



Beautiful City of the Dead

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Relly's band is called Scorpio Bone. Screaming guitars, crusher drums, and a singer who looks like a golden god. Along comes a girl named Zee, with a bass guitar, a notebook full of strange lyrics, and exactly the right attitude.

At the first practice, it all comes together. And Relly's vision of a new kind of music, Ghost Metal, comes alive at last.

"Now that we're together, the four of us, it's gonna start. The big time. The biggest thing you ever saw," Relly says. "When we get cranking, the four of us, we can cross over to the other side, the other world. It takes four and no more. It takes four to win the war."

It sounds crazy, but Zee knows it's the truth. And at their first gig, she realizes that music isn't all there is to Scorpio Bone. They're not just a band anymore. Together they are immortal.

Beautiful City of the Dead Details

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From Reader Review Beautiful City of the Dead for online ebook

Polly says

Well-written (the author apparently teaches English Lit, so it better be), but that's not enough in this case. It's a decent story, and somewhat resembles something like the earlier Weetzie Bat books--it's that kind of urban semi-fantasy. But it lacks heart, and it lacks much of a plot. A lot of ominous and/or exciting stuff happens, and the story seems constantly to be moving somewhere, but it never really does, and a lot of things that happen are not clearly connected to anything else, and don't contribute to the story. The main characters are apparently teenage Gods (and also members of a band) battling grown up people who are the same Gods grown old, but we never find out why or how or what for. It's kind of a beautiful book in some ways, but it definitely does not live up to its potential.

I'm glad to have read this once, but I'll be rereading Percy Jackson when I want teenage gods (I may be a member of the unofficial English Language Police, but I'd still rather have a solid plot than beautifully constructed sentences in my fiction), and Weetzie Bat for ethereal urban fiction, rather than this.

L8blmr says

What a strange little book! I came across it recently when my daughter was cleaning out her former room here. It doesn't look like she ever got around to reading it. Based on the artistry of the dust cover, the title, and the short review on the back, I decided to give it a chance. In my opinion, it seemed a little bipolar. The story revolves around a group of teens in a heavy metal band, and I enjoyed the musical references, how their original songs were put together, and where they found their inspiration. Where it gets a little crazy is when we find out that the teens are not ordinary kids but are equipped with super powers and that their otherwise normal high school is infested with a set of adults with the same powers, except they use theirs for evil. Yeah. All this in a small book of only about 250 pages with somewhat large print. Some parts of the story seemed glossed over and/or rushed and it was more about a couple of small battles rather than a bigger war. However, it was the juxtaposition of the reality of musically-inclined teenagers with their supernaturally-powered alter egos that was jarring for me.

Mary Z says

Teenage heavy metal gods fighting evil.

This book rocks. I read it one afternoon and wished I'd stretched it out, because I was sorry it ended. This book was pretty much perfect, and I'm picky about my books.

I don't even know much about heavy metal, but I loved this book anyway. When the music plays in the book, you don't just see the band, you hear the music all around you, you feel the vibrations in the air, the bass shaking the floor under your feet, the steel strings buzzing against your fingers.

This is a book I'm totally passing on to my brother, who actually is a metal fan and will therefore love this book even more than I did (if that were possible).

Natasha says

It had potential but very little was explained on how the magic worked and the character development was sub par

Alina Hansen says

I have read this book over and over again for almost ten years. I always find myself coming back to it for it's style and content. I love the writing and the subject. Wish there was a sequel but honestly it stands so good on its own it doesn't need one.

Jacob Dickie says

I thought the book was really good I liked the style and settings of the book I can relate to the characters in the most part of there school life and how they are effected

Alley Kat says

In Beautiful City of the Dead, Zee moves to a new town. Quickly meeting Relly, the lead guitarist of local "Ghost Metal" band, Scorpio Bone, she makes a place for herself, quickly becoming the bassist of his band. After their first gig, a powerful secret is revealed, one that will change Zee's life forever. Other forces in town will stop at nothing to have her.

I really don't know what I expected from this book. I guess maybe I thought it would be about some kids in a rock band that actually cross over to the land of the dead with their music. What I was met with in these pages was somehow more enjoyable and a better read than expected. The characters were realistic, and the plot was different, yet familiar at the same time. I loved the references back to old metal and rock bands like Black Sabbath, Slayer, and Rush. It helped me relate to the book much more than someone who had been into a different genre of music would have.

