

Among the Fallen: Restless Dreams

Ross Shortall

Scott Beadle

Scott Beadle, Illustrator

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The second in a planned four-book series, *Among the Fallen: Restless Dreams* is a brilliant if brutal blood fest. Set in a “city of the dead” (and undead), it is packed with shuffling hordes of zombies, crazed and crucified religious zealots, monstrous living chains that shoot out of the darkness to trap and obliterate their victims, and many other evil, murderous, and ghastly things that go bump in the night.

Whether this chaos is the result of “a huge government experiment gone wrong,” alien invasion, or punishment from God at “the hands of the very angels he cast from Heaven” is part of the mystery created by Scott Beadle and his coauthor and illustrator, Ross Shortall. The book is rife with biblical references and quotations, the most appropriate and presaging of which are taken from Psalms, Romans, Matthew, and Zachariah. The selections chosen from both Old and New Testaments are not mere attempts at making the coauthors appear literate, they are pieces of the *Among the Fallen* puzzle.

Shortall’s illustrations are very good, and there is one at the start of each of the book’s twenty chapters. Unfortunately, it is the same illustration in each case; a lost opportunity.

Next is the matter of proofing, or the lack of it. There are many simple mistakes that demonstrate the shortcomings of spell-check programs, which are no substitute for proofreaders. It is likely that another set of eyes on the page would have caught many errors of capitalization (Lobby, Mayor), misidentification (East Coast is not a state), word confusion (“your dead” instead of “you’re dead”), and the incorrect use of possessives and apostrophes (“mayor’s daughter” not “mayors daughter,” and “ain’t” not “aint”).

Among the Fallen boasts a glossy cover, ample (if repetitive) illustrations, and the bold and costly choice of going with a larger-than-normal typeface, which increases the number of pages by half again or more.

Despite its technical failings, *Among the Fallen* is still a good if unrelentingly bloody read. It is gory, ghastly, grim, and gruesome from the first page to the last, with nary a flicker of light to ease or brighten the mood. Beadle and Shortall so immerse their audience in horror that they never give the reader a chance to come up for air. They write with an exciting, exhausting, and entertaining intensity. *Among the Fallen* is for horror fans who hunger for total immersion in a dark and frightening world.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN (October 16, 2012)

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