



# The City

*Dean Koontz*

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*The city changed my life and showed me that the world is deeply mysterious. I need to tell you about her and some terrible things and wonderful things and amazing things that happened . . . and how I am still haunted by them. Including one night when I died and woke and lived again.*

Here is the riveting, soul-stirring story of Jonah Kirk, son of an exceptional singer, grandson of a formidable “piano man,” a musical prodigy beginning to explore his own gifts when he crosses a group of extremely dangerous people, with shattering consequences. Set in a more innocent time not so long ago, *The City* encompasses a lifetime but unfolds over three extraordinary, heart-racing years of tribulation and triumph, in which Jonah first grasps the electrifying power of music and art, of enduring friendship, of everyday heroes.

The unforgettable saga of a young man coming of age within a remarkable family, and a shimmering portrait of the world that shaped him, *The City* is a novel that speaks to everyone, a dazzling realization of the evergreen dreams we all share. Brilliantly illumined by magic dark and light, it’s a place where enchantment and malice entwine, courage and honor are found in the most unexpected quarters, and the way forward lies buried deep inside the heart.

## The City Details

Date : Published July 8th 2014 by Bantam (first published 2014)

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Author : Dean Koontz

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Genre : Fiction, Horror, Mystery

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# From Reader Review The City for online ebook

## Robert says

If points were awarded for style and having his way with the English language, then Dean Koontz deserves a solid **8.5** for THE CITY, where the prose sings soprano, and hits all of the high notes. But if you want to award an author for his plot and filling a novel with substance, instead of flowery language comprised of mums and daffodils and rhododendrons and roses, then he gets **-7** in this arena, and that may even be a tad generous. I mean, this is the same man who takes the mundane and turns it into one machete-wielding bastard. Forget Freddy and Jason, and all the other hacks, this man takes a father figure, stuffs him full of crazy, and sets him loose on society. If that shit doesn't freak you out, then you're probably not thinking hard enough.

If names were any indication of a person's destiny, then it's no surprise that Jonah Ellington Basie Hines Eldridge Wilson Hampton Armstrong Kirk is a musical prodigy and can recreate a song after listening to it. Sure, he's one brilliant son of a gun, and this novel shows plenty of brilliance, but it gets caught up in the mundane. And I found myself asking the question about when the train might pull up to the station and take me away from this universe with verse left to spare on some unsuspecting ne'er-do-well.

There's a cutting fiend who takes up residence on the sixth floor, just above our nine year-old hero in Apartment 5-C who wields a knife at his throat, and leaves a few trinkets behind for the residents to remember her by. But it seemed like more of an artificial way to ratchet up suspense, instead of grounded in a more concrete foundation. Where this story really failed, though, is it never went anywhere. Similar to a hitchhiker who gallivants across the country, stopping in Nashville and Columbus and Chicago and Denver and Albuquerque and LA and then Las Vegas before finally settling in Lincoln, it just seemed all over the place.

I received this book for free through NetGalley.

Cross-posted at Robert's Reads

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## Christine says

Amazing! This book is one of the best books I have read by Koontz. I was hooked from the minute I started reading it. Jonah is a fantastic narrator and the characters that surround him are people you want to know from the very beginning. My favorite character was Mr. Yoshioka. His story alone is quite compelling. There really should be a soundtrack to go along with this novel.

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## Melinda says

Jonas Kirk shares his history. A musical prodigy, Jonas finds music comforting, his personal saving grace. Jonas tells his life story to his long time friend Malcolm explaining events and people aiding and abetting his metamorphose into a 'whole' man, as opposed to 'half' a man as his estranged and deserter father.

I found ***The City*** mediocre. For me it lacked a spark, the characters, the narrative were flat, lifeless. I didn't 'feel' anything reading this story, rather I felt as if I read mere pretty words on paper.

The 'evil do'ers' felt contrived and misplaced. It was as if their presence was inserted to amuse and fulfill an expectation.

Other players added to the narrative, quite frankly they rescued the story. Pearl, Yoshioka and Amalia breathed life into this flat and banal novel.

