

Corrupts Absolutely?: Dark Metahuman Fiction

Lincoln Crisler (Editor) , Peter Clines , Jeff Strand , Joe McKinney , Weston Ochse , Cat Rambo , Tim Marquitz , William Todd Rose , more... Edward M. Erdelac , Karina Lumbert Fabian , Jeremy Hepler , Jason M. Tucker , A.S. Fox , Kris Ashton , A.D. Spencer , Wayne Ligon , Malon Edwards , Warren Stockholm , Lee Mather , Trisha J. Wooldridge , Wayne Helge , Andrew Bourelle ...less

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Dark metahuman fiction featuring stories from Peter (Ex-Heroes) Clines, Weston (Seal Team 666) Ochse, Joe (Dead World) McKinney, Cat Rambo, and many more.

- The only family member to survive the 9/11 attacks.
- A sidekick-turned-construction-worker.
- Teenaged products of an institute for unwanted metahumans.
- A man who can make anyone do anything.

Are they heroes? Are they villains? Sometimes they're both. Often at the same time. *Corrupts Absolutely?* collects twenty tales from veteran authors and newcomers, each with a unique perspective on what it might really be like to be superhuman in today's day and age. In the center of such a roiling mass of uncertainty and excitement lies one important truth: the fight against good or evil is never as important as the fight for or against oneself.

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Cover art by Malcolm McClinton. Design by Shawn T. King.

PRAISE

“The editor has done a fine job of assembling a batch of stories filled with attitude and badassery.”
—Superheronovels.Com

“Lincoln Crisler has taken pains to choose this myriad collection of stories exploring the theme of Metahumans acting out inhumanely and there are quite a few zingers to this collection. This is a collection very much in the vein of *Masked* by Lou Anders; however, with a tenebrious and twisted bent to it.”
—Fantasy Book Critic

"Corrupts Absolutely?" is a great anthology with a concept that never gets old. Each of the stories is incredibly unique, even the ones that deal with a similar power or theme. I had a great time with this and I didn't dislike a single story. That's hard to do. Highly Recommended!"
—Only the Best Sci-Fi and Fantasy

“Lincoln Crisler’s compilation is commendable for showing a range of variations on its theme. The contributors address the motif from different aspects and genres. Aficionados of horror will find several tales to whet their genre appetite.”
—Hellnotes

“...the large majority of the stories establish intriguing conditions, insert equally intriguing characters, add appropriately devastating consequences to either action or inaction, and let the chips—or bodies—fall where they may. Recommended.”
—Michael Collings

“Really got me to thinking about who really is a 'Hero' and a 'Villain' and where is the line drawn.”
—Melsworld

“...The perfect collection for horror fans with a taste for superhero prose or lovers of hero tales who enjoy a bit of corruption with a horror flavor.”
—Dreadful Tales

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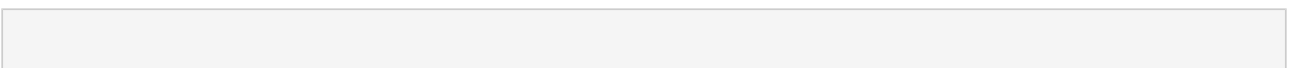
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From Reader Review Corrupts Absolutely?: Dark Metahuman Fiction for online ebook

Mihir says

Overall rating = 3 & 1/2 stars

Full Review originally at [Fantasy Book Critic](#)

ANALYSIS: Most of us have always been fascinated by superheroes. In this anthology Lincoln Crisler dares to ask the question why people with powers would always turn to good? Focussing on the powerful words by the first Baron Acton, comes an anthology focussing on the shadier side of metahumans. I'll be speaking about each story as it will be in line with the previous anthology FBC reviews and simply makes more sense.

Retribution by Tim Marquitz – The anthology begins with this exciting tale by Tim Marquitz. It's about a person who has lost his family during the events of America's biggest tragedy (9/11). The story then reveals as to what might happen to such a person who gains a certain type of power and decides to extract a certain kind of retribution. It's not pretty and the author doesn't really make any amends for the protagonist's behavior. It is a stark story, which asks the reader to imagine what happens when a person's reason to live is extinguished and they get a chance to do what their mind tells them. A rather good tale but on the shorter side and a good opener to this collection.

?Hollywood Villany by Weston Ochse – This was a rather different story; it begins by shifting narratives and basically is about a boy who just "wants his two dollars back". The story constantly keeps the readers on their toes and ends the story with a twist that might definitely get a lot of reader's attention. I however didn't quite like the story as much, the constant narrative switches kind of ruined the read for me.

?Mental Man by William Todd Rose – Mental Man is concept which has been explored in some horror stories and can be described as a cross between Dean Koontz's *Hideaway* and Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon*. However the twist being in this story that protagonist never manages to see the killer's face as the killer shatters all mirrors and reflective surfaces. The tale is quite an excellent one as it basically examines the relationship between a hero and his nemesis. This story basically works as it has a sixth sense moment in the end and for me this was first of the standout stories in this anthology.

