



The Isolator, Vol. 1 (light novel): The Biter

Reki Kawahara

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Sci-fi action, angst, and super-powered teenagers abound in this new series from Reki Kawahara, the acclaimed author of *Sword Art Online* and *Accel World*!

Ever since a terrible childhood tragedy, Minoru Utsugi has wished for one thing: solitude. Years later, a bizarre encounter leaves a mysterious artifact in Minoru's body that grants his wish--but that's far from the end of his troubles. Others have been visited and given powers like Minoru's, but their twisted desires are not so benign. When a murderous force threatens the people Minoru holds dear, will his newfound abilities be enough to stand in its way? And can there be a future for someone who craves eternal solitude above all else? The story of the Isolator begins here!

The Isolator, Vol. 1 (light novel): The Biter Details

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From Reader Review The Isolator, Vol. 1 (light novel): The Biter for online ebook

Aelvana says

Minoru lost his entire family the night someone invaded his home. Now he wants nothing more than to get through life without impacting others at all. No more memories, good or bad, for him or anyone else of him. But his strong desire to have a minimal existence has one major problem: when the alien orbs descended three months ago, one of them chose him. Now he has the power to completely isolate himself, but others received more malevolent abilities . . .

This was a lot deeper than I was expecting. It's an excellent picture of both Minoru, who reacted to extreme tragedy by turning in on himself, and also Takaesu, whose twisted childhood set him down the path of becoming a serial killer.

I liked that Minoru really struggles with connecting to other people in the wake of losing everyone who was important to him all at once. Even though this book hints that some of the people he's met would consider him a friend, he's not ready for friendship. He's defining his relationship with them by how quickly he can get rid of them, and how he can try to smooth over anything they might find memorable about him so he can fade into the background once again. Other characters don't get him at all, but he's got that quiet desperation that drives him, and he stands up for his own convictions.

This takes an interesting twist when he finds himself somewhat responsible for putting others in danger. He doesn't wish on anyone else the same kind of tragedy he experienced, so he steps up despite wanting to keep a low profile. It's also fun how he ends up using his perfect isolation to fight. He's not a skilled fighter, and his abilities are entirely defensive, but he can do quite a lot more than I expected with them. (And the book never did answer if he will eventually run out of air if he keeps the shield up too long.)

It was also interesting how deeply the powers tied in with who the characters are. Minoru getting isolation powers is easy to see, but I loved that the villain's biting powers made just as much sense. In both cases, the orbs latched on to an obsession in their host and amplified it past all reason. Given that, I'm looking forward to seeing more backstory on his new teammates, to see why their powers developed the way they did.

Overall this was a very nice surprise. The sci-fi/supernatural elements are flashy and fun, but also grounded in well-realized characters. I am looking forward to see where the rest of this series goes. Recommended.

See my reviews and more at <https://offtheshelfreviews.wordpress....>

Terrence says

I think The Isolator is a hard one to recommend because it skews towards an older crowd in instances (ultra violence in certain scenes) while also remaining very clearly a piece of YA lit (you see this in some of the characterization and problems the characters deal with).

The premise is interesting. These alien beings in stone / eye form (think Berserk's Behilit) come down from above and take some control over a human host body, giving them enhancements to their abilities. It seems

like a bit of a PG / PG13 take on the manga / anime Parasyte. There is a twist involving the powers and aliens that I won't spoil that makes it a bit more unique. At the end of the day, I was somewhat intrigued by the set up.

Your characters aren't necessarily archetypes you haven't seen before, but they are still executed fairly well. There's an undercurrent of human hangups that the two perspective characters in this volume have, and accepting / overcoming the past seems to be a key theme going forward.

Overall, it just didn't catch my interest that much. I think they introduced a few too many important characters to start the novel series, some of whom seem more damsel in distress / hangers on at this point than actual characters. I hope we get to learn about each of them more in later volumes, though I'm not left on the edge of my seat after the end of this volume to learn what happens next.

Jesse Burk says

A pretty good story. It had some intriguing ideas and it held my attention really well. I'm not used to having a deeper understanding of the enemies perspective while reading which definitely made this story unique. I am really interested in finding out how this story unfolds in the next couple of volumes.

Bentgaidin says

Interesting, but I feel like the light novels are just letting me down. This would probably get another star if the writing didn't feel so choppy, which I think is probably an issue of an overly faithful translation. Also, I kind of wish that there wasn't set up such a clear division between good people with powers, and bad people with powers, but that's more a minor thing at the beginning of a series that might deal with it later anyway.