Jonas possesses an admirable attitude. No matter what adversity he faces, past or present he focuses on the positive and takes life in long easy strides.

***The City*** isn't good or bad - more average. A little slow with plenty of references of musical greats, poets, art which I enjoyed. I'm not certain of what the reader will take away with all the intricate references with the exception of an uber quick history lesson. I'm unsure if the references were too plentiful and slowed down the pace or if blame can be pointed elsewhere. I'm NOT a Koontz expert but something is off regarding ***The City***.

My second Koontz book, he gets one more shot before I decide if he is shelf worthy. So far I find myself disappointed again, currently, his place on my shelf is looking dismal. I fail to see the greatness of his books so many I know rave about. Where is the Dean Koontz I was told I would love? I'm still waiting.....

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### **Rick Slane says**

Very light historical-fiction and art-appreciation. I finished this on an airplane so it is not difficult and not as good as *The Goldfinch* or *Boy's Life*.

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### **Branwen Sedai \*of the White Ajah\* says**

*After you have suffered great losses and known much pain, it is not cowardice to wish to live henceforth with a minimum of suffering. And one form of heroism, about which few if any films are made, is having the courage to live without bitterness when bitterness is justified, having the strength to persevere even when perseverance is unlikely to be rewarded, having the resolution to find profound meaning in life when it seems the most meaningless.*

Despite my outward enthusiasm about starting this book when I first purchased it, I was also almost equally terrified. Dean Koontz was and is my number one favorite author. Through his words I found comfort and hope when they could be found no where else. It was through his writing and his books that I realized I wanted to write my own books someday. So I always eagerly await each new release of his with a kind of breathless anticipation. But the past few books disappointed me somewhat. They tended to be a bit...less about the story and more...dare I say preachy? When I pick up a Dean Koontz book I don't want to be preached at (I can go listen to my parents for that :P). I want to be scared. I want to laugh. I want to fall in love with the characters. I want to cry.

*No matter what happens, no matter what, everything will be okay in the long run."*

I did all these things with this book and he has made a complete turnaround, in my opinion, from where his previous few books have strayed. This story is concise yet eloquent. Horrifying yet beautiful. I remained enthralled for the entire duration of the book. I can't honestly say too much about the story itself without giving anything away, but I WILL say that even if you are not a fan of this type of book I think you will find something in it that speaks to you.

Welcome back, Mr. Koontz.

*Surrendering to fear can destroy your life. Indulgence to stubborn anger destroys it as well. But guilt, is no less a destroyer of lives. Fear can be overcome. You may let go of anger. And guilt can be forgiven.*

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### **Karen says**

Thank you to NetGalley and Random House for giving me an eARC of this book in exchange for an honest review. This was an incredible honor for me as I have been a HUGE fan of Dean Koontz for "decades"!

The City is the story of remarkable young Jonah Kirk who, in his late-fifties, decides to tell the story of several years in his youth beginning when he was 8 years old. From the first line where Jonah gives his full name of Jonah Ellington Basie Hines Eldridge Wilson Hampton Armstrong Kirk, I was captivated. Who has 9 names? Amazing character Jonah does! And thus the adventure began.

As usual, Koontz had me under his spell as a wordsmith as he magically told Jonah's story of a MAJOR incident in young Jonah's life. Jonah's relationships with his mother, grandfather, best friend Malcolm, Mr. Yoshioka, Mrs. Lorenzo, and finally, Miss Pearl aka "The City", were the backbone of this story and I fell in love with each of these characters. My favorite character (besides Jonah) was Mr. Yoshioka.

I was also in love with the musical genius of young eccentric Jonah who is a piano prodigy. Koontz's descriptions of the music and songs had me envisioning each and every song as I listened along in my head.

Koontz once again weaved his spell with his incredible writing. I was breathless and eager for more. When I had to put the book down, I couldn't stop thinking about it and couldn't wait until I could pick it back up and continue reading. I was sorry when The City ended because I wanted more!

I also highly recommend the short story "The Neighbor" which tells a bit of Malcolm's story.