??The Real Church by Jeremy Hepler – The real church explores an angle which is very interesting to read about. Owen McKinney is the protagonist of this tale which has him exploring what it means to follow in Jesus's steps however there's a catch to this power. That's what makes this tale so absorbing and the way it ends, it makes you want to know more about Owen McKinney and the world of Real Church. Another very good story with an angle which will be interesting to read about.

?Ozymandias Revisited by A.S. Fox – Originally I thought that this tale was perhaps revisiting one of *Watchmen* most intriguing characters. However turns out that it has nothing to do with that iconic book but it is basically about the poem "Ozymandias" by Percy B. Shelley. The original poem talks mortality and human arrogance, A.S. Fox takes the gist of the poem and then turns it around by showcasing an omnipotent, narcissistic persona who talks about his way and his whims which continuously affect the way and remolds it. A fascinating story but one that ends in a weird way.

?Enlightened by Sin by Jason M. Tucker – This is one of the better stories in the book which showcases Victor, an individual who goes after killers a-la Dexter however the difference being that his power allows him to know about the person's intimate wrong-doing and sins. Convinced about his tract he soon encounters a superhero Captain Justice and a killer Red Dahlia that to might lead to his doom. An excellent short story that if made into a longer book will be something, which I would love read more about.

?The Origin of Slashy by Jeff Strand – This is one of the darker tales of the book and deals with a rape survivor called Kaylee who soon discovers her power thereafter. Its what she does with it that leads to the darkness of the story. A story about a fall in to madness of sorts, it very well could be the darkest story of the book and one which highlights the central theme of the collection.??

Conviction by Edward M. Erdelac – This is one of the weirder tales in the book which does not do much to explain the origin of the main character's powers however showcases how much powerful an emotional connection can be. Set from the perspective of a young African-American boy called Abassi who goes on a rampage of sorts a la King Kong because of sentimental reasons. The way this story is written really draws a chord with the reader however the ending is a bit ambiguous.

?Threshold by Kris Ashton – Simply put this was my favorite story of the entire collection, its about a person who is compelled to kill because of the building pressure in his head very similar to migraines. The story pursues a very interesting thread as it fundamentally asks the question in a struggle between the heart and the head, what would triumph? The ending is also a great one and I would love to see this story be transformed into a novel-length story simply to see what happens in the end.

??Oily by A.D. Spencer – Oily is about a super heroine who seeks guilty people as Cat's eye with the help of her father's words. She however meets someone that befuddles her directives. A story, which has an interesting premise but after the previous stories with similar premises, this one simply doesn't manage to reach the levels of the earlier ones. A decent effort but definitely could have been better.

?Hero by Joe McKinney - This story is built around the Cassandra myth and set in modern times. Robert Hanover is the man who can see seven minutes and twenty two seconds in to the future. However akin to his mythological sibling no one really believes him. This story is set from the perspective of the physician treating him, an excellent story and one whose twist in the end manages to completely surprise the reader.??

Pride by Wayne Ligon – Probably my second favorite story in this collection, Pride shares characteristics with the X-men storyline of the 90s and a bit with the recently released Myke Cole debut. This story is set in Detroit and focuses on Calvin Carmichael, a metahuman who is forced to be a sub-human because of his past. This story deals about personhood, freedom and the right to pursue happiness, with an ending that definitely matches the premise of the story, Pride is one of the standout tales of this myriad collection.

?G-Child by Malon Edwards – This tale is about a girl superhero who is team mates with a stronger hero and who is having a nervous breakdown. Set in the past and present, the story follows twin threads to show the readers why Aiesha is the way she is. The tale didn't quite work for me as I couldn't connect with the narrator or her can of woes. The ending, which tries to salvage the story doesn't do enough.

?Static by Jason Gehlert – Static is a story which begins on a bridge and the reader is immediately dumped into the happenings of the world. It has to do with why people are acting strange or killing themselves and its upto Licoln Carter and John Buchanan to figure out why. This story feels more of a part of a larger tale and the way it starts and ends might leave several readers with an acute sense of vrtigo or unfinished business.

??Illusion by Karina Fabian – Illusion is another dark story in this collection and focuses upon Daryl Stephens, a teenager with an acute issue. Heart breaking in its execution and premise, this story dwells upon what happens to those who are given power and are yet unready to wield it. The story opens up with Daryl who chants a mantra to help him but often fails and yet it provides him with an illusion of sorts. An interesting story but again one which perhaps ends too starkly.

??Sabre by Anthony Laffan – Sabre is a tale, which examines the Iron Man/Tony Stark story mode as it focuses upon Sabre the hero. However as an investigative reporter finds out to her chagrin what the hero's presence has been actually doing. With a very neat twist inserted in the end, the author quickly closes off this tale by showcasing what a Tony Stark-like persona might really aspire to. A highly entertaining story and one that makes the reader sit up and take notice.

