

The Orcs of New York

Colin J. Robertson

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The Orcs of New York is a blockbuster fantasy novel in which greed and ambition lead to an interdimensional threat to humanity's future.

In Colin J. Robertson's fantasy novel *The Orcs of New York*, humans move to mine a parallel world for profit, leading to an interdimensional war.

Roland has amassed unparalleled wealth thanks to his massive corporation, the Griff Company. His newest venture seems mundane at first glance: he gathers experts, using their knowledge to maximize his drilling, mining, and harvesting ventures. What makes the venture unusual is where he plans to mine: in The Fourth World, a parallel dimension that's accessible through a portal hidden deep within a New York City skyscraper.

Roland is in luck: the inhabitants of The Fourth World are eager to form a partnership with him. All they want in exchange is education and the means of improving their world, which is stuck in a medieval era. One of their generals comes to Earth; he plans to lead an expedition back to his world in a show of good faith. But when the portal opens, a contingent of orc warriors barrels through it and begins slaughtering humans. The experts and their families are trapped within the skyscraper; they race to defeat the orcs and shut down the gateway.

There are significant narrative shifts in the story, which first focuses on Marc, an oil drilling expert, as he deals with the family fallout of his decision to work with the Griff Company to drill into virgin land. Such scenes move at a slow pace. When the story shifts to reveal the parallel world, its source of tension is kick-started; soon after, the orcs cross over, enact their devious plans, and invigorate the tale, which races ahead. There are few quiet moments thereafter.

Still, the book's fantastical elements are subdued so that the book can focus on what faces its human cast, including their family dramas. They share endearing exchanges and fast banter, including with an eager captive professor whose lessons play a major role later on. The Fourth World is underdeveloped; there are only hints at its deep lore. And the technology that enables the connection between worlds, along with the fact the connection has happened before, is glossed over to the detriment of investment in it.

Further, though Roland, Marc, and the orc general take center stage, they're introduced only in terms of single traits, including greed, blind ambition, and hatred. But they evolve as tensions increase, and their personal nuances are drawn out at a gradual pace. Marc, in particular, holds interest: though he begins the story as an ambitious driller who's oblivious to his family's well-being, the orc invasion gives him an opportunity to mature into someone his wife and children can respect. Still, though the novel progresses to show how the cast faces the inevitable consequences of their disastrous attempts to bridge worlds, its entertaining conclusion is diverted by a tantalizing cliffhanger.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (February 15, 2022)

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