All in all, I loved The City! Dean Koontz never fails to deliver amazing book after amazing book! You get another WELL DONE from me, Mr. Koontz! I can't wait to see what you come up with next.

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### **Patrice Hoffman says**

As I read this novel I kept wondering to myself what happened to the Dean Koontz I loved so many years ago. I was so excited to start *The City* and was even temporarily blinded by Koontz prose and wordplay that I almost forgot that I was bored out of my mind... almost.

*The City* is the story of Jonah Kirk as he recalls the days of his youth. Born to a beautiful songstress and a disappearing father, Jonah finds solace in his incredible ability to play the piano, note for note, after hearing the tune only once. Jonah is narrating this story at the request of his best friend Malcolm Pomerantz (who's a little on the OCD side) recounting the days of his youth that transforms him into a whole man. Not a half man like his father.

As *The City* progresses, we are introduced to the many people in Jonah's life that have helped shape him. There's the woman who's the city, Miss Pearl, Mr. Yoshioka, and Amalia Pomerantz, Malcolm's older sister. Each of these characters bring the story to life, with their keen sense of clairvoyance, wisdom, or just plain beauty, inside and out. When Koontz let them star on the pages, the novel didn't seem so...mundane.

As a way to maintain his position on the horror shelf, Koontz provides characters who seem to only exist for the sake of thrills and bloodshed. Fiona, Drackman, and his father help move the story forward but are never really interesting enough to bring on the razzle dazzle of the more evil characters I've come to expect from Koontz. I'm sorry but I had high standards from Koontz. I was a teen who once spent all her allowance just to get my hands on one of his many books.

The one other gripe I have with this novel is that it didn't seem to move forward for at least a while. There were so many references to musicians, poems, art, or architecture and all things creative that the point of them being mentioned was soon forgotten. It's like we were given Koontz iTunes playlist on shuffle.

It's not all bad. Believe me. The writing is top notch. I have so many quotes I highlighted from this read that will resonate for a long time in my life. Of course, Koontz' classic good vs. evil theme isn't lost on me, but I also thought *The City* is a great coming of age story. Jonah faces challenges with courage that many adults will never obtain. He takes the good with the bad, and is positive that no matter how bad things get, they will get better. Jonah is the type of person I aspire to be someday.

Overall, *The City* is an enjoyable enough read for philosophical purposes but if you're like me, expecting the Koontz of yester-year than this may not be the place for you. Wonderfully written paragraphs are drowned by the constant name-dropping of musical acts. I recommend this novel to die-hard fans who are entranced with any and every work by Koontz. I just urge Dean Koontz to take his own advice and realize his talent for writing is a gift he hasn't earned so he should use it wisely on the next novel.

*Copy provided by Random House Publishing Group via Netgalley*

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## **Elspeth says**

I have to say this is the worst Dean Koontz book I have ever read, mostly because throughout the whole story it didn't feel like Koontz wrote the thing. The pace was slow, the story mostly boring, the characters bland, and most of it came across as a history slash music slash art lesson. It also has WAY more religious pressure in the book than I like in my stories. I don't mind if the faith in stories, but please don't try to convert me.

The book is set in the sixties, with a nine year old piano prodigy as the main character. This made for the

author to add a lot of filler with music titles, musician names, and history lessons. I would be okay with this if it was well done, but it really wasn't, just really boring.

I remember reading Stoneheart a few years back, and being fascinated by the London architecture, and doing searches on all the statues mentioned. It was a beautiful way to learn, and I smiled through the whole series waiting for a new statue to be introduced so I could look it up.

This book was just so ham handed, and so in your face with the trying to make you feel certain emotions that it irritated the hell out of me. Maybe it's the fact that I was reading books by better writers just before this, and parts of this story has been done before in much better ways.

So all in all, this book was a big old fail for me. I got through it because it was easy to read, too bad it wasn't just as fun.

I received this book from Netgalley for an honest review.

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### **Lisa says**

This book is available today!!! (and I just listened to the audio sample and it sounds great!)

