



City of Hope & Despair

Ian Whates

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A SECOND VISIT TO THAIBURLEY: THE CITY OF DREAMS, THE FABLED CITY OF A HUNDRED ROWS.

Dark forces are gathering in the shadowy depths, and the whole city is under threat. The former street-nick, Tom, embarks on a journey to discover the source of the great river Thair, said to be the ultimate power behind all of Thaiburley. Accompanying him are the assassin Dewar and the young Thaistess Mildra. It soon becomes evident that their journey has more significance than any of them realise, as past secrets catch up with them and unknown adversaries hunt them... to the death!

File Under: Fantasy [Towering City | Ancient Secrets | Assassins & Gods | Soul Thief!]

City of Hope & Despair Details

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Author : Ian Whates

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From Reader Review City of Hope & Despair for online ebook

Joseph says

A second visit to Thaiburley, City of a Hundred Rows, but we actually spend surprisingly little time in the City proper. Our Heroes from the previous installment, Tom and Kat, have gone in separate directions. Tom has been sent on a mission that takes him and some companions out of the City, following the great river Thair back to its source; needless to say, peril awaits and dark forces dog their steps. Kat, in the meantime, is reuniting with her gang, the Tattooed Men, to track down the Soul Thief that's been killing folks down in the underCity. Again, needless to say, complications ensue ...

A worthy successor to, and improvement on, the first book (even if, as mentioned, much of it takes place off in the wilderness), and I look forward to seeing how it all concludes in the third book.

Kyle Maas says

Great series, good story, engaging characters; this is one of my surprise favorites from the last year.

Slightly Orson Scott Card'ian in that this a fairly adult story told through the eyes of children, this series (The City of a Hundred Rows) places the reader into a city on the brink of change. For decades, this vertical city has existed comfortably with it's clearly delineated class system: those rich and powerful near the top, the working middle class exactly where their name would indicate, and the lower class quite literally on the bottom looking up. All of this changes when one boy, seeking approval from his fellow gang members, accepts a dare to climb to the top and bring back evidence of his journey. Along the way, he sees something that he shouldn't have, and soon sets into motion a series of events that will find him facing danger at every turn and threaten the very social hierarchy the city is based on.

Let me put it simply: I really like these books. The first two are out with the third on the way and thus far I have thoroughly enjoyed myself. Ian Whates does an excellent job of imbuing everything with a sense of history; the city is one that feels lived in. The characters, even the small roles, all given a history and vitality that makes the world created one that is very easy to invest in. All of this is done with a deft touch, hints of backstory revealed naturally through the characters eyes, never leaving a feeling of being "told" anything. Action and pacing are excellent, with the fight scenes in particular detailed and inventive in their execution. His characters are all wonderfully human; each an outcast in their own right being forced into positions where they are responsible for far more than they asked for. If you are looking for some fun, fast, entertaining reads, perhaps something to fill that post-Harry-Potter-I-want-to-take-a-break-from-Game-of-Thrones-void, pick these up and give them a chance.

Andrew says

A more simplistic book than the early novel.

The story flowed nicely and extra world building details kept flowing.

It felt like the middle part and by the end I felt I was needing something extra.

But a good read none the less that kept me fully enthralled.

Just need the next part now.

Not huge books - perhaps they should have come out in one cover.

Ben Babcock says

City of Hope & Despair jumps between two narratives. Tom, the street-nick turned unlikely hero with the ability to hide himself and others in plain sight, sets off as part of a small expedition upriver. Back in Thaiburley, Kat, her sister, and the Tattooed Men hunt the Soul Thief. Meanwhile, there is the distinct impression of a ticking clock, as a mysterious calcifying disease afflicts those in the city who have magical talent.

Whates flicks back and forth between these narratives so much that it might make your head spin. This works to the book's advantage, however. I found myself getting tired of both stories. After a short time with Kat, I'd wonder what Tom and friends were up to outside of the city. Similarly, too long with the anaemic Tom, and I was yearning to see Kat get up to trouble. *City of Hope & Despair* suffers from a serious case of "grass is always greener" syndrome, but Whates still manages to make it work, barely.

Tom, fresh from saving the city with his ambiguous superpowers, is off on a quest. Yes, it's quest time in *City of a Hundred Rows* world! Tom's party includes the cunning assassin, Dewar; the intriguing Thaistess (priestess), Mildra; and a super-strength Kayjele named Kohn. With brains, spirit, and brawn backing him up, Tom travels upriver. It's not entirely clear what they are seeking (good old Prime Master of Thaiburley and his amgiuous explanations again), but legend has it that not only is the river the source of the city's magic but there is a *goddess* at the source of the river! So there!