??Crooked by Lee Mather - Crooked is another interesting story dealing with mobsters and vendettas. The protagonist is a person looking to escape his past life with his loved ones however what happens when the past catches up with him and how he faces it is the crux of this story. A bit Machiavellian in its premise, the story ends up with a strong twist and the protagonist has shades of Glotka from the Joe Abercrombie series, a good tale but perhaps could have been fleshed out better.

??Fixed by Trisha J. Wooldridge – Fixed is a tale about a working woman Victoria Cheetham who has to decide on her priorities, sandwiched between her professional work and personal life she strives to strike a balance between her demanding boss and her family. The story was a bit of a hodge-podge effort for me, on one hand it had a comedic sheen to it and on the other it strove to be serious as well. The end result being that it managed to be neither, one of the weaker stories in the book for me.

??Acquainted with the Night by Cat Rambo – Acquainted with the Night is a tale of a person pushed to the very limits of his humanity and is told through a series of vignettes about the main character. What follows is a tale that might not sit lightly with some readers and follows a Greek tragedy of sorts. A dark tale which though powerful feels a bit incomplete.

??Gone Rogue by Wayne Helge - The penultimate story in this collection is a quirky light hearted one, which pretty much surmises what the plot is going to be about. Focusing on a sidekick who plays the man Friday to Zooster the superhero. He pretty much finds out that the superhero biz isn't that cracked out as it's made to be. Hilarity and zany situations ensue thereby giving us an ending which very well surmises that for every hero to be one, there needs to be an arch-nemesis.??

Max and Rose by Andrew Bourelle – This tale ends the book and does so with something of a damp squib, focusing on the two titular characters it recreates an evening and perhaps acts as a spiritual prequel to the earlier tale "Ozymandias Revisited". While the author cleverly shows the signs of trouble in the couple's life, the tale overall doesn't do much to impress the reader, it ends up being a decent effort.

CONCLUSION: Lincoln Crisler has taken pains to choose this myriad collection of stories exploring the theme of Metahumans acting out inhumanely and there are quite a few zingers to this collection. Some of the stories like Threshold and Pride are the jewels in this collection that perhaps should be further explored in the longer format IMHO. This is a collection very much in vein of "Masked" by Lou Anders however with a tenebrous and twisted bent to it. Give it a try and see what it feels like to be Corrupted Absolutely!

Edward Erdelac says

OK, so I'm in this book (my contribution is called Conviction), but it really has some great stories in here. Won't go into spoiler-y detail, but I'll just list my personal favorites (in no particular order) -

Retribution by Tim Marquitz - for description, and a really interesting and appropriate superpower.

Ozymandius Revisited by A.S. Fox - for the audacious voice

Threshold by Kris Ashton - for the most doubled edged superpower

Acquainted With The Night by Cat Rambo - for style, just beautifully written and imaginative.

Pride by Wayne Ligon - Just my all around favorite. A well thought out world, interesting characters, and great action.

Gone Rogue by Wayne helge - For hilarity, and the amusing character names (Kitty Twister, The Midshipman,etc).

Not much of a review, I know. But I recommend it.

Stephen Brophy says

An unexpectedly satisfying collection of stories linked thematically by the idea that gaining superpowers is no guarantee of a future in superheroics. Nor is it always an obvious path to clearcut villainy. The truth is, we all mostly live in the gray, hovering on a border between committing acts that we might construe as heroic but could just as easily be perceived a much darker way by those on the receiving end, and likewise teeter until we tip over into the black. That's what happens to most of these characters, some of whom embrace evil, others who stumble blindly into it, and still more who can't even conceive of themselves in such simple mortal terms.

It starts with a dark-hearted kick; Tim Marquitz "Retribution" is a queasy tale of a man who lost his family in 9/11, only to volunteer to become a human weapon who's method of revenge is arguably no less horrific than the incident that shaped him.

"Bedtime Story" from "Ex-Heroes" author Peter Clines tells a tale of a man as powerful as Superman who uses his incredible abilities to keep the world in line, and any transgressors are dealt with in no uncertain terms.

Edward M. Erdelac's "Conviction" is a barn-burner of a tale told from the POV of a young kid from a tough neighborhood who starts out using his newfound powers to take down some local gangbangers, but as his omnipotence grows, he doesn't quite have a handle on where or how to stop cleaning up the world.

In my contender for favorite in the collection, the noirish "Crooked," from Lee Mather, a "gifted" small-time hoodlum long on the lam from the boss he ripped off makes the mistake of returning to his old stomping grounds to rekindle an old flame. But the reunion doesn't go quite as anyone's expecting.

And the last story, Andrew Bourelle's "Max and Rose" is a romantic tragedy that neatly and brutally

underscores the likely outcome of a tried-and-true asshole lucking into powers he neither deserves or respects.

