



Hell to Pay

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A new side novel set in the Ascend Online universe! 'Book 1.5'

Lazarus Cain is a member of the Grim Shadows, one of the Thieves Guilds in the city of Eberia. Unfortunately, Lazarus is having a bad day. Waking up in a torture chamber, suffering from amnesia, he'd be pretty much screwed if not for the mysterious, magical sigil burned into his chest.

Sometimes a really bad day should be shared with others, especially professional torturers.

Lazarus will need to use all his cunning and skill to work with his comrades, uncovering schemes within schemes, discovering that The Grim Shadows are not the only Thieves Guild in the city mired in conflict. What's more, the leaders of the other guilds, the Thief Lords, don't respond well to treachery...

Hell to Pay Details

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Author : Luke Chmilenko

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Fate's Lady says

OMG the dangling modifiers are RELENTLESS.

That aside, this one covers a different set of characters than the first book, and takes a long time to really get going. The main character wakes with no memory of the previous 24 hours, and a finite amount of time to solve the mystery or Bad Things will happen. The editing left much to be desired and the pacing could have been better, but I'm sure it's leading up to something interesting. I hope...

Rob Clark says

An erstwhile second entry in the author's freshman series, this book focuses on another group of players in his world who've taken a somewhat riskier path to success. While the writer's excellent flow remains a constant, there seemed to be slightly more mistakes in both plotting and grammar.

On the whole a very strong second entry into the series that does a lot to flesh out the artificial world the protagonists inhabit in a way that leaves the reader wanting to know more.

Definitely recommend.

Lazybee says

Completely new characters. Shame.

Arun says

One of my favourite LitRPG authors delivers another stellar book. Truly immersive, Hell to Pay describes the characters of the Thieves Guild, who are oft-relegated to the shadows of infamy and villainy. This book, however, gives them a platform to shine and shine they do! The book is as immersive as the game it is set in and each character has a role to play. I can't wait for the next book in this series.

Chris Evans says

I'm really not a fan of decimal point books, they are made to be optional reading material and thus can't have any story progression in it. These are 'ok' when it's an established story and characters we want more from, but this is the second book published on this world AND doesn't involve any of the main characters. -_-

So, what keeps this story from being scored even lower is that it really isn't a decimal point book. As I said

above, this doesn't involve any of the main characters, isn't near any of the main characters, and in no way connects to the main story line. This is an entirely separate story line set in the same world.

The story it's self would have been very good... if it wasn't a 'not stuck in the game' litrpg. All the events here have absolutely no stakes. While the first book goes into the main characters reasons for playing, why they can't log out, and how bad things might get for them and others if they fail. None of that is explained for these characters. The only thing left here is the strange and the poorly explained mind manipulation. While that a potentially really cool idea it has yet to go anywhere, be explained, or see any real life fallout for it. Also, it wasn't the main character it was really happening to (aside from the memory part) or being threatened to happen to. There's potential here, it just hasn't been realized yet.

Dave Packard says

A side novel in the same universe (game world) as the original, but with characters that appear in Book 1 and Book 2 (this is 1.5). Loved it like the first one. Great series - I highly recommend it to game players especially.

Miles says

3.4?

Pj says

The writing quality of Hell to Pay is on par with the first novel in the Ascend Online series, but as a personal preference I didn't like this story as much. It was harder for me to care about the protagonists because they all seemed a bit selfish. The world building is solid, and most of the good things from the first book on that front carry over into this novel. I also like that we get a glimpse into the level progression of characters that stayed in the starting city as compared to those in the outskirts.

The tone of the first book is about building and exploring something new. The protagonists want to make the virtual world better than they found it. In this book people all anyone seems to care about is saving themselves. Yeah I get that there were some scenes focusing on unity within a thieves guild, but they don't outweigh the idea that the only reason anyone is doing anything in this book is to save their own skin, or figure out what happened in their own history during a period of Amnesia.

Tara says

I know ... it's an issue. I need a therapist, because I'm simply addicted. Let's be very upfront and clear here... this is NOT our original favorite heroes! This is a new band of adventurers with their own histories, backgrounds and personalities to learn. In fact, this is nearly the opposite end of the spectrum as it is a band of thieves who remain within the city while our original adventurers are out in the wilds. I don't feel this is a spoiler as it's well known from the beginning where our

new protagonists hail from.

Still as addictive as the first book, you just have to ease past the desire to know how your original heroes are fairing because you will NOT find out.

I zipped through it as quickly as I did the first and am completely enthusiastic about beginning the next in the series. It's official ... I need an intervention.

Mike says

I thought the writing and storyline were very good, and would have enjoyed it more if I knew what I was getting.

However I found it very hard to get into this book, because there was the expectation that this was a continuation of the first book and following the original characters. However it follows an entirely new MC and party.

I also would have liked there to be more of the LitRPG gaming elements and mechanics that the first one had. Instead this felt more like a fantasy action/thriller novel, and not quite full LitRPG.

Bryce O'Connor says

Like some of the other reviews have already stated, the change of protagonist was a little jarring at first, but after an initial period of hesitancy, it didn't take long for me to dive headfirst into Lazarus' insanity and adventure. Maintaining the improved writing seen over the course of the first book, Hell to Pay approaches Ascend Online from a different play-style and perspective that is no less interesting, enticing, and active.

A small note of extra appreciation: as a sucker for a touch of romance, I have to commend Luke Chmilenko on inserting juuuust enough of a love sub-plot to add to the overall tone of the story, without remotely distracting from the fast pace, constant-action style of AsO's play and progression.

Amy Asadoorian says

Excellent second installment

Not as grasping as The first Ascend Online, but still an excellent read. Not as gamer-y as the first, but characters were well developed by then end and I began to care about them and their epic quest. There are a lot of questions left unanswered that I hope come back around in subsequent editions to the series.

What really stood out for me in this edition were the battle scenes. In most fantasy novels, I actually find them boring. Not in Hell to Pay! They are fantasy battles done well! Graphic and gross and wholly original!

Kudos on another awesome novel!

CB says

I decided I should finish this series since I checked out the third book through Kindle Unlimited. I enjoyed the new perspective, although I'm super glad I knew that was going to happen because otherwise I would have been super confused expecting a continuation. This installment didn't seem to be as focused on the game playing aspect, but was still an interesting new story line. I'm excited to see how the two disparate stories will converge.

Kim says

Title: Hell to Pay (Ascend Online Universe) by Luke Chmilenko (5/29/2018)

Why I picked this book up: On a trip to TN with DH, he was listening to the series

What I thought about it: It was a intermediate book that tied together books 1 and 2 in the series, told from the viewpoint of a member of the thieves' guild.

Overall impression: 3/5.00

Around the Year in 52 Books prompt: A book with an antagonist/villain point of view

Popsugar prompt: A book about time travel

Matt says

Lazarus chooses to play as a beefed up hands on villain, but as it turns out he's just a soft hearted, over emotional, inexplicably patriotic sap in wolves' clothing. Setting aside the ludicrous notion of a Thieves guild making it their mission to save the city they live in (as opposed to acting more like, well, THIEVES!) Chmileko's character doesn't have a semblance of the bravado or selfishness you'd expect from such a character. Lazarus is not a counter to Marcus, or a cleverly written anti-hero, he's just a dunce. Very disappointed for this missed opportunity. I'll give book 3 a shot, but my confidence in Luke is shaken.
