



The City of Towers

Keith Baker

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The City of Towers launches a brand new novel line set in the world of Eberron, Wizards of the Coast's newest D&D(R) campaign setting.

Author Keith Baker's proposal for the exciting world of Eberron was chosen from 11,000 submissions, and he is the co-author of the Eberron Campaign Setting, the RPG product that launched the setting. The Eberron world will continue to grow through new roleplaying game products, novels, miniatures, and electronic games.

AUTHOR BIO: Keith Baker is a freelance writer and game designer. In 2003 his proposal for the world of Eberron was selected as the winner in the Wizards of the Coast fantasy setting search.

The City of Towers Details

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From Reader Review The City of Towers for online ebook

_ says

The world of Eberron proved to be more interesting than the generic fantasy steampunk setting I thought it was.

Brian Minton says

A spellbinding adventure, filled with plenty of lore from "Dungeons and Dragons" and their Eberron campaigns. The book about mid-way through picks up steam, filling the reader with intrigue and wanting to know what will happen next. The climax is bittersweet and its Epilogue leaving the reader wondering why they never suspected anything. Wonderful read!

Rich says

While not great by any stretch of the imagination, I liked this book enough to order the second book in the series. The problem with this first book is that Baker feels the need to explain the **WHOLE** world of Eberron. The book ends up being a long series of conversations, with a fairly low dose of action.

The mysteries that are set up in this first book are what really made me decide to push forward. I want to read further to see how certain elements play out.

I thought the way he treated the character of Pierce, the warforged was surprisingly well done in a book that really wasn't that subtle. I also really liked the fact that Baker wasn't afraid to kill one of the main characters -- although I won't be surprised if he gets better in later books.

I should point out, I'm NOT a big D&D player. I played 1st Edition back in High School, (yes. I'm old) but haven't played seriously since then. I do casually play DDO which takes place in the Eberron setting. Having read City of Towers I have a little better understanding of how things work in DDO.

Vince Darcangelo says

<http://archive.boulderweekly.com/0310...>

This review originally appeared in the BOULDER WEEKLY

Mr. Baker's neighborhood

He is the mastermind behind the new world of Dungeons and Dragons and author of a new fantasy novel. Keith Baker gives the B-dub's resident geeks an insider's tour of Eberron.

by Vince Darcangelo

It is said that anything is possible in post-war Sharn, the City of Towers. The survivors of both the Mourning and the fall of the Cyran army are a weary lot—desperate, on edge—so the hooded figure on the bridge could be a harmless beggar or something more sinister. It's hard to discern through a heavy rain that batters the ghettos of Sharn like a post-apocalyptic tsunami. Only blue, rippling shadows are distinguishable through the downpour. I step forward, but Rael, the wise Valenar elf, places a cautious hand on my shoulder.

"Hold up, Dymus," she says. "Something's not right."

I look to Kesht. The young priest shares my puzzled gaze.

"There are two people up ahead," says Rael. "I think one is in trouble."

We advance carefully, taking short, quiet steps until we catch sight of a body lying motionless at the feet of the hooded figure. A pool of water drifts away from the body. It flows red with blood.

The hooded figure turns and approaches our party.

I draw my sword, as does Kesht. Rael raises her longbow and locks the dark character in her sights. In the once-proud city of Sharn you learn to act quickly if you wish to survive. Details come later.

We don't wait to learn the approaching figure's intent.

Rael pulls the taut string of her bow, steadies her aim and fires. The missile slices through the pouring rain. I can't see if it hits its mark, but through the downpour comes a sharp, metallic pang.

The hooded figure drops to one knee.

Keith Baker's Boulder home is a fantasy geek's paradise. An oversized bookshelf serves as an archive of role-playing game (RPG) modules, player's handbooks and monster manuals. Posters of fantasy artwork grace the walls. Intricately designed miniatures of majestic dragons, mythical creatures and timeless warriors stand guard over counter space. Two broadswords hang over a mantle, and if you ask nicely Baker will give you a lesson in swordplay. After all, prior to becoming a novelist and game designer, he studied fencing and worked at Renaissance fairs.