In the city, Kat is chasing a Soul Thief. This malignant entity hunts people with magical talent and literally sucks them dry of it. It preys on the poor of the lower city, and so far the authorities have done nothing to stop it. So Kat and her band of antiheroes, the survivors of the vicious gladiatorial pits, are trying to fill the void. Eventually they hatch a half-baked scheme to use people with talent as bait. It doesn't quite go as planned (thanks to some interference from local gang members). In the end, Kat has to make a deal with the enemy she knows to hunt the enemy she doesn't.

Lurking behind these two stories, like a spider at its web, is the prime master. I love this guy. I hate that I love this guy, because he is bad for the plot like trans fat is for your heart—it can taste so good, but it is going to kill you one day. The prime master is one of those characters who has more answers than the reader—almost but not quite an author avatar—and manipulates other characters from behind the scenes. He confronts the mysterious bone disease that is attacking the talented of Thaiburley. It seems clear that he knows more about Tom's quest than he has let on to Tom. And he personally gets involved in Kat's hunt for the Soul Thief—though he has ulterior motives for sending her on a joint expedition with the Kite Guard into the Stain.

Tom, on the other hand, I still can't bring myself to love. He's just so plain and transparent. Whates gets into his head, and it's full of the fluffiness of youth without any of the flaws. It's true that Tom is no warrior. When it comes to his personality, his character, there are no flaws. He's a nice guy who, in a high school setting, would probably get beat up a lot because he's just so nice it's sickening.

I'm conflicted about Kat. I like her, but I think Whates leans too much on the stereotype of the "strong,

damaged badass girl” without seriously exploring it. To his credit, he gives Kat and her sister an interesting and fairly deep backstory about their childhood in the Pits. Kat’s adversarial relationship with her sister figures prominently in this book, coming to a head during the climax of her plot and resulting in a change to Kat’s status that will leave her uncertain and unbalanced in the next book.

City of Hope & Despair definitely has a lot going on, which isn’t quite the same as saying it has a lot going for it. Much like the first book, this one seem to reach for but never quite grasp the story it wants to be. I’m disappointed that it didn’t quite live up to my expectations, but after re-reading my review of the first book and thinking about it some more, I shouldn’t be surprised. Though this is a competent, complete story that sets the scene for what promises to be an intense third volume, *City of Hope & Despair* does not rise to the level of fascinating or epic.

Amber says

This second installment of the City of a Hundred Rows is in motion in several directions, and it makes you insanely curious about how Mr. Whates is going to tie the series up. Tom sets off with a group consisting of Dewar, the assassin, Mildra, a Thaistress, and Kohn, a giant cyclopien Kayjele, seeking the source of the Thair river and the home of the goddess Thais. Their journey is anything but an easy one, what with an innkeeper reverting to a deadly secret identity and waking an ancient enemy to hunt them down and prevent them from achieving their destination. Kat is back with the formidable Tattooed Men, which means she's got to face her sister, the leader of the group which Kat abandoned, and they're facing the Soul Thief, who descends on the City Below every few years and turns several people possessing special talents to husks. It's personal because the Soul Thief stole Kat and Chavver's mother from them. Their vendetta is complicated by an upstart gang called the Fang and a stranger from the East called Brent. This battle was complicated before it even began, and the price of success will be high. As if that wasn't enough, the prime master is investigating a mysterious and implacable new disease called bone flu, which gradually ossifies entire human bodies.

Things are complicated no matter which of the hundred rows you're on, and unlikely alliances must be made if the threats are to be confronted and vanquished. I can't wait for the last book!

Christopher Stilson says

In contrast to the previous book, this one took me several months to finish, although not because of any intrinsic failing on the part of the book except insofar as, following as it does three dissimilar plot threads instead of a unified, interwoven theme like the previous book, it makes it easier to find convenient stopping points. Also, unlike the previous book, it ends rather abruptly on a not-quite-cliffhanger, with each of the major characters facing a vague and undefined threat which we are assured is immanent. Furthermore, the draw of the previous story - the teasing characterization of the city - is largely absent from this one due to the fact that half the book does not take place within the titular city.

On the whole, this entry into the series feels like half a book.

Jane says

Ian Whates doesn't waste a single word. Each sentence builds onto the depth and texture of everything before, retreading only what hasn't been mentioned since the previous book. This is the type of writing I aspire to!

City of Hope and Despair picks up street waif Tom's surprising ascent to international intrigue and importance in a world where magic, religion and mechanics don't necessarily play nice with each other. It is a coming of age tale in a world of fantasy, steampunk and dirty politics.

