isn't that bad. It's professionally written and produced. However, those qualities, and it's price point, makes me have higher expectations. It's a 2.5. Unless you have a desire to read all of Ms. Lackey's work or are a huge City of Heroes fan, I'd skip it.

Amy says

Too many cooks.

I'm having a personal war between giving this novel a two- or three-star rating. Overall, I didn't care for the book as a whole, but I liked two major sections of the book very much. *Invasion* is a group effort headed by Lackey and suffers from having too many writers involved. After an extremely strong opening, the book compiles several different--I don't know, stories? sections?--of different perspectives. At several points I wondered, *Why are we here?* or *What book is this now?* Those who play ten characters in an MMORPG and don't at all care about equalizing game time between those characters probably won't have as many issues with this text. However, I kept getting lost and felt that I was forced to read sections that had no connection with anything else. It's perhaps most like when Marvel or DC publishes a huge crossover between superheroes, except here you can't skip that annoying *Plastic Man* arc because you're afraid he might actually do something connected to the storyline.

I loved the beginning. I loved a section close to the end. I was interested in several characters, but didn't get to stick with them regularly. Ultimately, I'm glad I read it... but I'm glad it's over, too.

Ron says

Echo and various other meta-human organizations around the world are under attack by UFO Nazi troopers with advanced weaponry. This first volume deals with the initial attack and the aftermath. Plenty of characters, lots of jumping around, building the world with a lot of concepts rattling around in this book. Will check out book two to see how the conflict develops. Interesting audio read.

R. Ware says

A lot of fun, if you like science fiction. And, for science fiction, particularly good character development, as one would expect from Mercedes Lackey (and despite a generous number of characters). The sequels are equally rewarding.

Sean Sweetnam says

As a disclaimer, I have not listened to any of the podcasts that were the source material for this book. This review is based solely on this book.

Secret World Chronicles: Invasion takes place in an alternate universe where there are "metas," essentially superheroes. The metas first appeared around the beginning of world war II, and have had a large impact on the function of the world (although the course of history appears to have been relatively unchanged). The first book in the Secret world Chronicles (SWC) documents the lives of several important characters in the SWC universe, and their experiences during an invasion from a devastating new foe. It is very much a comic book in book form.

I enjoyed Invasion, and it has a lot going for it. The universe is intriguing, and the writers make good use of their options, creating a lot of characters with unique and interesting powers. The writing does a good job of recreating the visual and auditory aspects of comic books, making the action vivid even though it is just words on a page. And there is plenty of action, with larger than life foes battling the protagonists every few pages.

My only complaint about Invasion is that the characters feel too much like stock characters. We have almost all of the classic comic tropes: the lone battle-hardened wanderer, trying to help others while running from his past; the immensely powerful woman with crippling emotional damage. Some of these characters never grow during this book; some of them grow in unbelievable ways.

Takehome message: Invasion is a fun read, but don't read it for the character development. You'll enjoy this if you like comic books or imagining fantastic action scenes.

Amber Marshall says

The whole time I was reading this, I just kept thinking, "This would be so much better as a comic book" partly because it's telling the same style of stories comic books tell (and reads like a comic book novelization) and partly because the huge cast of characters would be easy to keep straight if I could look at them.

Another reviewer commented "too many cooks" and I was agreeing until I realized she meant too many AUTHORS not too many characters. By the end I had people pretty much straight but it was a struggle at first.

Don't get me wrong: the stories are interesting and I was invested, and I'm not one of those "pictures or GTFO" people but with one of those soap opera styles (follows one character for a bit, then all the others, then checks back in with the first, etc) it can be difficult. I read an older fantasy series that had a similar form, with a group of authors all playing in one sandbox together, sort of, but writing each story on their own (then they had to deal with the consequences of other stories, etc) called Thieves' World. There are several volumes and they were quite good. So it's not the format exactly that bothers me; it can be done well. And damn does that sound like a fun way to write some novels.