If you knew Baker as a child, you probably wouldn't be surprised.

"Instead of playing Cowboys and Indians, I ran around with friends playing Egyptian and Norse gods," he says.

After showing an early interest in mythology, fantasy, the horror/sci-fi fiction of H.P. Lovecraft and the eerie artwork of Edward Gorey, it was no surprise that in 4th grade Baker became interested in a game called Dungeons & Dragons (D&D).

For those who missed the fundamentalist crusades and the music videos of Ronnie James Dio in the '80s, D&D is an RPG dating back to the early '70s in which players role-play as characters in a medieval fantasy

world where dragons and magic are real. Players team up in campaigns that involve fighting enemies, collecting treasure and completing tasks (featuring a life currency of "hit points" that is used in most modern video games). As players' characters progress, they advance in level, and with each level comes new and unique challenges. There is no board—the campaign takes place in the players' imagination, where the victors of battle are determined by a roll of the dice. And unlike a video game, D&D encourages intellectual interaction among players, and the possibilities of game direction are boundless.

In 2000, Wizards of the Coast, publishers of D&D, released a third edition of the game, which hadn't been revised since 1989. And in 2004, Wizards of the Coast introduced a new campaign setting, a full-scale world in which new D&D adventures would be based: Eberron—a world created by grown up and still fantasy-obsessed Keith Baker.

The hooded figure turns out to be a warforged soldier—a creature that had been created to fight in the Last War, but now finds itself without a purpose. It holds a book in one hand, a bloody axe in the other.

We approach it carefully, weapons drawn.

Suddenly, a child appears on the other side of the bridge and screams. The warforged rises to its feet. It pulls a second axe from its waist and towers over me, weapons raised high.

"This does not concern you," it says with a booming, metallic voice. "One chance to leave."

Instead, I raise my sword and swing at the bastard with all I've got. The hilt is slick with rain, and it nearly slips from my fingers. But my blade finds its mark with a strong, swift rattle. Stunned and battered, the warforged stumbles backward, dropping both axes along with the mysterious book. Rael fires another arrow. The warforged falls to the ground. I move in to finish it off, but before I can a mechanical nodule on its chest sprouts wings and flies away from the broken frame. It glides over the railing of the bridge and down, flying deeper into the grisly slums of the City of Towers.

We look back across the bridge, but the screaming child has gone. Was he ever there? Two bodies lie at our feet. A relentless, freezing rain is soaking through our armor, chilling us and drenching our belongings. Everything around us is coated with wet, sticky blood. I retrieve the stolen book from the fallen warforged. I'm startled to find that it's bone dry.

Even more surprising, its pages are blank.

Baker seems an unassuming man at first, friendly, perhaps a bit hyperactive. He is thin, wears glasses and sports a tight beard and brown, somewhat-ruffled hair combed smoothly to the right. Sara, Joel and I join him and his wife, Ellen, in the living room of their Boulder home, where said stacks of game modules and implements of impalement elicit high praise. We are experienced in the ways of dragon-slaying—all of us were "gamers" (the term by which D&D players affectionately refer to themselves) in our younger days. It's been more than a decade since I've played regularly—the same for Joel. But Sara is a current gamer, with a future campaign partner growing inside her belly. (I'm referring to the fact that she's pregnant, not to some magical, game-related spawn spell, for all you wizards out there.)

With our Ph.Ds in dungeon ass-kicking, Baker is introducing us to his world the best possible way—through an old-fashioned, take-no-prisoners D&D campaign. Sara is Rael, a ranger of the Valenar elves. Her people betrayed Cyre near the end of the Last War, but she has turned her back on them and continues to serve Cyre. Joel is Kesht, a warrior-priest of the Sovereign Host, once part of the Southern Command of Cyre. I am Dymus Deneith, a monk-fighter. I bear the Dragonmark of Sentinel.