### **I LOVED THIS BOOK.**

Was this a perfect book? No. Were there maybe one or two (three?) plot holes? Yes. But I gladly threw down a plank and continued across the gaps. I didn't care. I loved the movement of this book, the story, the characters, and THE CITY. This prose was just so nice. I don't really have a better word than nice. It was just so nice to read this book.

I'm not sure how much experience Dean Koontz has with nine-year-old inner-city African-American males. Maybe some, maybe none. All I can say is, I'm a believer. This rang true to me. I just loved it. I was under the spell from very early in the story. I've read a lot of reviews that lament the turn Koontz is taking in his work. I for one do not wish to pigeon-hole this man. Let's not relegate his talent to only thrills and chills. If it's time for him to step out, let's welcome the step. This is a great book and a great story.

I'm so happy that I was able to get an advanced readers' copy from Book Browse. This is my honest review. I loved it and I give it all five stars without hesitation :)

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### **\*TUDOR^QUEEN\* says**

I received this book as an advance copy for review via NetGalley.

I've never read one of Dean Koontz's books until now, but knew he was a bestselling author and that his

books were a tad on the weird side. So, I embarked with keen interest on this journey through "The City."

At base this story is a heartwarming one about a young black boy who lives in an apartment building with both some colorful and precious neighbors. Jonah Kirk is a very smart, industrious, thoughtful and curious boy, an only son to now estranged parents. His mother and Grandpa are both talented musically, and these genes passed on to Jonah. At ten years old, he plays the piano almost as good as his Grandpa Teddy, a professional piano player. His Mom works at Woolworth's by day and sings at clubs in the evening- her true passion.

Not only is Jonah talented musically, but seems to possess the gift of "second sight." This manifests itself in frightening visions, often accompanied by a woman Jonah dubbed Pearl. Pearl is a beautiful, nurturing, rose-scented black woman who periodically appears, acting as a kind of guardian angel and mentor for Jonah's visions. Pearl is a self-acclaimed embodiment of the city.

Some of the tenants in the apartment building are quite endearing, such as the Italian woman who watches Jonah when his Mom is at work. A recent young widow, she loves to cook and is a loving presence in Jonah's life. Another tenant is a Japanese tailor, always neat and resplendent in an impeccable suit with manners to match. His gentle, supportive friendship to young Jonah was a tender touch throughout the book.

Weaving throughout the book is a sinister plot that mysteriously builds and coalesces, based on Jonah's visions. The story is a rich one, keeping the reader in suspense as to whether it's a paranormal reality or a criminal one.

Mystery/thrillers are not my favorite genre of book. I took a chance on this one and was pleasantly surprised. This was a fulfilling story with solid characters that really kept my interest.

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## **Gina Burgess says**

I can hear a lot of you saying, "But Koontz is not a Christian fiction writer!"

You are correct. But I really like the way Koontz writes so I asked to review this book and the publisher graciously gave me permission.

This is not typical Koontz. You know everything will be okay in the end because the beginning is actually the end. The City reminds me a lot of The Prayer of Owen Meany. I really liked that novel, too.

You are quickly whisked back to last century (around the 60s) to the life of one nine-year-old boy called Jonah Kirk who has eight or nine names of famous black musicians between the Jonah and the Kirk. Add a good-for-nothing father and a wonderful Christian mother set in an apartment house in the middle of a big city (Chicago, I think, it really is not important which city). Then stir in some truly evil people that have zero feeling for the sanctity of life, a wonderful Japanese neighbor who is struggling with his own demon, and you have the perfect mix for a great literature reading experience.

There are numerous religious connotations in this novel. This is a lot about protection and forgiveness. (view spoiler)

Pay attention to that key word: literary. This is very similar to the old timey novels of yesteryear where the



reader gets a lot of description that makes you feel the heat, the chilling rain, the taste of the ice cream and hot dogs. You are taken for an in depth tour of some of the most chilling villains, but it is not like a jerky head jumping ride. The transitions are smooth and extremely expert. This is more a psychological thriller than one of Koontz's monster fear factors of his early career. Unlike a lot of today's fair, you actually want to read to the very last word. The ride is very satisfying.