And then there's Mercedes Lackey's seemingly random, set in the 1970s(?) vampire story (which I liked probably more than the rest, honestly) which has nothing to do with the other metahumans' story that I could tell.

I got the ebook in a Humble Bundle and now I'm wondering if something is wrong with my file, because the last story seems to cut off mid-sentence and there's no real ending. This one was fun enough but I don't think I'll be bothering to pick up any other volumes, if there are more.

Daniel Fehrenbach says

So for a book that came out of (from what I can gather) a series of podcasts based on the authors' interactions in the (now defunct I think) City of Heroe's MMORPG it's about what you would expect. If you don't know what to expect based on that list of random things the book reads like a bunch comic book loving people started a story "Wouldn't it be cool if...", barely had time to finish the sentence but just kept trying again and again for around 200 pages.

The characters and dialogue are on par with a less-than-self-aware classic age comic book with some millennial/post(?) modern flourishes (laptops, hacking, out of place environmentalist rhetoric) so don't expect a literary masterpiece and expect more than a couple of groan-inducing lines per page. That being said - superheroes backed by Tesla technology fight space-mecha-Nazis, for a piece of ultra-sugary brain candy that's a pretty solid hook.

Matt says

I couldn't decide between 2 and 3 stars for this book but I eventually went with 3... It's definitely not like anything I've read before. A weird mix of good and bad.

Basically, from what I understand, Mercedes Lackey and friends wrote this book as a narrative of their role-playing experiences in the MMORPG City of Heroes, which I think is an awesome idea and way to get story ideas.

Unfortunately, the pacing is all over the place, the different writing styles don't mesh well at all, and there's no real building of suspense or anything like that. If anything, Invasion feels like a set of short stories that all take place in the same universe. Once I realized that, the book became a lot easier to read.

The cool and strange sci-fi/fantasy setting (meta humans, magicians, and angels fighting robot alien Nazis, anyone?) make up for the poor writing quality and long-winded excess, but only barely. I'll be reading the next book in the series if I ever get ahold of it, but this is by no means high-quality prose. It's just a fun and mindless romp through the fantastical ideas of a bunch of gamers. Take it for what it's worth and it becomes much more enjoyable.

Mathew Walls says

This is sort of like two books in one. It starts as a series of vignettes about super heroes fighting space nazis, which is awesome, then about two thirds of the way through it flashes back thirty years to a completely unrelated story about witches and vampires, then near the end it returns to the present and is about super heroes and nazis again. Both stories are good, but they don't seem to belong in the same book.

There's also a weird inconsistency where one of the super-hero characters' name changes after the witches and vampires section with no explanation. It seems intentional but the lack of explanation is puzzling. This is the first book of a series though, so maybe it gets explained later.

If you like super-heroes you should read this book. If you're not into the supernatural stuff, you could skip the bit about witches and vampires without missing anything important, although I enjoyed that bit too.

Nick says

I enjoyed it well enough to finish and to put the second volume on my list of things to read, but it has flaws. One comes from the very nature of a shared-universe story. Like Thieves World and others of this type, the writing styles of the different creators do not always mesh. Also, the story skips over what seem like they

would be interesting and important incidents, like the brief return visits of the enemy, after the first big attack.

Still, this is very much an "origin story" for the characters, and it reads like one for the most part. Given that, it was quite readable, and I do hope that the bugs in the blended writing are ironed out for the second volume.

As far as the story itself, it rapidly became a "kitchen sink" story, with flying saucers, neo-Nazi powered armor and a host of other things, all dropped into a superhero vs. supervillain world that is somewhat like ours, including a post-Hurricane New Orleans. That works, but if you never liked superhero movies or comic books, you probably won't like this, either.

Mike (the Paladin) says

I grew up on "Silver Age Superheroes", I collected comic books. I'm a "gamer". I've played table-top, arcade, console, and PC games and I've been tempted by City of Heroes for some time. This book was inspired by characters in that game.