LJF says

Minoru Utsugi is alone... or, at least, he wants to be. Ever since a tragic incident in his childhood, Minoru has wanted nothing more or less than absolute solitude- and he may get that wish.

When mysterious orbs known as "Third Eyes" come down from outer space, they go inside human bodies and give them powers based on their wishes and memories. But these powers aren't free- black "Jet Eyes" grant these amazing powers- but the red "Ruby Eyes" don't just grant their hosts powers- they also give them homicidal urges.

Tomomi Minotsugi is an ordinary high school girl- when she encounters Minoru for the second time, she's determined to befriend him- but can someone as isolated as Minoru really have friends?

The Ruby Eye host known as "The Biter" has the teeth of a shark, and uses them to bite people, and his latest target is an unassuming high school girl. But he's stopped by the impossible- other Third Eye hosts- who he didn't even know existed.

Yumiko Azu is a Jet Eye host, codenamed "The Accelerator". She works for an organization of Jet Eye Hosts working to take down the Ruby Eyes. On what should be a normal assignment of rescuing a girl from a Ruby Eye Host, she encounters another Jet Eye host. She would love to recruit him, but he wants nothing to do

with her- or anyone at all. Can she convince this pig-headed idiot to join her side? Norie Yoshimizu is Minoru's thirty-one-year-old adopted sister. She took him in after he lost everything, and he knows he'll never be able to repay her- but when Norie gets put in danger because of his problems, he knows he has to save her- no matter the cost. Into this crazy mess Minoru is thrown- what will he do- and can he ever really reach the absolute solitude he is searching for?

Allison says

So far, I've only read two light novels that I absolutely couldn't stand- this one and *Maid Machinegun*. While the other was bad because of ordinary ineptitude, however, *The Isolator* actively infuriated me. First of all, the fact that the villain here is a cannibal that only eats fan service fodder girls and stops to admire them before meal time is intensely off-putting. Monstrousness aside, I'm not sure the literary world needed any anime-style cannibal fetishism, but if you, as a reader, want that, here you go.

As much as it repulsed me, however, at least the eating people stuff in this book was original. I still didn't like it that well, but the first half of this novel is a well-written, smart character study of a protagonist and a villain and their divergent attempts to overcome the sorts of horrific pasts that can only be found in YA novels. All of this setup, however, is wasted on a never-ending drag of a battle that takes up an incredibly long stretch of the novel. Character development is wasted on a ridiculous super-powered set piece, filled with bizarre gore and at least one personal revelation so stupid that it cheapens the first part of the book.

The worst part of *The Isolator*, though, is how much it ends up falling back on cliches. The main character has a superpower beyond the scope of what's been seen before? Really? Tell me more! Does that brash, snarky girl that he just met secretly have a heart of cold and a sweet spot for him? Who knows? Let's find out! Wow, do you think that the aliens have some sort of long-standing vendetta on their home planet that they're using humans to settle? I don't know, but I'd sure be shocked if future volumes revealed that to be the case!

And, seriously- if you're writing a light novel, and you have to pick a code name for a character, you're seriously going to sit there, nod, and go, "Yes. I pick Accelerator. Never been done before, good job, me!"?

On a technical level, the prose itself in *The Isolator* is well done- it's clear, keeps the story going, and, to an impressive extent, equalizes the importance of bloody action and internal monologues. The illustrations are really nice, too, though there's one I kept staring at while thinking, "What exactly am I looking at here?" The prose and illustrations, however, are in the service of a story that is repellent and stupid. Needless to say, I have no intention of keeping up with this series.

Quiet says

"The Isolator" is a latest young-adult/light-novel from one of the contemporary superstars of the genre, Reki Kawahara, most famous for the "Sword Art Online" series of books.

The Isolator is a traditional light-novel. For those who read Sword Art Online though, this book is not alike; whereas SAO is considered a light-novel solely for its demographic and country-of-origin, it was really a

complete story, a science-fiction novel through and through. But "The Isolator" is not that; this is the first book in a series that barely scratches the surface of the science-fiction/fantasy future of 2019 and space-alien superpowers that comprise its innards, and ends on a deep cliffhanger that promises much much more so long as you keep buying the books. This is what Light-Novels are: alike much of Japanese pop-culture, its a design meant to reach a mass audience and convince them to commit to a lengthy, expensive interest in a project that extends over multiple entries (and, very often, multiple mediums as well).