With a number of other tales to suit just about any dark taste, editor Lincoln Crisler has curated a highly worthy compendium of the best of what this superpowered subgenre has to offer.

Jake says

How I rate books

5-star (incredibly rare)-- I connected with this work to the degree that I may have heard angels singing in Heaven.

4-star-- This was a fantastic book, I'd certainly read another book by this author.

3-star-- This book met my expectations but might not be loved by others.

2-star-- This wasn't what I expected, the writing was good, but it rubbed me the wrong way.

1-star-- Someone issued a contract for this? Did I read this right? I'm totally lost.

I was amazed by this collection of stories. This is a book filled with great authors telling stories about superheroes and how they became supervillains--and if not villains, then at least showing signs of questionable morals. These were stories of likable heroes, who fell flat upon their moral faces. Half of this book are among my favorites, and even the story that I least connected with proved to be a gem.

I do not wish to divulge the pure awesomeness that this book delivered. Each story was uniquely told even if some of the superpowers seemed a little repetitive at times. It was the voice of each author that made this book great.

I don't think it is possible to pin a favorite story to this book, but if I had to pick three, I'd go with *Max and Rose* by Andrew Bouelle, about Max who is growing with his ability to manipulate anyone (except Rose) into loving him, or use brute strength to make people do whatever he wants them to do. This is the story of a not-so-super-hero and his wife. The end was fantastic.

Ozymandias Revisited by A. S. Fox showed the downside of being Godlike.

And my third favorite was *Going Rogue* by Wayne Helge. This was the story of the sidekick who always got the shaft. The sly humor in this story rose it a hair higher than Lee Mather's *Crooked* and Edward Erdelac's *Conviction* and *Hollywood Villainry* by Weston Ochse.

Again, I wish to say there were no losers in this collection. Every story sparkled in its own light. If Lincoln

Crisler ever does another anthology, he's already pre-sold one copy to me.

R. Riley says

I'm a sucker for superhero prose and this anthology definitely delivers and satisfied my craving. Reading is a very subjective experience, and this is merely my opinions, but I can appreciate the reasons why some of these stories were included in this collection. As with any anthology, some stories are hit or miss, but overall I really enjoyed reading this collection of tales.

First, the good: my top picks from this antho are MAX AND ROSE by Andrew Bourelle, THE REAL CHURCH by Jeremy Hepler, OZYMANDIAS REVISITED by A.S. Fox, and CROOKED by Lee Mather. These stories were authors firing on all cylinders and were a real pleasure to read and experience. Out of the twenty tales compiled here, there were only 3 that I didn't care for and that's saying much about Crisler and his talent for assembling anthologies. He has excelled here and has brought together some really good, some even great, stories.

Definitely pick this up, folks. There's a little something for any reader between these pages. From familiar superhero tropes to some nice twists on old comic lines.

It was a pleasure to read this and I will definitely be searching out a few of these authors to see what else they have out there.

R. Thomas Riley

Ben Terhune says

If you're a Gold and Silver age comic book fan, Corrupts Absolutely?, is not a book you're going to want to pick up and read. However, if you're a fan of modern day hero spin-offs that show a protagonist's inability to cope with real life problems, you're going to want to read this book. Corrupts Absolutely? is a beautifully written showcase of short stories showing what the world would be like if real people somehow obtained real paranormal abilities and had to face real life problems; problems such as terrorism, commercialism, narcissism, revenge, and poverty. Would they become heroes or would they falter and give in to their deepest darkest desires? Corrupts Absolutely? answers that question with all the grit, gore, and glamour that one tends to typically find in titles released by Ragnorak Publications.

In this particular anthology, you're also likely to see numerous seemingly irrelevant meta human protagonists heavily influenced by their relevant hero counterparts of today; counterparts possessing powers heavily rooted in popular Marvel and DC comic titles. In Tim Marquitz's short story entitled, "Retribution", we meet a hero who faces down Al Queda seeking revenge in the same way that Dr. Manhattan or Marvel's Firestorm would and the same can easily be said for A.S. Fox's, "Ozymandias Revisited". If you ever wanted to read sordid tales about men who become gods and use their powers to erase lives, alter history, and commit various acts of grey area murder, then you're definitely going to enjoy the first half of this anthology.

With great power comes great responsibility, and the characters of this anthology often collapse under the weight of that responsibility or they alter the world in such a way that their responsibilities no longer exist which Peter Klines illustrates rather well in his short story, “Bedtime Story”, in which the world’s greatest hero is the most political authoritarian power; a power so great in fact that he rules whole continents with an iron fist and a kill first, ask questions later mentality. Corrupts Absolutely? is an anthology containing 22 stories from 22 various authors and each author has a writing style that is unfiltered, uncensored, and unorthodox. Edward M. Erdelac’s, “Conviction”, is refreshing in just how unorthodox it actually is. As of late, stories in ebonics and short form slang are on rise and Edward demonstrates his unique writing style flawlessly when he tells the story of a young boy from Cabrini Green who becomes a god and doles out revenge on those who have threatened his family. They say Pimpin’ ain’t easy, but Edward M. Erdelac does it with professional proficiency.