Easily taking on the role of "dungeon master," or DM—the "referee" who serves as arbitrator, antagonist and storyteller during a campaign—Baker guides us through a quest of his own design, into the world of Eberron. Through his ability to control game-play, talent at adopting voices and his wild enthusiasm, we quickly realize that Baker is neither unassuming nor hyperactive. He is intense, theatrical and passionate about his pursuits, be that playing D&D; creating a card game, Gloom (released last fall); writing his first novel, *The City of Towers: The Dreaming Dark Book I*; or creating an entire freaking universe in which gamers can play.

Baker leads us to a dark corner of that universe known as Sharn, the City of Towers, the setting of his debut book.

It could be a knock at the door of our room. Just as easily, it could be another crack of thunder (the storm had lasted well into the night). It also could be the lingering lucidity of a dream, for the deadly battle with the warforged had cycled through my mind all night, disrupting my sleep.

I hear the thud again and sit up and reach for my sword. Kesht already has his drawn. Rael, the cool-headed Valenar elf, motions us at ease. It could be anything, but it is only a knock at the door.

"You have a visitor," says the innkeeper. "A woman from the House Cannith."

The mysterious woman is elegantly dressed in an ornate blue cloak too stylish for this part of the city. She has dark hair with red highlights, royal, if tragic, blue eyes, a regal manner. She introduces herself as Lady Elaydren. She wears a ring bearing the signet of Cannith.

"I am looking for an artifact," she says. "I was expecting to receive it from Gelder—the scholar that was murdered on the bridge last night. I understand you were there?"

Rael cautiously nods her head.

"I'm looking for a book," Lady Elaydren continues. "Did you happen to find one?"

Kesht rolls his eyes. I kick at the dirt with my boot. Rael begins to speak, but stops.

After scanning our expressions, Lady Elaydren lets out a soft, proud sigh.

"Well then, I have gold," she says. "But without the journal, I have no expedition to fund. Please do think back to last night. If you recall anything, I frequent the Grey Dragon Tavern. If I only had that journal, well..."

She turns and exits the courtyard.

Some hours later, we meet Lady Elaydren at the Grey Dragon with journal in hand. The signet on the book matches that on her ring. When put together, they both glow with a royal magic.

Lady Elaydren offers us a deal that will send us in search of a seven-pointed star 57 levels below the sewer in an old foundry. We came to Sharn in search of adventure and treasure, so we accept.

"Keep an eye out," she says as we are leaving the tavern. "It is always possible there will be more agents of the Lord of Blades, if that is, indeed, who you are dealing with."

As he guides us through a world of his making, Baker fills us in on how the campaign we're undertaking came into existence. Prior to creating Eberron, Baker had done freelance writing, often for less traditional pulp adventure RPGs. Then in 2002, Wizards of the Coast issued an open call for a new world in which to base campaigns. Baker came up with Eberron, incorporating many pulp devices into the traditional D&D schema.

"I thought, 'What if you took that pulp tone and applied it to the fantasy setting instead of the '30s,'" says Baker.

The result is a world that Baker describes as "Lord of the Rings meets Indiana Jones and The Maltese Falcon." In essence, a film noir in a fantasy RPG setting.

Wizards of the Coast liked the idea, and chose Baker, and Eberron, out of 11,000 entrants—awarding Baker \$100,000.

The creation of particular worlds for gaming has always been an important component of D&D culture. Since the game's inception, writers have developed unique and original settings in which players base their campaigns. The first was Greyhawk, a world concocted by D&D creator Gary Gygax. The second edition of D&D featured such popular settings as Forgotten Realms and Dragonlance.

For Eberron, Baker wanted to increase the level of sophistication of game-play without losing the adventurous appeal that gamers love.

"Let's take what is in D&D—magic, fantasy, etc.—and apply it to a world as we've applied science and technology to ours," says Baker. "D&D has all these monsters... We needed to create a world where they were there, but we wanted to create a world where we explain why they're there."

To do this, Baker took the notion of magic, an essential ingredient of D&D game-play, and incorporated it into the society of Eberron in such a way that it is not an anomaly or mysterious power so much as it is a physical reality that Eberron's inhabitants have attempted to harness to improve their lives.