Five of five stars. I was tempted to give it four stars because of one segment in the climax, but the book overall deserves five stars. You'll pay a lot of money for the hardback version, but it is worth every penny. The book is a keeper.

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## Edward Lorn says

As with most Dean Koontz books released over the past decade, THE CITY is readable, which is to say it's not riddled with errors or clunky writing. And that's about all this novel has going for it.

THE CITY is a betrayal, plain and simple. Not the content of the story, but the story itself is a piece of false advertising. Not even the title makes sense once you've read the book, because the MC doesn't truly reflect on the city, doesn't go for walks as the cover would have you believe, and, in truth, the reader never gets a feel for this place. The only tie-in (and boy-o, is it a loose one) is a woman who claims to be the city personified, but she doesn't matter. At all. The book should've been entitled JONAH, or some such.

Let's take a gander at the synopsis (something I never do in my reviews, mind you). My comments will be in bold:

*"The city changed my life and showed me that the world is deeply mysterious. I need to tell you about her and some terrible things and wonderful things and amazing things that happened . . . and how I am still haunted by them. Including one night when I died and woke and lived again.*

**Spoiler alert! That doesn't happen. That bit about him dying. Once again I'm reminded of LIFE EXPECTANCY, where Koontz couldn't even be bothered to follow his own synopsis. The opening paragraph of the blurb is misleading, giving one the hopes of perhaps a moving or thrilling read. The reader receives neither.**

*"Here is the riveting, soul-stirring story of Jonah Kirk, son of an exceptional singer, grandson of a formidable "piano man," a musical prodigy beginning to explore his own gifts when he crosses a group of extremely dangerous people, with shattering consequences. Set in a more innocent time not so long ago, The City encompasses a lifetime but unfolds over three extraordinary, heart-racing years of tribulation and triumph, in which Jonah first grasps the electrifying power of music and art, of enduring friendship, of everyday heroes."*

**There is no "electrifying power of music and art" present in this book. What Koontz does is list the greatest names in jazz, and mentions Carel Fabritius's Goldfinch painting. Jonah, our main character is simply great at everything he does without having any real hurdles to cross over because he's so naturally talented. Oh, and he's black. Make sure you make note of that because Koontz reminds you every time Jonah meets someone who isn't. And that's about as far as the character development goes with the kid.**

*"The unforgettable saga of a young man coming of age within a remarkable family, and a shimmering portrait of the world that shaped him, The City is a novel that speaks to everyone, a dazzling realization of the evergreen dreams we all share. Brilliantly illumined by magic dark and light, it's a place where enchantment and malice entwine, courage and honor are found in the most unexpected quarters, and the way forward lies buried deep inside the heart."*

**This isn't an "unforgettable saga", it's an outline for a thriller involving bombings and robberies. It just so happens to occur around this little boy. His family's so remarkable that I cannot remember a single one of their names, because Mr. Yoshioka stole the show. That character is the one shining light in this dismal read, and I enjoyed every scene where his name graced the page. He is, quite honestly, the only reason I finished this book.**

In summation: The book promises magic, which we catch the slightest glimpse of with a woman who pops up three or four times in the book for no apparent reason other than to tell the kid something bad is going to happen, oh, and to show him her purse. The book promises a coming-of-age story, which never happens because the main character never comes of age... he simply remains the same emotionally after a horribly crippling tragedy. By the way, that tragedy is no more than an afterthought in this book, mentioned only as Koontz races for the finish line.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

The city changed my life and showed me that the world is deeply mysterious. I need to tell you about her and some terrible things and wonderful things and amazing things that happened . . . and how I am still haunted by them. Including one night when I died and woke and lived again.

Here is the riveting, soul-stirring story of Jonah Kirk, son of an exceptional singer, grandson of a formidable "piano man," a musical prodigy beginning to explore his own gifts when he crosses a group of extremely dangerous people, with shattering consequences. Set in a more innocent time not so long ago, The City encompasses a lifetime but unfolds over three extraordinary, heart-racing years of tribulation and triumph, in which Jonah first grasps the electrifying power of music and art, of enduring friendship, of everyday heroes.