Often overlooked are sidekicks and even more are they seldom recognized, but in Wayne Helge’s short story, “Going Rogue”, Wayne clearly shows what happens when one sidekick gets fed up and crosses the line between hero and villain and Wayne writes it all in such a way that you as the reader sympathize with his protagonist to a point that the story becomes almost tangible. If you’ve ever wondered what it’d be like if Patrick Bateman inherited god-like abilities or how the world would be if Charles Xavier was born a serial killer, then do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of Corrupts Absolutely? today.

Gary Olson says

Corrupts Absolutely? is a collection of 21 short tales on the very dark side of having metahuman abilities, with stories ranging from a wounded man who brings his explosive rage to bear on those he blames for the deaths of his wife and daughter-to-be (“Retribution” by Tim Marquitz) to a world where metahumans live under more restrictions than sex offenders and being a hero is a crime (“Pride” by Wayne Ligon) to a woman whose concerns over the ultimate use of the robo-suit she lead development of are trumped by pragmatic realities (“Fixed” by Trisha J. Wooldridge). The metahuman abilities and settings vary widely, as do the contributing authors’ styles, making for an entertaining selection of tales.

As is often the case, a story collection has its high and low points. Not all of the tales here worked for me, but my enjoyment level overall was high. In addition to the previously mentioned stories, my favorites included “Ozymandias Revisited” by A.S. Fox (where having godlike powers leads to having godlike problems), and “Illusion” by Karina Fabian (exploring the toll taken by telepathic abilities on a young telepath). Its a compelling collection of dark fiction where the ‘heroes’ are often not at all heroic, and well worth checking out.

Gef says

I may not have collected comic books as a boy, but I was always fascinated by superheroes--and the villains they fought. The whole notion of gaining some incredible ability that no other person on the planet possessed offered so many questions. The most pressing one probably being: how would I fare as a superhero? Lincoln Crisler has brought together over twenty stories that ask a similar question, with the characters in each story falling well short of nobility more often than not.

While not all the characters depicted in this anthology are corrupted to a point of outright evil, they are all irrevocably changed and see the world much differently from mere mortals.

Take Tim Marquitz's "Retribution," which kicks off the anthology, and the heartache a man who lost his family on September 11th, 2001. That event poses as the real corruption and the man's hunger for vengeance against the terrorists responsible. That and his discovery of a superpower with a wholly devastating reach. The emotions came through in this story as sharply as the destruction the man leaves in his wake.

"Hollywood Villainy" by Weston Ochse delivered a great take on mind-reading, as a Chinese kid hounds a couple of two-bit hoods in L.A. by getting in their heads and doing some Machiavellian-style manipulation. Piss Boy is not to be trifled with--though the name needs work. "G-Child" by Malon Edwards had a great X-Men on crank vibe with a couple of teammates battling it out in a suburb when one of them, for lack of a better term, starts hulking out on the neighborhood. The interspersed backstory of the other hero's childhood and torment with her family wound up working great as she tries to subdue her rampaging partner, but it did take a little while to get used to, with the frequent scene switches.

Karina Fabian's "Illusion" might have been one of the most haunting stories, about a boy who can essentially absorb the knowledge of those around him--and just about everything else in their head. Deryl feels a bit plain at the start, one more angst-ridden teen trying to survive high school--boo hoo--but Deryl's story of loss, in more ways than one, really felt like a tragedy more so than just about any story in the book. And that's saying something.

And, I gotta say, Abassi from Ed Erdelac's "Conviction," is easily the most all-out do not f--k with me kids I've seen in a story in a long time. The narration from Abassi feels a bit muddy in the beginning, mainly because he's so introverted and withdrawn. But as the story progresses and Abassi's world becomes clearer, the severity and suddenness the young boy's powers seem inevitable and a bit poetic.

Some of the superpowers in the book are subtle, some so obscenely over the top they boggle the mind, and while you might see some allusions to some of DC's and Marvel's iconic characters, there isn't anything that feels derivative or unimaginative. All the characters strike their own chords and not all of them are so quick to take the easy route when given incredible gifts.

I found it really intriguing to read about these characters, because their own pettiness, jealousies, and frailties shine through in a relentless way. If you always thought Superman was too much of a boy scout, then you need to read this anthology, because the Boy Scouts of America are nowhere to be found in its pages.

Rob Hayes says

First time reviewing an anthology so I'm a bit lost as to how to go about it.

First off: I give Corrupts Absolutely? 3 1/2 stars but I like to round up because I'm an amiable sort.

As an anthology, it's a bit hard to review it as a whole. There were some really good stories contained within its pages, and some really not so good ones. I'd call it "Hit and Miss with a definite lean towards the Hit."

If you like stories about people being bastards with super powers, then this one is for you!