"It's trying to take what does exist in D&D and say, 'Instead of technology we use magic,'" says Baker. "People are comfortable with magic. People apply it as they would technology."

But despite better living through hocus-pocus, there is still plenty of fresh meat for the hack-and-slash style of gamer, like myself. Baker just wants there to be an explanation from whence the meat came. Gone are the days of a random castle in the middle of a forest with neither rhyme nor reason to explain its presence. Gone are the oversized monsters in desolate settings that couldn't possibly sate their hefty appetites. Oh, the castles

and dragons are still there. Don't worry. It's just that in Eberron, everything has a backstory.

On the surface, the war ended two years ago. But when you go underground, into these dark, subterranean depths, you see a war is still being fought. There are no armies, no sides, no objective more noble than self-preservation. But in these impoverished sewers, battle is waged constantly. To the victor, survival—the right to live, and fight, another day.

The lighting is as dim as the hope down here; sputtering torches offer spare illumination. It's difficult to see far ahead or behind. The sound of rushing water surrounds us, flowing through the walls, above us, below. The carrion smell is intolerable. I focus my thoughts on the promise of treasure to keep from turning around and heading back to the surface.

For a small fee we acquire the services of a guide. He's underage, but cheap. The goblin child leads us through a twisting maze of granite and filth, in search of our destination. The rolling gush of water grows louder the deeper we tread into the tunnels. Finally, the child leads us to a flat stone wall. The only way forward is to the right—into a river of fetid, brown waste.

Kesht takes the lead, inching knee-deep into the sewer water. He steps into a shadow. I follow, but no sooner have I entered the murky stream than I notice a warforged soldier lurking in the darkness.

"Kesht!" I yell, but a moment too late.

The warforged drives its axe between his ribs. Kesht howls in pain and drops into the water.

"Give me the book," the warforged bellows.

Kesht is slumped and retching into the sewer. I dive through the space between him and the creature, deftly avoiding a quick attack. I raise my sword and swing wildly at the enemy... but miss.

There is the sound of footsteps crashing through water at the far end of the tunnel. I turn to find two large, hairy beasts charging toward us. Feral shifters. Two dry platforms flank the sewer between the shifters and us. In the other direction is a grate. Our only shot at surviving this ambush is to get to the platforms and fight on dry ground.

But first we have to deal with the warforged, which has raised its axe for another strike.

"Give me the book," it hollers again.

Rael attacks with her scimitar, but loses her footing in the water. She misses her mark. Kesht struggles to his knees and swipes at the warforged with his longsword. He does minimal damage but at least disrupts the enemy's attack. I charge the beast, striking with a two-handed deathblow. The shot lands clean. The warforged falls backward against the grate, then slides motionless into the murky water.

Baker is as savvy as he is talented. When he developed Eberron, he wasn't just creating a campaign setting. He was creating a franchise, something he could develop and expand. Last month Baker released his first

novel, *The City of Towers*, which is set in Eberron and details many of the events and creatures that gamers will encounter in their campaigns. It is the first part of a trilogy, and the first book in the career of a budding novelist who, at the age of 35, has already garnered much success. Baker has published numerous RPG modules, a novel, a card game and did some of the scriptwriting for the much-anticipated online RPG *Everquest II*.

Not bad for someone who worked in coffeeshops, bookstores and the video-game industry while trying to break into the RPG business.

"I've always known what I wanted to do," says Baker. "I just didn't know how I was going to do it."

Ultimately, it was part talent, part creativity and part passion.

"I just wrote [Eberron] because I thought it was a fun idea," says Baker. "I think that's why they liked it, because of the passion and energy."

Before we can tend to Kesht's wounds, we must deal with the feral shifters—who've grown mighty claws and are closing in fast. Rael raises her bow and fires, striking one. Kesht raises his sword and swings at the other. He makes contact, but opens himself to a counterattack. The shifter slashes him with its claw. As Kesht struggles for balance, the shifter raises its claw to strike again. I rush to Kesht's aid, but can't reach him in time.