Christine Bachman says

I felt like this book really wasn't thought out. The idea of music and the immortal seems like a good idea in theory, but the author did nothing to explain why they're connected, or even show an instance where the two really had anything to do with...well, anything. A lot of the plot were "quick fixes," events that happened because they needed to, without any explanation. I also didn't really see a distinct beginning, middle and end. The whole story was a messy blur, and it wasn't until the last pinch of pages I felt like there was an actual hook, as weak as that hook may be.

The narrator, Zee, didn't actually feel like a real person to me. Her thoughts were always taking life as a detached surrealist. I think we all have those moments where we can accept what's happening in a very open way...but I hardly think anyone thinks like that all the time. I'm not sure if the author didn't go into enough detail with her narration (like he did everything else in the book), or really just doesn't understand how people, let alone a teen girl, thinks.

Ruhama says

Zee has never quite fit in, so when she meets Relly, who never questions her name, she finally feels a connection with someone. The friendship deepens when she joins their band as the bass player, and Scorpion Bone starts rockin' the town. But things go a little deeper than the foursome's garage band (or attic, in this case), especially when Zee starts meeting a couple of other suspicious characters. Relly reveals that they are, in fact, gods, and she is the element of water. Now it makes sense to Zee why Relly constantly said 'four and no more' for their band, as all four elements were present. But water is in demand, and Zee must decide how important her friendship with Relly is when he is kidnapped by three other gods who are missing their water.

This is a strange little book, but it is very well written and the storyline is fascinating. I enjoyed Zee's character, and she is drawn as believable. When you are on the fringe anyway, it's a little easier to accept that perhaps you are a god. I really liked that she was a bass player and thought she provided a great alternative image of a girl. The title comes from a nickname for a cemetery, at which Relly and Zee gather song lyrics, and have their showdown with the other gods.

Nicole Bunge says

So yeah, teenage metal band fights evil. *snort* Heck of a tag line.

I liked it, really it's more of a 3 1/2 star book.

Kinda stark on the prose, but most rock songs are, and I can dig it.

Zee plays bass, meets Relly at school - they instantly bond over being in the "parents who named us weird" club.

The creepy biology teacher hates them both, so they have more in common.

Zee joins Relly's band, Scorpion Bone.

Then it gets weird... like elemental magic weird.

But... really, the book is not too heavy (I almost wish it was.) The "I kinda like this boy" subplot doesn't develop, and I'm actually thankful for that, it would have ruined the bigger picture.

Author has a good grasp for teen angst, school suckage and the joys of being in a band. Satisfying but not too epic. Ending is a bit weird, but... meh, no biggie.

It's one of those "recommend for teens who don't wanna read because most of the crap written for them is dumb." Not condescending, not fanciful, not too geeky. Just a book. Not every book has to change the world or win awards. Take it or leave it.

Rosa says

I picked this book up off the shelf over a month ago at this point. When I finally started it I couldn't entirely remember why I picked it up , but I know that I am happy that I did. When Zee starts her new school she can't find anyone who looks interesting until she meets Relly. Relly has his own band and needs a bassist and he thinks Zee is the perfect fit. The four play ghost metal a sound so big you can hear the silence in it. Then Zee finds out that there is more to Relly, herself and their band than meets the eye.

The prose of this book was extremely lyrical and poetic. It just sounded gorgeous and I loved the different places that Zee went to come up with lyrics for the band. I just felt like the whole book had a gorgeous sound to it, which is always appropriate for a book about music.

I loved the twist in the book. I know it was unexpected but I thought that that was what made it work. This is one of the first paranormal books where a lot of explanation about what is going on why people have certain abilities was left out, but to be honest it didn't feel necessary. I didn't miss it the way I normally do. The book felt full all on it's own.

The music was enough for me. I really enjoyed it and honestly I am not entirely sure I can explain why.

Hollowspine says

A story about a teenage girl, Zee, who makes a new friend, one whom she finds both attractive and dangerous, and who introduces her to a secret world within the everyday world. In this hidden world she has mysterious elemental powers. But...with power...comes immense danger. It seems that the skeevy bio teacher is also more than he seems and he has it out for Zee and her new friends.

I found the book somewhat interesting. It had good ideas and some potential to develop into something cool, but I feel it fell short. Rather than being a self contained story it felt rushed and underdeveloped to me, like a failed attempt to launch a series. I felt that the beginning started out well, as a first book in a series, but then the second half of the book (in two separate acts) comprised the second two books condensed into a few short chapters. Things that should have been explained in more detail were rushed through and the reader was forced to assume many things for themselves that should have warranted some explanation by the author.

The characters were shaping up in the first part of the story, but development completely stops at that point and only perhaps three out of six characters have any development at all.