Melissa Hayden says

Since there are so many stories in this one, I'm going to try to keep it short and mention only a few. I did however, write a small thought on each in my notes. So if you are curious about any stories on the list I don't mention here, just ask..

This is not your traditional 'superhero' thinking. These characters are heroes, are not heroes but potentially villains, and are in the grey area where some would think they are heroes and some would think villains. The views are yours for the deciding.

The Introduction raises questions on the use of the term superhero, and the affect on people. The question is raised of how would people react with common things in life if "we" became a superhero. Would you marry the same person? Work the same job? These are some of the thoughts in a few of the stories.

Retribution is a hard story to start with. It could very well hit close to home in an Americans heart, for several. A man losses his wife and child-to-be September 11, 2011, and a part of himself as well. He sighed up to go over seas to make those responsible for his families death pay. His rage is explosive and full of vengeful hate. This is a heart breaking tale, for both sides of the war to me as well. His story is one that many could think he is a villain, but also a wounded man in grieving as well.

Mental Man is a mystery type take. We learn why Rob is in the position he is working, and that he doesn't have an archenemy to keep him feeling balanced and with a life purpose. Rob helps the police look for a murderer, but I wonder who the true murderer is.... I loved the metaphor of his feelings and the mental villain of diseases (Mental diseases.) The way this story turns around by the end in just a few short pages, had me hooked.

I really liked Enlightened by Sin. Victor hears the encrypted threat from Red Dahlia from his favorite DJ while he's cleaning up after his latest bad guy eliminating. Red Dahlia is dangerous and known for many deaths in a world where "Heroes" are sponsored. Victor is not sponsored, and is doing the dirty work of cleaning up the streets where others are not. Victor goes to talk to a victim of Red Dahlia's that 1) didn't fit the profile like the other victims, and 2) lived. This man has secrets to tell. I liked that Victor starts as seeming like a villain for the way he works, but in reality he's not, and I wonder about the "Heroes" in this world as well. I kind of got the reversed feel of Heroes and Villains rule here.

Threshold is a favorite of mine as well, for the twisted ending. We have a man who learns at twenty when he touches someone he will learn great details of harm they have done and if they need to die for it. A symptom of his ability, severe headaches. Uncontrollable pain until he does what needs to be done, and becomes the assassin, to eliminate the horrible people that shouldn't be here. I really liked this writing style, and the storyline with this man and his headaches pushing him to do what he needs to do.

Hero was neat to see how others react with knowledge a 'hero' has and shares. Robert Hanover is with Dr. Lange, his therapist in the hospital. Robert believes he has the power to see exactly seven minutes and twenty-two seconds into the future, but he is self absorbed. When Robert shares something about a beautiful receptionist at the hospital, with the Doctor exploit what he learns?

Pride was a neat read to see how far down can you push someone before they try to turn around, and it might

come back on you. Carmichael works in construction now, after he took the fall for his mentor and lost his chance to be a superhero. But things on this job go bad, and Carmichael holds back as long as he can to save others. But when there is too much invested into this project and someone has to go down with the building, a sacrifice that will deface that person and save the face and money of another, who will fall?

Sabre was one I really enjoyed as well. A hero fights the villain, Anti-Matter, in her specialized suit, but when she returns to her office she gets a visitor who suspects her as the "hero" for the suit has abilities in the area her business has worked and created, along with others. This short story starts off fast and strong with fighting, and demonstrates this wonderful suit. I like how this "hero" helps yet makes out for the good. She walks a very gray line type feel to me. I like that idea.

Crooked, Oh! This was one of my favorites. Leon uses his telekinetic power to help cover his tracks in the snow. He goes to rob his ex, just to find someone's taken her captive because of him, wanting what he took from them some time ago. A crime boss is hot on Leon's trail, or is Leon the one on their trail. I really liked the way this story twisted together and came to an unforeseen end.

Gone Rogue is a neat tale to see how two heroes can turn to archenemies when one lets his sidekick do all the work and then when things go wrong, shows up to turn on him. This was a tale that really made me think sometimes the "villain" isn't always the bad guy.

Overall, this book really got me to thinking about who really is a "Hero" and a "Villain" and where is the line drawn. It all depends on the side you see, sometimes. The Heroes here could be borderline Villains. Or Villains, borderline heroes. A feeling of Dark Superheroes, nothing is black and white and they live in the grey making the tough decisions and trying to cope with the strange abilities within them in a world dominated without it.

Jojo says

An interesting take on the question of superpowers and how they could change a person. This book is an anthology of stories written by various authors and mainly told in third person.

I enjoy reading from all the different author styles. It's the best part of anthologies, really. A lot of the stories are rather dark but realistic. There's also various superpowers. Some characters have the whole package (telekinesis, mindreading, flight, etc) while others have one and is limited by something. One of my favorite stories is a healer gone wrong. His power can only work a certain way so he was unable to really save anyone.