Then suddenly a valve opens, allowing a thick wave of sewage into the tunnel that levels everything in its path—including Kesht and the shifter. For the moment Kesht is spared, but critically wounded. Rael pierces the other shifter with repeated trajectories from her longbow, taking its life.

I close in on the remaining shifter. It raises its arms in surrender, but seeing I intend no mercy, the hairy beast attempts to flee down the tunnel.

Not so fast, Chewbacca.

I fire my crossbow, nailing the shifter in the back of the leg and dropping it into the brown goop. It cries into the water as Rael and I approach. I press my longsword to its neck, then raise it high above my head. The shifter pleads for its life.

It is not spared.

We gather ourselves on a dry platform, away from the sewage and the carnage of battle. We are battered, but not defeated. The ancient and mysterious book is still in our possession, but our quest is not complete. More adversaries await—more treasure, more adventure. We tend to each other's wounds, catch our breath and plot our next course.

We steel our resolve, and press on through the ruins.

For more information on Keith Baker, Eberron and *The City of Towers*, visit www.bossythecow.com or www.wizards.com.

silly fox says

[except: illithid. (hide spoiler)]

Richard Reinhart says

Keith Baker's new world Eberron is introduced to me in this book. I found the world very closely matches Forgotten Realms series which is under the same publisher. The book which is the first in a trilogy is very action packed, full of mystery and flows very well. In a land of lost a group of four tries to find a new meaning in which they feel a part of the world of Eberron. 5 out of 5 stars.

Conan Tigard says

Since this is the first Eberron book ever published, I found myself a little lost at times trying to understand this new world. I had trouble bonding with any of the main characters until about halfway through the book. In my opinion, the second half of the book is much better than the first half. I actually put the book down for about a month after the first 70 pages or so.

When I gave it a second chance, I found myself more immersed in the story than during the previous read. Eberron is not your typical Dungeon & Dragons world. It is definitely more technology driven and the Sharn is an immense city in height.

The City of Towers by Keith Baker is a good opening book for a world that has a lot of promise. I did like how the city is laid out in mind-boggling towers so high I have a hard time imagining it. There is so much more to discover in this world that I am really looking forward to it. There is one thing that I don't like about the Eberron books: the incredibly small print and the font. I find the font hard to read, and I see this font in other Eberron books.

Other than that, The City of Towers is a good book that is definitely worth looking into. I look forward to seeing both the characters and the world develop in further stories.

I rated this book a 7 out of 10.

Steven Wilber says

Let me start by saying that while I did not think this novel was anything special, I did enjoy the book and thought it was very good. "The City of Towers" was the first book in the Eberron novel line and served as an introduction to the setting for many readers. As such the author provides the reader with a great deal of information on the world of Eberron, its inhabitants, and its history. While this information was interesting and highlights the difference between Eberron and other fantasy settings, at times the sheer volume of it took away from story and left me feeling like I was reading a guide book for the world or a campaign supplement rather than a novel. I think this is the source of many of the negative reviews.

However, there were a number of things I liked about the book. First, while the book is an action, adventure book, it is also a mystery. The characters in the novel are hired to track down a missing person and recover some rare Kyber Dragonshards (magical crystals with the power to bind other creatures and magic) that this person was carrying. Over the course of the novel, the reader learns that the mystery goes much deeper and that the main characters are caught up in some larger plot that is tied to their pasts. The author does a good job of dropping clues and revealing things without giving the entire plot away (although I was able to guess some things ahead of time). While most of the story is revealed in this book, the novel leaves much of the deeper story for the future books in the series.

I also liked the characters in the book. While fairly typical fantasy characters, they did seem to have interesting back-stories that the author revealed slowly as the book progressed. Mr. Baker also did a good job of tying these stories into the main plot of the book. My favourite character was that of the Warforged Pierce, who struggles with his role in the world and purpose now that the Last War is over (The Warforged are magical sentient constructs that were created to fight in the war and have only ever known war).