My first take on this book was that I liked it. It drew me in right away. The writing is okay and the story telling works. The cliches are what we expect from superhero tales and the action didn't disappoint. This held for a good portion of the book. As further characters were introduced however the book began to stumble. There are (for me anyway) some annoying subtexts that the writers (I suppose) couldn't resist putting in. The action falters the plot "spreads thin" and slides.

For maybe half the book I had this rated as a 4 star book. Somewhere around the middle however my opinion began to slide. I dropped it (in my mind) to 3 stars. Then I started to skim. When the recruiting starts and we have to put up with the internal wrangling and attempts at politics and (worse) political shading the story completely nose dives (at least for me). I found myself, just trying to get through the book.

It's ending is of course a set up for "more to come". By the way, while I was still very interested I set out to find the second book...and couldn't.

**** update Feb. 21, 2012 ****

Our library has since corrected an error in their catalog. They have the second book, but they had labeled it the "4th" book in the on line catalog.

Still, I have a lot of books to read and didn't care enough for this one that I'll run down the next. It's why once I saw the book labeled as 4 I never looked back.

Anyway, 2 star book for me.

Mike says

UPDATE What I got was apparently the first two books in the series slapped together. I think my overall experience was improved by that, but I would have rated Book 1 a 4 and Book 2 a 2.5 as individual works, and most of the points I make below still stand. I have thus raised my rating of this book to reflect

that. **END**

I read the ebook version of this one, and for all I know, that's the only way to get it in writing. It could have done with copy-editing and the realization that no one uses the term "laddy-buck" anymore.

It's tough to accurately review this book without going back to review individual authors' contributions. The overall plot had me intrigued, and very early on I decided that I would watch a movie or TV serial based on it. Nerdy pulp doesn't get much better than super-powered humans in a world being attacked by Nazi aliens.

But after the end of the initial attack, major problems beset the plot. First of all, the story climaxed in the first 150 pages. After the alienazis depart, the book becomes a character study and a sermon on the aftermath of disaster. There are some battle scenes interspersed, but some succeed (the pursuit of Slycke, the Dr. Dusk arc) where others do not (anything involving John Murdock or Bella). Other characters are simply put on a bus (the intriguing Handsome Devil) or get a bridge dropped on them (the seemingly throw-away Mercurye).

Character development was hit-or-miss as well. I never got tired of Vickie Vee, Red Djinni and Red Saviour, who actually had back stories and compelling personalities and flaws. Contrast to John Murdock, who continued to get into life-threatening battles even after the story established that his character was essential. If he's an essential character, those battles are inherently meaningless. It doesn't help that he's constantly a jerk to every plot-relevant person in the book. The authors take pains to remind you of his troubled past in an enigmatic *Program* and a mysterious ...*her*. There's always a mysterious *her*, but you have to explain how it all ties together for me to care. And when it comes to Murdock, I really don't.

And then there's the aforementioned Belladonna Blue, the most blatant Mary Sue of any story I've ever read. A 19-year-old superhealer and telepath, conveniently fluent in Russian from her parents' dealings with the FBI, with grandparents who worked alongside Robert Oppenheimer. She has sky-blue skin, blazing eyes and the body of a swimsuit model, besides an encyclopedic knowledge of history. She is brimming with confidence from taking showgirl classes in her hometown of Las Vegas (remember: she's nineteen), and she always has a snappy comeback at the ready. She's always breaking the rules and getting in trouble with her bosses, so *she is her own worst enemy!* Gag me.

Real potential lies within this series. If the plot had moved a bit faster, if some of the characters weren't so blasted annoying, I could have rated this higher. But some sections of the narrative shone so brightly, they brought the grade up by themselves, and the story is compelling enough to make me want to read the next book in the series, even if I have to put up with more Murdock and Bella.

Which, when you think about it, makes it a success after all.