Overall, I can't really think of anything particularly problematic about this book. It had a nice mix of everything. Some authors had more fleshed out characters, some had more interesting superpowers, some were hard to understand and some were awesome just the way they were!

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes anthologies and superpowers. It's fairly dark so it might not be the best choice for our younger readers. Also, I would say it's a good book for anyone looking for something thoughtful. A book that doesn't get carried away with the stereotypical hero (it is about superpowers, after all) and just lets the readers see another side of humans.

Craig says

free ebook version from editor in exchange for honest review

I found *Corrupts Absolutely?* to be an original set of stories that are quick and easy to read. Instead of your normal superhero story, these are all anti-hero or super villain stories. I found myself enjoying the stories which told how the character gained their powers more than the ones in which it was ambiguous. I also found myself connecting more with the anti-hero rather than the villain (think Punisher rather than Magneto). Still the stories were fun to read.

I would recommend *Corrupts Absolutely?* to anyone who enjoys short stories and super powers.

seak says

Corrupts Absolutely? is an anthology that deals with superheroes and metahumans and their powers. What would we actually do if we had 'em? Hopefully people would do good, but like the title of the anthology says, would it just corrupt people absolutely as the saying goes.

I always thought that if I got a superpower it'd be something like fire coming out of my butt. Everyone else gets the handy dandy and oh so convenient fire from palms, but I'd have to be like, "Give me just a sec..."
zip "...alright, I'm ready to do this."

Retribution by Tim Marquitz - Let's just say this is quite the explosive beginning. Okay, I have more to say than that. This one deals with a man who's lost his family in 9/11 and watched it happen. Revenge consumes his life and he has the means to make something happen. (4/5)

Hollywood Villany by Weston Ochse - This was a hard one to put down. A "kid," who really just looks like a kid, but who's actually quite old follows a man home - "I want my two dollars." This story has a sick twist that was entirely unexpected. (4/5)

Mental Man by William Todd Rose - I really enjoyed the concept of this one, a man can get inside the victims' or the killer's head and see what happened, but in this case the killer smashes all the mirrors in the house and hides his face well enough he can't figure it out. I would love to see this as a full length novel. (4/5)

The Real Church by Jeremy Hepler - A guy resurrects a dog and then, with his mother, starts a church. This, in my opinion, is one of the most truthful stories of what someone would do with a "superpower." (3/5)

Ozymandias Revisited by A.S. Fox - No, this is not a Watchmen tribute, but has to do with the poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Worth a read before reading this story as it is often referenced with it's own changes. *Ozymandias Revisited* is about a guy who has ultimate power, who can do anything he wants, which he also does. Sex, drugs, rock and roll, and everything else. This all comes with costs, some what you may think, others not expected. *Revisited* has a very unique style that's worth a read in and of itself. (3.5/5)

Enlightened by Sin by Jason M. Tucker - Another I'd love to see turned into a novel and my favorite so far, Enlightened is about a Dexter-like character, but who has the power to actually know the sins of those he kills (unlike Dexter's "I proved one bad thing so they're dead" take). Victor's tracking a brutal serial killer, but what's great about this one is that it expands the whole concept and world - there are superheroes, but who are sponsored by corporations. They help, but at the same time make sure to help themselves. (5/5)

The Origin of Slashy by Jeff Strand - This is how a serial killer is made. I was expecting a clown going into this, but this concept was creepy too. Slashy starts off with Kaylie getting raped and then finding out she can't be hurt. (3.5/5)

Conviction by Edward M. Erdelac - Told from the perspective of a young black boy and also as if he had written it, misspellings and everything. Abassi meets with a shrink about a picture he drew and tells about his rough life in the ghetto. He likes the shrink and decides to follow her advice. Conviction kind of had a similar concept to Ozymandias but also very different. (4/5)

Threshold by Kris Ashton - Similar to Enlightened by Sin in that the main character can tell whether a person has done something wrong, but in this one he feels pain until he does something about it. Great ending and great story. (4/5)

Oily by A.D. Spencer - About a superhero who gets hints from her dad about who to track down, she goes about as Cat's Eye. Enjoyable but a bit forgettable at the same time. (3/5)

Hero by Joe McKinney - A man, to around 7 minutes ahead, can predict the future - so of course he's being held captive. A highly enjoyable story. (4/5)

Pride by Wayne Ligon - One of my favorites so far, I think I like the ones more that display the powers. This reminded me a lot of Shadow Ops: Control Point where powers are highly regulated by the government, but that doesn't necessarily mean controlled. (4.5/5)

G-Child by Malon Edwards - A girl with parental issues attempts to stop a similarly power-enhanced teammate. Lots of action, but I didn't love it. The story switches back and forth between the action and her earlier years. (3/5)

Static by Jason Gehlert - I loved the plot, the ideas, and the action, but had a hard time following exactly what everyone could do as far as powers go and some of the dialogue was a bit stilted, a bit awkward. (3.5/5)