### **Dollycas's Thoughts**

I haven't read a Dean Koontz novel since I have started blogging and this was a great one for my venture back into his unique way of storytelling. Sometimes his stories have just scared me to death but this one drew me in with its almost fantasy feel.

Jonah Ellington Basie Hines Eldridge Wilson Hampton Armstrong Kirk takes us back in time and gives us an "oral history" of his life. And what a life it was. The key character to the whole story is "the city" and that doesn't mean what you think but there will be no spoilers here. Jonah's story is very complex and includes some characters that seem very ordinary at the beginning but become extraordinary in the end. I was shocked that the adult Jonah and I have something in common. This story then evoked some totally new emotions.

Let's face it Koontz is a master storyteller. He creates plots that so intricate and multifaceted that grip the reader so tightly while examining hard issues. His characters come to life right off the page and his descriptive talents bring the time and place alive as well. There is so much going on in this story readers need

to slow down and savor the words. There are several elements interwoven with the main theme that all add up to make this an outstanding story.

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### **Kim says**

I was lucky enough to receive this eBook through NetGalley. Dean Koontz is one of my favorite authors; from the first moment I picked up my first book by him, *Watchers*, I was completely captivated. I find all of his characters fully developed. I even feel that the villains are portrayed with a depth that amazes me; as a reader I have come to appreciate and understand better the depths of them - even if I cannot relate personally.

I decided *The City* is reminiscent of earlier Koontz books I devoured. Much of the writing is prose. Chapter 1 begins "My name is Jonah Ellington Basie Hines Eldridge Wilson Hampton Armstrong Kirk. From as young as I can remember, I loved the city. Mine is a story of love reciprocated. It is the story of loss and hope and of the strangeness that lies just beneath the surface tension of daily life, a strangeness infinite fathoms in depth." So begins Jonah's tale, told of his days as an eight year old boy, from his 57 year old perspective.

I am not sure what I expected. I think I had no preconceived notions about the story, so it made reading it more of an adventure, since I did not know the direction it was heading. Dean Koontz is a master storyteller, weaving tales of magic and intrigue into his books. Some consider his books horror, and liken him to Stephen King, another master storyteller. This book was different. Not horror, just magical and mystical, and yet very realistic. Wiser, somehow. It is about the choices we make in life; choices in becoming good or evil, about doing good, even when the world hands us bad. Jonah had two very different parents, and wonderful grandparents and a select few good friends who walk alongside him in his life, through tragedy and happiness, too.

"One of the many wonders of this world is that, if we allow it to happen, anyone newly met can all but overnight become a central figure in our lives, hardly less essential to us than air and water."

--Dean Koontz, from the novel *The City*

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

I usually try to summarize the book before I write what I think about the book. This book...you know what...For a moment, I failed to see the point with this book. Eh anyway, I will give it a try; Jonah is a young black boy, a musical prodigy that thanks to visions and a woman called "Miss Pearl" will try to stop a criminal gang.

This book was not easy to read and it's not easy to write about, mostly because I found the book's story lacking. It wasn't badly written, just not interesting. It's the kind of book that takes a longer time to read the unusually because part of me just found the book dreary and instead of reading I do other things, even the other books I'm reading at the same time suffers because of it since my mood to read is low.

I still don't understand why "Miss Pearl" is helping Jonah. I mean there must be many violent crimes committed in the city, why him? Is she often helping people, or is it just him? Damn it, I don't understand

Miss Pearl and neither did I found her that interesting. It would have been better if he just would have stumbled on the criminals without visions and help from "Miss Pearl". Then it would, at least, have been an ordinary thriller instead this weird book with a hint of paranormal.

So this was not a happy read for me and I will just let Commodus finish this review:

**1.5 stars!**

*Thank you Netgalley for providing me with a free copy for an honest review!*

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