The Isolator: Volume 1 is okay. That's about all I have to really say about it, because there's not much that happens besides establishing what the next entries in the series will be based on. Characters are introduced at a very slight level; all but the main-character remain deeply shrouded in mystery, cloaked in the various tropes typical of Japanese pop-media that are meant to be shed at later, more opportune times in following entries. The action-conflict is established at an elementary level: three months before the novel begins gemstones from space fell quietly onto Earth and entered into certain persons. If it's a black gem, you're a good guy; if it's a red gemstone, you're a badguy. This the depth of context that this first volume bestows on this, so obviously much more is hidden than is revealed in this book.

This is a 200 page novel, and alike SAO most of these pages are action passages. This is still a rather weird thing to read because action in literature very rarely "does" anything. Action-scenes are just a lot of stuff happening that, while directing of characters' evolutions to come, also stalls the text from getting to that; most skilled or learned western authors keep action-scenes to a minimum, utilizing them only when absolutely necessary to the story, but this is not the case for many Japanese authors, and this is especially the case with the Light-Novel genre. I've written about this same thing in other reviews of Japanese Light-Novels, so I'll repeat simply: be prepared to zone out repeatedly if you're not familiar with (excessive) action-passages.

There's the problem that massive amounts of action just isn't that exciting in literature; in videogames and anime lengthy bouts of action are paramount to the consumers engagement, but in literature it's really rather boring, and honestly meaningless. This is something that the target audience of young/early teenage males might respond to, but for adults this degree of activity is definitely going to deflect from the story, as the medium just doesn't depend on such a thing.

No less, I enjoyed The Isolator, although it is a very limited text that offers little else than a framework for later entries in the series which will, hopefully, be much more insightful and evocative. I very much like the radically entertainment-oriented sensibility of Japanese light-novels, and while I am not persuaded that a hundred+ pages of action passages are good writing I do find much enjoyment in reading about the initial usage of superpowers, human transformations, and other comicbook-like elements. Such grandiose activity hasn't really been done by western authors; and certainly among the available translated Japanese light-novelists so far, Reki Kawahara does action-writing the best.

Sabrina "Look At My Books" says

Surprisingly well written and deep

Scott says

Another fantastic book by Reki Kawahara that has a different feel to his other series, although still planted in sci-fi genre.

As it's the first book in the series, most of the book was character introduction and world building but it doesn't feel over the top or forced. Most things at this stage are still shrouded in mystery, making me wanting to get my hands on the next one asap.

An interesting change to Kawahara's previous novels is that this book was written in third person with multiple perspectives. I felt that this change allowed a broader view of the plot, but at the loss of not feeling as close or relatable to the main character (though it could be argued that this is the way the main character wanted it).

Overall a great start to a new series that I'm keen to continue with.

Rebecca says

This is easily the best Reki Kawahara novel to make it into English. Hero Minoru is neither a sad-sack like Haruyuki (Accel World, Vol. 1: Kuroyukihime's Return) nor is he a Gary Stu like Kirito (Sword Art Online: Aincrad), and his plight is understandable. There are a variety of female characters, and the plot is totally game-free. Even if you've grown sick of his other properties, this is worth reading.

(Longer review will eventually appear on The Anime News Network.)

Niquie says

- Hardcover with color illustrations. Illustrations throughout the book were smaller than usually in a light novel and were surrounded by a thick black border (why???).

- Pov was 3rd person and alternated between Minoru and the Biter.

Minoru Utsugi is a troubled young man. When he was younger he survived something horrible, something no one should have to go through, and now years later he is still trying to cope with what happened. Just not in the healthiest ways.

He wants to forget everything, but even more than that he wants to be forgotten.

I've never quite met a character like Minoru before. He's mentally weak but physically strong, and yet he stands by his convictions. Throughout the novel he confronts his way of life (he has this way of over analyzing his every action and deeming it ultimately selfish) and he changes, he grows, and still by the end of the novel he doesn't change at all.

It's interesting, and I look forward to the next book to see how this plays out.

As for the Biter, he starts out as man with a biting trauma but by the end of the book I just felt sad for him (sad for all the characters really). In some ways *The Isolator* reminds me of the *A Certain Magical Index* series, just without the optimistically happy ending. In some ways *The Isolator* feels more realistic.

The concept for this series is a simple one. Three months ago most probably alien eyes enter the atmosphere

and attach themselves (like parasites) to unsuspecting humans giving them the ability to use a unique to them power.

The Biter gains the ability to bite through anything, and a voice telling him to eat and eat and eat people. The Isolator (aka Minoru) gains the ability to create an invisible shield around just himself, and so far no voice that talks to him.