Illusion by Karina Fabian - Probably one of the most realistic in terms of what would actually happen if someone had psychic abilities - they'd go crazy. Illusion follows a kid's experience with this. (4/5)

Sabre by Anthony Laffan - The closest to an actual comic, this had great action, great scenes, and was lots of fun. It follows Sabre, a superhero dogged by reporters with lots of secrets to hide. (4/5)

Crooked by Lee Mather - The name of this story says a lot more than I realized when I started reading. A man with certain handicaps runs into an ambush while breaking into a home. Crooked is one of the darker stories, I wasn't a big fan of the parts that discussed children being injured or worse (I've become a softy in this area), but otherwise a very worthy installment. (3.5/5)

Fixed by Trisha J. Wooldridge - A woman, often marginalized by the men she's working with, both because of her gender and because of her handicaps, becomes a big player. But, is it because of her expertise or

because of blackmail. Fixed wasn't my favorite, but very well done. (3.5/5)

Acquainted with the Night by Cat Rambo - One of the shortest stories if not the shortest, this story describes the origin, the career, the arrival, and the announcement of our superhero. I liked the unique structure and this story is the only to involve aliens so far. (4/5)

Gone Rogue by Wayne Helge - I mentioned some of these stories are very close to being comics, well, Gone Rogue is more like an '80s superhero cartoon. Filled with campy superhero and villain names (like The Midshipman and Kitty Twister), a teenage sidekick has to step up. (4/5)

Max and Rose by Andrew Bourelle - One of my favorites, if not my favorite, Max and Rose is a powerful story. I was going to say it's about what it means to be a superhero, but it's really more the opposite - if you're not being a superhero with your powers what does that make you? What if you're taking advantage of those powers? (5/5)

Corrupts Absolutely? is a great anthology with a concept that never gets old. Each of the stories is incredibly unique, even the ones that deal with a similar power or theme. I had a great time with this and I didn't dislike a single story. That's hard to do. Highly Recommended!

4 out of 5 Stars (Loved it)

dsneaks says

I received this book for free from Lincoln Crisler in exchange for an honest review. This book is a collection of short stories that deals with people who have some form of supernatural ability. Are these supernatural abilities a good thing or bad thing? well that depends on the story you are reading and in most of these stories I'm pretty sure supernatural abilities are not the best thing to have. First off I would like to talk about the title of this book Corrupts Absolutely?, the adding of the question mark sends a message about the book before you even open it. Its not saying that supernatural abilities will corrupt always, but there is always that chance. I personally like the title a lot and is one of my favorite things about this book, the title is just so perfect for the tales being told within the book. The short stories inside this book I felt varied greatly, some of them I loved so much that I wanted to keep reading more and was upset that the story just ended. Other stories I was disgusted and horrified, especially when animals were hurt in one of the stories. Other stories I hated with a passion, they were dry and boring and I just could not get into them at all and I just couldn't wait to get to the next story, so I could be done with the one I was reading. In general I enjoyed most of book and there was more cases of me wanting to read more of the story then wanting to just finish the story and move onto the next one. This book gives an interesting look at supernatural abilities, a side that in most cases is not always seen. Supernatural abilities are usually looked at in a perspective of becoming a superhero, but that is not always the case. What if the "superhero" thinks they are doing good but in fact are killing people instead. This collection of short stories looks at this idea and portrays it in an interesting and entertaining manner.

Jeff Beesler says

Metahuman fiction is one of the first genres that has been with me since my toddler days. This is probably not to be unexpected, seeing as how my generation has had heroes like the Superfriends (TV's version of the

Justice League). It's also worth noting that I have followed other franchises like the X-Men since childhood as well.

As a result, this has developed a certain culture of taste within me as far as expectation goes. I'm completely used to well-defined lines of heroes and villains, good versus evil, with no shades of gray in between.

Corrupts Absolutely? then has its chance to take what I know of conventional heroes and throw it right out the window. And it does. The protagonists and antagonists presented in this dark metahuman anthology here defy tradition, which is why from this point on I'm reluctant to use such terms as heroes and villains. Every character has his or her own flaws, and unfortunately not every character can overcome the circumstances of their powers. At this, I must explain that my use of the term "unfortunately" speaks solely of the character, and not to the reader's experience.

I find Corrupts Absolutely? to be a worthy addition to the world of metahuman storytelling. There were a couple of stories which did end a little on the abrupt side for me, leaving me with little to no closure. However, stories such as "Conviction", "Threshold", "Gone Rogue", and "Max and Rose", pretty much socked me in the gut through evocation. I couldn't help but feel for the protagonists featured in those stories. In fact, I did a complete 180 on the character of Max in "Max and Rose", as the events unfolded in the anthology's end tale.

Mr. Crisler has much to be proud of with this book. His selection of tales included in Corrupts are there for a reason. The collection does what it sets out to do. If ever he does decide to edit another anthology of dark metahuman elements, I'll be sure to pick up that collection, too.