I was also taken out of the narrative by some terminology choices that I felt were poor. For example in the beginning of the story Relly explains to Zee that they are gods. Gods over the four elements, water, earth, fire and air. However, there are apparently many hundreds more people with similar powers to their own. The bands Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin for a couple. If there are so many people with similar powers...how could you call yourselves gods? Gods are individuals with immense powers, who are ageless and have many smaller minions to do their bidding. Although the issue is not huge and didn't greatly affect the reading of the story it still galled me a little. It would have been more effective, I think, if they were called something else. Just about anything else would have worked. Elementals. Mages. Mutants. Even changelings would have been better. I also noticed that the author didn't recall the four horsemen of the apocalypse correctly, which is another mistake, although not huge, that could have been easily fixed and

would have made the story that much better. I also was annoyed that whenever the band name was brought up "Scorpio Bone" the characters would say, but scorpions don't have bones...but the band isn't scorpion bone, but Scorpio Bone. Although it's easy to see where the scorpion part comes in there is much more to the word Scorpio than just scorpion. For one in the zodiac it is considered a feminine water sign. Gee, isn't that convenient? Couldn't the author have used that to their advantage in the story? Did Watts do so? No. No one who didn't know that will know that. If, in fact, Watts even knew that.

Another bizarre thing was the connection the book had with the dead. There are many references, including the title, that lead the reader to expect some sort of ghost story. In fact, the only ghost scene comes at the very end and is ...as if it immigrated from some different book. It didn't make sense at all and could have just been the delusions of an paranoid schizophrenic. Other than the references to "Ghost Metal" which seemed to just be a cool name and the use of 'grave poetry' (of the most incredibly insipid nature) the dead seemed to have no place in this bizarre story.

Overall, although I read the entire book (which took only about five hours in total, being very short and simple), I felt that the only part the author really shone in was describing Zee's feelings while she played as part of a band. But having read other books with such descriptions even in that the author fell short of other writers. In the end it was rather short, underdeveloped and rushed. Some parts didn't make much sense and many of the characters seemed like they were replaced by mannequins in the second act. With all I've said (and all that I remembered was odd later) I think Watts should recall all the books and ...treat this publishing as a rough draft. I bet you could do better.

Rachel says

This is the story of Zee and 3 other teens who start a band, only the leader of the band wants to event a whole new concept for Metal, called Ghost Metal. As Zee and her 3 companions continue to hone their skills and get more gigs, things start changing inside Zee. She later finds out that she is a water god, and the other 3 represent the other elements. This results in a last showdown between another set of gods - very old and powerful ones. Both sets of gods want Zee alive and with them - or not at all.

I found this book very easy to read. I read it more as a time killer than anything, since it's nothing too heavy or thought provoking. That is both it's blessing and downfall. It's a story that you like to read, and can remember clearly what it's about. I would probably read it again to be honest, but it's not something that sticks with you, and makes you sit on the edge of your seat.

It's much like a fairy tale to be honest, only with out the ending of a moral. I recommend renting this from your local library, before you buy it.

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

Watts, Leander Beautiful City of the Dead, 254 p. Houghton Mifflin -

On her first day at a new school, Zee is befriended by Relly - a young man with a rock band that needs a bass player and holds a very large secret. Zee happens to play the bass quite wickedly, plus she has a head for lyrics and is the catalyst the boys need to propel them towards actual gigs. Unfortunately, evil is willing to

use Relly to get their hands on Zee - because they need her also.

A great title and a catchy front cover will draw teens in, and they will not be disappointed by the contents.

MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Christian Lehman says

I read this book when I was in Jr. High. I was really into starting my own rockband and I played the bass guitar, so I really resonated with Zee, the main character. She moves to a new school and her first day is really awkward and uncomfortable. She knows that she's different from other teenagers, and she sometimes creeps other people out. She makes a friend named Relly, and he is the guitarist in a band. He asks Zee to be the bassist for his band. His band plays experimental music that Relly calls Ghost Metal.

He says, "You know how if you turn the volume all the way till your ears almost bleed, how when it's so loud there's a quiet place inside the noise? Loud enough to shake your teeth loose but in there somewhere is a ghost voice, like silent singing. That's the sound I want to get."

After their first gig, Relly starts acting strange and rushes out into the ally. Zee chases him and watches as he bursts into flames. She panics and starts to run, but Relly tells her it's all right. He tells her that he is a god and his element is fire. He says everyone else in the band is a god with a specific element, and that he believes that Zee is the goddess of water.

I suggest this book for any one who likes rock music, super powers, and romance. This is a really cool book and one of my favorites.