Finally, the book had plenty of action and adventure. While I did find the first half of the book a bit slow (primarily because of the amount of information about the world incorporated into the story), the second half really picked up. The final 75 or so pages really pulled the story together and finished with a bang. The ending left me looking forward to the second book in the series ("The Shattered Land").

As I have said, overall I liked the book. However, as mentioned, I did find all the 'introduction to Eberron' stuff a bit tedious and it did detract some from the story overall. Much of this stuff seemed unnecessary to me and would have been better left to the appendix at the end of the book.

However, I believe that the good in the book more than outweighed the bad and in the end I think "The City of Towers" was a good introduction to the setting and the Dreaming Dark trilogy. While not the best Eberron novel out there it was good enough for me.

Note: The second and third books of this series show Mr. Baker's growth as an author and are each quite good.

Newton Nitro says

De volta para a literatura de fantasia, começo a leitura da trilogia Eberron: The Dreaming Dark, de Keith Baker, que já estava fazendo poeira na minha pilha de "para ler algum dia!"

The City of Towers (Eberron: The Dreaming Dark #01) - Keith Baker | NITROLEITURAS #fantasia #dungeonsanddragons #eberron | 390 pgs, Wizards 2005 | Lido de 28.06.17 a 01.07.17

SINOPSE

Endurecidos pela última guerra, quatro soldados chegam a Sharn, lendária cidade das torres, capital da aventura, que abriga o melhor e o pior que a Eberron tem para oferecer. Depois de uma vida de luta, a guerra é tudo o que eles sabem.

Agora, em um momento de paz incômoda, eles devem se esforçar para sobreviver. Entretanto, pessoas importantes começam a morrer. Os heróis logo se acham presos em uma trama que os levará dos mais altos níveis de poder para as profundidades mais sórdidas da cidade de maravilhas, sombras e aventura.

RESENHA

Um livro muito divertido, que passa bem o clima aventuresco e pulp de Eberron, um cenário de RPG para Dungeons and Dragons. Como o primeiro livro lançado pelo cenário e escrito pelo criador do cenário Keith Baker, grande parte da narrativa se preocupa em mostrar o que torna o cenário diferente.

Os personagens são bem legais, principalmente o Pierce, um Warforged guerreiro. Os Warforged são, uma espécie de robô ou andróide feito de madeira, aço e magia, autoconsciente, um dos elementos mais legais do cenário Eberron!

Para quem não conhece, Eberron é um cenário de campanha para o jogo de role-playing Dungeons & Dragons (D & D), ambientado num período após uma vasta guerra destrutiva no continente de Khorvaire. Eberron foi projetado para acomodar os elementos tradicionais de D & D com narrativas pulp (estilo Indiana Jones), horror lovecraftiano (esquema cósmico com tentáculos), e algumas tecnologias de fantasia não-tradicional, como trens, skyships e seres mecânicos energizados por magia.

Eles mal sobreviveram a uma guerra devastadora, e as cicatrizes mentais que deixou foram apresentadas de forma realista, assim como a falta de direção agora que a guerra acabou.

Gostei da interação entre o grupo de aventureiros, ressaltando os laços de amizade e com todo aquele clima de "veteranos de guerra". Os personagens são bem construídos, com personalidades distintas, histórias pessoais interessantes, e cativam, principalmente, repito, o DOIDIMAIS DO PIERCE, o warforged!

O legal de Eberron, e que me impressionou em 2005 quando o cenário foi lançado, é a maneira madura com que lida com elementos tradicionais do D&D. A subclasse empobrecida é verdadeiramente oprimida e vive na imundície e na miséria. O racismo, o conflito de classe e a tensão pós-guerra abundam, ao lado de vícios e corrupção. O forte contraste da opulência dos ricos e sua indiferença cega com aqueles (literalmente) embaixo deles, junto com as Casas das Dragonmakrs, que são como corporações proto-capitalistas, serve para reforçar o estilo quase "steampunk" ou "magipunk" do mundo de Keith Baker.