Based on this book it sounds like these eyes only go after people who were horribly traumatized when younger (even the Biter, by the end learning all I did about what happened to him I didn't feel satisfaction or happy when he lost, just regret that things turned out as they did) and it looks like Reki Kawahara is not afraid to show this.

It's funny, when I first started reading *The Isolator* I was bored. It was a typical story about a teen with a power who just wanted to be left alone and stumbles on an incident that won't let him be left alone. There's even an "organization." But then, near the end of his fight with the Biter, as I read the last or so scene from the Biter's pov I felt a click happened in my mind.

This book touched something in me, and by the end I was left with this feeling of quietness. It's hard to describe, but even though I felt sad, it wasn't painful, I didn't even feel like crying, it was just life, and sometimes life is sad. Even now as I think about this book that feeling of quietness comes to me, it was worth it to keep reading because any book that can leave me feeling like this is a book I want to read again.

Kawahara did such a great job describing the character's mental pain. Some of the best parts for me were *Fragment 01* and The Biter's past and true feelings about said past. When he goes into what his favorite shark is and why I just felt for him.

Lastly there is no focus on romance here. There may be in future books (come on this is the guy who writes *Sword Art Online* and *Accel World* which are both harems I believe) but for now this thankfully had none.

And I just have to mention this, but according the Kawahara's author note he writes six books a year... what kind of insane writing schedule are you on Kawahara!?

Final Thoughts: Any book that leaves me feeling like this one did is a book I really really like. The beginning (*Fragment 01*) was great and I learned some interesting facts (like how to knock someone out) and probably more information on sharks and the different types than I needed to know. But the characters really shined, and once I got past the part where Minoru realizes he has to change and The Biter becomes a person to me I really got into the story and I want to keep reading this series.

I want to know how these characters will continue to grow, and if Minoru's wish is granted just what a world would be like if (view spoiler)

Brandon Beninato says

My first and probably last attempt at the light novel genre(although *Kizumonogatari* is sitting on my bookshelf, waiting for me.) The story moved much too quickly for my liking with almost no emphasis on world building. Now don't get me wrong, I feel as though I went into this book with higher than average expectations but I can't help but feel let down. One minute you're here and the next you're somewhere

completely different with no point of reference as to how you or the other characters even ended up there.

If you enjoy light novels then I can see where this book would captivate its target audience. There's some decently written battle scenes and the typical protagonist against the world charade that you would come to expect from a story like this. With that being said, "The Isolator, Vol. 1" isn't *that* bad, it just wasn't for me.

Aaron Nagy says

[I lost it when the guys head turned into a megalodon (hide spoiler)]

Tuna says

Kawahara is a writing machine. I was afraid picking it up that it would feel like a regurgitation of his other stories or that it would feel like his third series that was an after thought. After reading it, I must say that I was wrong. I felt like there were no similarities at all to Sword Art Online. The only slight similarity there is to a previously written Kawahara work is the nature of the Eye's abilities manifesting in an individual being similar to the subconscious generation of the avatar that one uses in Accel World, beyond that its a real world non MMO game not even set in the far off future. I greatly enjoyed it. Actually in comparison to Accel World this book feels much faster paced and a bit more gripping as I was able to get through 100 pages in just two days of reading, while Accel World typically takes me much longer at times. Kawahara is really focused in this one with little to no tangents present.

The magic battling, Isolator, story focuses a lot on the trauma that the two characters of choice have in this volume. One is the antagonist who one could easily feel the pain and stress was felt while the other is the lead who was caught up in a bad place at a wrong time. I could see how one would just want to be isolated and forget about their past and everything. Though Im glad that we dont stay in that state for the whole volume and series with the lead character showing some growth mentally and emotionally by the time the last page is read.

Only flaw is that it seemed Kawahara is unsure if it will get a second volume or become a series. I hope it sold well enough so that the publisher will allow it to continue. Though I guess it wouldnt come out as fast as Accel World and Sword Art Online volumes since he wants to maintain his six books a year schedule.

Grendaycita Segovia says

Una historia interesante y entretenida, aunque es un tanto cliché ver ese tipo de chico que es antisocial y que posee de repente un poder extraño, la trama entretiene y mas porque nuestro protagonista busca la "Soledad Absoluta". En cuanto a nuestro primer villano, estuvo genial en especial porque nos relata su historia y como es que llego a ser asi; otro punto a favor es que esta conocemos los diversos puntos de vista algo que en las Light Novel es muy interesante.