Liviu says

I finished City Hope Despair and overall I liked it but I was surprised by some aspects of it; first it is a *middle book* in a trilogy - not a 2nd part of a duology as I expected and the final concluding book (due late fall 2011) according to the information inside the copy I have will be called City of Lights and Shadows and there is an excerpt from it that gives a hint where it goes.

And this shows since the book has the typical middle book structure where things advance, some threads get solved but nothing essentially stands on its own and the book ends like the first one with a semi-cliffhanger in one of the two main storylines and with a clear tbc in the other.

Inside Thaiburley nasty things stir and nasty things happen, most notably a creature called the Soul Thief - who does precisely what its name says and steals the souls especially of the people with a little "talent" - is on one of its occasional rampages; also the city's underground is in flux after the events of the first book and new gangs appear to take place of the decimated older ones

Kat whom we last have seen locked into mortal duel with her sister for the mastery of the Tattooed Men and the arena is the main protagonist here with her sister - their battle gets postponed due to the Soul Thief of course - and a various cast, mostly familiar from the first book; this part is a little weaker than the first book mostly because it brings little new and reads not unlike typical UF stuff, but Kat makes it worth reading for sure

In the second thread we get to see the world outside Thaiburley and learn some backstory and some of the big picture issues, when Tom is sent by the First Minister on a crucial mission with DeWar as a "bodyguard" and two more interesting companions; of course there are people/entities that do not want the mission to succeed and they command a skilled assassin with a personal grudge against DeWar to stop them at any cost; this part alternates the expected (fights, ambushes...) with a lot of world building expansion and it is very good with the caveats above as being to be continued

Overall the book moves fast and is a page turner with everything that made City Dreams and Nightmare entertaining, but the trilogy ending which I plan to read asap of course will determine how the series stands

FBC Rv added 3/16:

INTRODUCTION: City of Hope & Despair is the second book in the series about Thaiburley, the famed City of a Hundred Rows that has started last year in City of Dreams and Nightmares.

I was a little surprised by some aspects of it; most notably the fact that it is a *middle book* in a trilogy - not a 2nd part of a duology as I expected, so it has the typical structure of such where things advance, some threads get solved but nothing essentially stands on its own.

The blurb below provided the other new aspect, namely the expansion of the story beyond Thaiburley though the city features strongly in the second main thread of the novel.

"A SECOND VISIT TO THAIBURLEY: THE CITY OF DREAMS, THE FABLED CITY OF A HUNDRED ROWS.

Dark forces are gathering in the shadowy depths, and the whole city is under threat. The former street-nick, Tom, embarks on a journey to discover the source of the great river Thair, said to be the ultimate power behind all of Thaiburley. Accompanying him are the assassin Dewar and the young Thaistess Mildra. It soon becomes evident that their journey has more significance than any of them realize, as past secrets catch up with them and unknown adversaries hunt them... to the death! "

According to the information inside the copy I have, the concluding series book will be called City of Lights and Shadows and there is an excerpt that gives a hint where it goes.

ANALYSIS: City of Hope & Despair essentially starts where City Dreams and Nightmare ends, though it takes a little to get there since the first pages of the book are a sort of extended prologue that seems disconnected from what came before.

Inside Thaiburley nasty things stir and bad things happen, most notably a creature called The Soul Thief - who does precisely what its name says and steals the souls especially of the people with a little "talent" - is on one of its occasional rampages. To add to uncertainty, the city's underground is in flux after the events of the first book and new gangs appear to take place of the decimated older ones

Kat whom we last have seen locked into mortal duel with her sister for the mastery of the Tattooed Men and the Arena is the main protagonist here with her sister - their battle gets postponed due to the Soul Thief of course - and a various cast, mostly familiar from the first book; this part is a little weaker than the first book mostly because it brings little new and reads not unlike typical UF stuff, but Kat makes it worth reading.

In the second thread we get to see the world outside Thaiburley and learn some backstory and some of the big picture issues, when Tom is sent by the First Minister on a crucial mission with DeWar as a "bodyguard" as well as two other companions. Of course there are people/entities that do not want the mission to succeed and they command a skilled assassin with a personal grudge against DeWar to stop them at any cost. This part alternates the expected - fights, ambushes,...- with a lot of world building expansion and it is pretty good.

So the content of the book is comparable with book one with the large advantage in originality City of Dreams and Nightmares had by simply being the first book in the milieu, being only partly compensated by the expansion of the universe here.

In execution, I would say the books are also comparable so City of Hope & Despair moves fast and is a page turner with everything that made City Dreams and Nightmare entertaining. The action takes place in a fairly limited amount of time so the main characters do not change much, but we find out crucial information about

their background and that adds to their depth as well as offering a better understanding of their motivations and actions from the first book. These "back story nuggets" scattered throughout City of Hope & Despair were very well done and I found them a major new strength of the series.