A trama de THE CITY OF TOWERS também merece destaque, envolvendo seus protagonistas em uma história de mistério e investigação urbana, que mistura aventura, pancadaria e horror lovecraftiano-tentacular doidimais!

Recomendado para quem curte aventuras de fantasia focadas em ação e investigação urbana, com um estilão meio noir, e para quem curte os doidimais dos Warforged, uma espécie de construtos mágicos ou robôs autoconscientes em um cenário de fantasia!

Um abraço do Newton Nitro!

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Charlie says

This is a good read and a good beginning to the world of Eberron - I agree with most others that this seems to have a tinge of the Players Guide sprinkled throughout, but, considering that this was written by one of the major sources for Eberron, I would expect no less - moving on to tale #2 and hoping for more story and more character development

Josh says

This book definitely came as a pleasant surprise. Being new to the world of Eberron, I was delighted to discover a world setting for which I had been searching for a long time, one that combines fantasy and sci fi in such a way that opens up huge possibilities for storytelling and worldbuilding. And the setting for this particular tale is even more enthralling - a massive vertical city built upon impossibly tall towers, each housing its own kind of culture from the tops to the depths.

But all that aside, I was surprised at the quality of the writing from Keith Baker. He definitely brings the world and the character to life in just the right way. That, and the performance of the narrator, made the dialogue sound witty and natural, and the characters burst with life. Also the nature of the story as kind of a detective-type story and not an epic world-shattering event felt very refreshing.

Another thing that I like about Eberron is the integration of the races. In this world, the traditional evil races such as goblins, orcs, and even medusa are not simply enemies that pop out to try and kill the characters. These races exist in their own pocket of Sharn, with their own societies, and their own rules. Traveling there does not necessarily mean battle has to occur - although racial tensions still make such an encounter likely. But when battle does occur, it's just as likely to be between a human and dwarf, or some other race. That kind of leveling of the playing field also makes Eberron feel refreshing and interesting.

I enjoyed this one a lot, and hope to check out the other two books in the series and maybe other books by Keith Baker.

Marvin says

Surprisingly not bad. Sometimes works a little too hard--and bluntly--at introducing the (new [at the time] D&D) world of Eberron, but it's a cool enough setting. The characters are a bit flat, but they have potential. That's perhaps the upside and downside to the entire book: potential. Baker delivers a good enough story, but he could have delivered a great one. It feels a draft short.

The mystery/investigation at the heart of the story is intriguing, but the characters don't feel entirely active in the pursuit. Things happen, unfold almost on their own. The BBEG (& co.) opposing our heroes are too lodged in shadow; a bit of foreshadowing really could've opened things up there. Auguries/prophecies/whatevers offered by secondary characters too often drive the plot--and a bit aimlessly so--instead of the heroes. Facets of the characters' backstories apparently key to their development are purposefully withheld from the reader and employed as an ineffective source of mystery.

The story keeps the reader moving along, however. Baker's prose is adequate, generally avoiding burdensome or painfully flowery detail, and his restriction of POV changes to chapter or section changes was a welcome relief from my recent D&D-fantasy adventures. The setting is intriguing and the character engaging enough to deserve the continuing of their tale--though hopefully finding themselves more in the driver's seat.

David says

For the first book of a whole new D&D campaign setting, I'd say this book is pretty good. It's not spectacular... just nice. Obviously, being the first book of a new setting, the book attempts to introduce the readers to the world of Eberron. For readers familiar with D&D, certain sections of the book felt like a campaign setting sourcebook. For readers unfamiliar with D&D, it may probably be too much irrelevant details. There's a nice glossary at the end containing history and setting details - might've have nicer to put footnotes throughout the pages pointing to the glossary - could've made the pace faster.

Anyway, as for the story, it's an action adventure book with some mystery thrown in. The protagonists were sent to locate a missing smuggler and a missing "shipment" of goods, but were inevitably drawn into something much bigger. The plot is quite good and very nicely laid out - not revealing too much too quickly. Certain parts of the action sequences had conflicting descriptions - minor, but you'd notice - like one of the protagonist healing from a dagger wound that should have been made by a chain.

