

## “EX-HEROES” (Book Review)

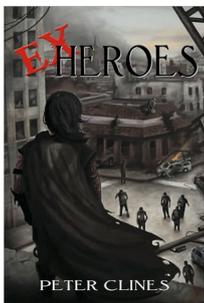
Written by Benjamin Dolle

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The concept of combining superheroes and zombies is not a new one, although it's usually presented in a “what if...” scenario, painting an alternate world in which the heroes themselves wander the streets in search of the mother lode of brain buffets. Author Peter Clines' EX-HEROES (Permuted Press) turns the hero/undead mashup on its ear, with mixed results.



Set in Los Angeles one year after the devastating onset of the ghoulish menace, the novel introduces a world in which the few remaining champions protect the last remnant of humanity, holing up in what was once Paramount Studios, now referred to by residents as “The Mount.” Running low on ammunition, and with even superpowers on ration, humanity is on the verge of being wiped out as the zombie hordes suddenly seem to gain intelligence and strategy. On top of the walking dead, a rival group of humans, known as the Seventeens, sees this new development as the perfect time to launch their own attack on The Mount.

It sounds good on paper, but there are some imperfections in this world that threaten to topple the story. One of the most glaring issues involves the superheroes themselves. Powers in this world seem to be limited, only being called into play sparingly until they're needed; then suddenly, they can be used without consequence for as long as required to win. Now, it could be plausible that these abilities generally work that way in this world, but it's never explained. The limitations only seem to exist when needed to heighten the suspense, but flare to life for the sake of spectacular battles.

Characterization outside of the main characters is incredibly limited as well, and the story comes across as flat. It's not all bad—there's some good stuff here—but it just feels like some oomph went missing in the expansion of the basic idea into a full-length story. If you like zombies and capes, EX-HEROES is worth a look. If you're searching for weightier fare,

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however, there are better choices out there.



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