City of Hope & Despair (A) ends like the first one with a semi-cliffhanger in one of the two main storylines and with a clear to be continued in the other, so the trilogy ending which I plan to read asap of course will determine how the series stands for me.

Rollie Reid says

I liked this one more than the first novel. The protagonist from book one is back, along with one of the villains, except that he is reformed, sort of. The villain is an assassin by the name of Dewar, who is tasked with killing Tom, the protagonist in book 1. Now, in book 2 he is tasked with protecting Tom on a long journey. That long journey is one half of the story.

In book 1, Tom has a protector by the name of Kat. The other half of the story is about Kat, and happens in the city of Thaiburley, the locale of the book 1. We learn more of the city, which is rather interesting all by itself.

The first book comes to a good solid ending, but with many possibilities for sequels. The second book ends on a cliff hanger, so I will be rushing on to read the third book.

Roman Kalik says

There's some good to be had in this series, but the writing is agonizingly dull. The characters are bland, the scenery is flat, and sometimes I wish something else would come along, because change is also something that happens slowly - or perhaps it's just the blandness of one scene that made me wish for a new one to come up.

Jason says

4 stars

Like the first book this is a fast, fun, and easy fantasy read. Unlike the narrow setting in the first novel, this one is much more of the standard epic adventure across land and sea.

Tom is given a daunting task and Dewar as a bodyguard to complete it. We do get quite a lot of backstory among the three main plot lines. There is a fair amount of magic, sword fighting, monster chases, and treachery.

This book is clearly a middle novel and would not make standalone sense. The book starts where the first left off and leaves us with a cliffhanger.

I really have enjoyed this light fantasy series and feel that it would appeal to a large audience of both adults

and the YA crowd.

Tbloxham says

This book follows on nicely from the story of the first, adding to the world and it's mythos without making it seem that the relatively self contained story in the first book was pointless. I enjoyed their journey out of the city into the world, and seeing what sort of place the city was in. A bit of a 'cliffhanger' ending which scores a few marks against it in my opinion, but still worth your time.

My favorite character introduced here exits stage right much too soon though in my opinion. Just because it proves severity to do away with a character doesn't mean it's the right choice.

The scene in the marsh village however was very nicely done, a bit of a subversion of expectations.

Rob says

...I wasn't terribly impressed with the first volume and I'm not blown away but this second book either. As I mentioned in the introduction, they are entertaining, tightly plotted novels but fairly light reading. The major difference between the two is that *City of Hope & Despair* is much more clearly part of a series. The end offer no clear resolution. One of the story lines ends a major cliffhanger and elsewhere in the novel lots of threads in the story are obviously going to continue into the next book. With the expanded scope of the story and hints of a far larger conflict than what we've seen thus far spread throughout the novel, there is something to look forward to in the third volume of The City of a Hundred Rows.

Full Random Comments review

Timothy Neesam says

The second in what is, at this time, a trilogy. This book is a rollicking ride, with more action than it's predecessor. The plot is primarily divided between Tom and Kat, who are on separate missions, with the PM appearing at intervals to move his own plot along. Nicely done, well imagined. Looking forward to reading the third installment.

Jessica Strider says

Pros: interesting characters, get to see the outside world and learn some of the world's history

Cons: powerful creatures are defeated with surprising ease (which may be realistic but it's also a bit disappointing)

The City of Hope and Despair is a novel about two quests. The first involves Tom's first time outside Thaiburley as he, the assassin Dewar, Kohn, a sightless giant and the Thaistess, Mildra, journey to find the

source of the goddess Thaiss's river. A demon doesn't want them to succeed and has alerted another assassin to stop them.

Back in the city, Kat and her sister postpone their fight to the death in order to hunt down the returned Soul Thief, the monster that killed their mother.

It's nice to see Tom grow up a bit and realize that street smarts won't cut it in the real world where dangers are many and varied. It's also fun to see him falling for the unobtainable priestess. Seeing more of the world Whates has created as well as learning why Thaiburley has isolated itself was great after the very contained (in terms of worldbuilding) City of Dreams and Nightmare. The Prime Master has more of a role in this book, and as he's a character much like the Patrician in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, that was a welcome addition.

Both quests encounter a number of difficulties, which keeps the book moving at a fast pace. It was surprising how quickly the protagonists managed to overcome some of the obstacles in their path, and while they faced tragedy, their triumphs seemed easier won than expected given the power of their enemies.

The book ends on a double cliffhanger, with both quests leading to something new, to be picked up in the final volume of the series. And given the quality of writing in the first two books, that's a book worth picking up.