The characters are believable and each has an interesting back story. But that's where it stopped. Not enough depth probably, or not enough characterisation perhaps? It's like watching player characters (RPG) go through a campaign. I can't "feel" for the characters.

So overall, the plot, the pace, and the characters are all pretty good - they just don't stand out. A pretty good effort for the first book of a whole new setting though, so it's still a good enough read. The ending picks up the pace and nicely sets the stage for the next 2 books.

One final point though - if you're easily irritated with bad proof-reading - be forewarned about this book. It's incredible that Wizards of the Coast, which published so many books, managed to publish a book with typos and grammatical errors abound - there's at least one for almost every chapter. I even noticed one when

browsing the glossary!

Matthew Perry says

A great beginning to an even greater trilogy. This book is the best of the lot. Real elements of fantasy are woven into the story to give you a sense of just how expansive Eberron really is. The story moves very fast and it's hard to stop turning the pages. The character's backstories are not fully explained in this book but, they are in the latter parts of the series. Great read.

Hyann says

My first book in the Eberron setting. I read the appendix, very well done. Just enough data to covered the basic.

I really like the way the author introduce the world and all the new things. He didn't make the mistake to put too much information which I appreciate a lot. The background on each characters flow really well in the story.

You have enough action and intrigue during all not book, not just in the last chapters. Another thing I liked is you have an end to the story, don't have to wait for the next book.

I will read the second book as soon as possible!

Spoiler: I just hope the will bring back one of the character!

Joseph says

I recently began playing in an Eberron role-playing game campaign, so I picked up this book as a way to learn more about the world. The book served its purpose fairly well. My only real complaint is that the editing is terrible. It seemed like I was jarred out of the story every few pages by one error or another. If you are a role-playing gamer, you'll probably enjoy this. If not, I wouldn't place any bets.

Robert Carlberg says

I wish I would have read these books earlier. Eberron is a great world to read about. It is another fantasy, but with its own twist. Love the Warforged. Thought that the idea of these works a lot better in this setting than any others. The dragonmarks are awesome. Be interesting what else I find out while I read this trilogy.

Walter Moore says

Keith Baker is really amazing at building worlds - the Eberron cosmology has rare depth and complexity. I greatly enjoyed the exposition - clunky or not - and the glimpses of a wide and living world behind the story.

Sadly, these shine through like a diamond in the rough. The actual story is a mess of wandering sub-plots, afflicted by the the telltale maladies of a "D&D campaign as book."

Each of the four protagonists (which I found myself referring to as the "player characters") is saddled with a special destiny and hidden past, and by the end of the book these have weighed the characters down beyond the lifting capacity of the muddled plot.

Still, it is worth reading to acquaint oneself with the world and the characters.. but don't expect much of it. A very mediocre example of the D&D Fantasy genre, relieved only by excellent world-building.

Chip Hunter says

Ebberon is a new world to me, and I bought this book just to test the waters (I'll be buying more in the future). I was surprised at how quickly and completely I became absorbed in this book. The world of Ebberon is a masterfull blend of pure fantasy (with gnomes, goblins, elves, and ogres) and science fiction (from flying ships and buildings to teleportation and sentient robots). As Daine, Jode, Lei, and Pierce explore the great city of Sharn, the wolrd of Ebberon is introduced in a manner which allows for no prior knowledge of the settings to fully appreciate the story. The characters are complex and each have somewhat mysterious pasts that will be explained in following books. The storyline is intriguing and I can't wait to read the next two books.

I was very impressed with the world of Ebberon, a world in a dark age in which powerful forces combat with magic and technology. This first book gives a glimpse into a world which promises to hold plenty of mysteries and wonders. Can't wait for more.

Matthew Gill says

Awesome book, great series. I fond this book really gave me a new and more broader/in-depth view of Eberron. The story itself was very engaging and I really liked the writing style/pace. Can't wait to see more from Keith Baker.
