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Ten year old friends Alex and Sapphire discover something strange on the city bus map, a street that existed for only one year. As they set out to solve the mystery, they encounter the possibility of another world, another dimension perhaps, lurking in a vacant lot, but they are not the only ones on the trail. Who will discover the truth, and who will pay the price? Book One of the Dragon City Trilogy, followed by Freak City and Dragon Town

Snapdragon Alley Details

Date : Published November 15th 2009 by Smashwords, Inc. (first published November 13th 2009)

ISBN :

Author : Tom Lichtenberg

Format : Nook 0 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Adventure, Mystery, Young Adult, Science Fiction, Magic, Paranormal

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From Reader Review Snapdragon Alley for online ebook

DJ says

An adventure story about two brothers and a girl friend solving the mystery behind a missing street that showed up on a Bus map for one year and disappeared the following year. Not everything is what it seems is the theme ongoing. I liked the book enough that I want to download the other two books to finish the series. Its a short story that kept me interested throughout. I do question on the age appropriate language. This is supposed to be geared towards younger kids and it has the words balls in it, as in "it takes balls", and taking about how Mom and Dad is inattentive towards the brothers. The youngest brother is 5, and way too smart beyond his years, so is the 10 year old. It would make better sense for the younger brother to be 8-10 and the older brother 12-13. That's just my thoughts. How many 10 year olds do you know that would have such a carefully planned route/methologies on going an adventure and going on a bus alone and being transported across town alone, and confronted a stranger so easily? Those little things just kind of got me a little confused.

However, I did enjoy the story quite a bit that I will read the rest of the series. If reading this for a child, I would consider 12 and older. How can a parent explain what "strange drinks" the Mother was drink ding and "balls". Other than that, its a nice adventure story.

Jimmy says

I don't agree with some of the reviewers. I found this book to be highly imaginative and fun to read. The only thing that kind of got on my nerves is the outrageous rambunctiousness of Sapphire. The ten year olds' need for adventure and independence is reminiscent of *Stand By Me*. The author had me just as needful and demanding as the brothers Alex and Argus to learn the mystery of Snapdragon Alley. The involvement of their presumed dead uncle only enriches the story further. Warning, the story ends abruptly, and leaves you hanging and full of wonder and questions, just like the characters. I'm hopeful that the sequel *Freak City* will shed more light on the subject.

Andrea Ika says

Review : SnapDragon Alley (book one of Dragon City)

Tom Lichtenberg

Synopsis

Ten year old friends Alex and Sapphire discover something strange on the city bus map – a street that existed for only one year. As they set out to solve the mystery, they encounter the possibility of another world, another dimension perhaps, lurking in a vacant lot, but they are not the only ones on the trail. Who will discover the truth, and who will pay the price required by the witchcraft of positive thinking?(goodreads)

Review

This was a quick, pleasant read. There wasn't a lot of depth to the story, but it was very engaging, and the

two main characters (Alex and Sapphire) were likeable. I do think that there could have been a great deal more character development for Alex's brother Argus; in fact I almost wonder if HE should really have been the main character - or if he actually WAS the main character, but you don't realize it until all is said and done. There's definite possibilities for a sequel with Argus as the main character...Even though the characters are 10 years old (or younger, in the case of Argus), this is not a children's book. YA, yes, and adults would enjoy it, although they might find it a bit superficial.

I thought many times as I was reading that it seemed more like an adult reminiscing about his childhood, and projecting logic and maturity onto the characters that would simply not be possible at their ages. I was also pretty disappointed with the ending, as the author seems to just get bored with the story, and ends it without much care. Overall it was a fun, quick read, but I'm very glad I got it for free.

Summary

Even though I enjoyed this little book (and it was little - it probably only took me 90 minutes to read, if that), I couldn't help feeling that it read as though it was a prequel to a longer, more in-depth book.

Reading level adult

Rating 3 stars

Jillian says

I thought this book started off well with unique characters with intriguing hobbies. The story of their uncle and what Mason told them seemed to set up the story for a climatic ending. The fact that the book's introduction talked about some 'price' to be paid had my expectations up.

I was sadly disappointed with the abrupt ending. Nothing seemed explained and the book immediately skips at the end to three very average - near depressing teenagers.

It seemed the only purpose of the book was to show us what we lose by growing up and forsaking any special fate we might be able to find. Though it was a little nice to see Argus still peering through soda tabs to see if something different lies just before him. You never know.

Pariskarol says

This free book (thanks, author!) is the first in a four-part series. With point-of-view characters under the age of 11, it was like YA fiction and had the potential to be a respectable member of that genre -- had anything actually happened (action being a key YA fiction feature).

Yet I'm compelled to read the rest of the series because I'm intrigued by the premise--door between worlds--and hope something interesting will happen directly involving the kids.

So far they are just wandering around the outskirts of the action, which is mostly implied rather than detailed.

I feel like I'm reading a rough draft, and I'm sincerely hoping some editor has intervened before Part 3 and explained that punctuation marks go inside the quotation marks. I won't be able to get to Part 3 otherwise...

Paul Allard says

This is the first part of a fantasy trilogy for children. quite intriguing as Alex, his younger brother Argus and his friend Sapphire look for a fantasy world/dimension/facet at the end of the bus line in their US city. It ends on a bit of a cliffhanger leading into the second volume, *Freak City* (which I've not read yet). Well-written, it should appeal to children who enjoy fantasy stories but leaves the reader wanting to know more.

Caleb Blake says

Snapdragon Alley is an intriguing little tale about a place that isn't. The book is the first in what is called the *Dragon City Trilogy*.

There is a mechanism used sometimes in movies and TV serials where the start contains a setting from some years ago that give a hint of something; an old crime, an abduction, a mysterious disappearance. This is followed by the current day story.

Snapdragon Alley is like that "prologue". Something happens some years ago to three children and an uncle that sets up what may become the main story.

Because of this, it's hard to give this book a very strong rating - I feel like I've watched only 2 minutes of an episode.

Getting that disappointment out of the way, it is a fun story which reads like it's aimed at a young adult audience. It seems successful in that with appropriate language and concepts with the bulk of the story switching between the three children. Argus, the youngest of the three, is the most interesting to me with a quiet intelligence and an almost autistic personality - perhaps this is actually a failure of the author as the child's behaviour seems quite incongruous for a five year old. He starts off well and truly in the background of the story, but becomes a central player by the end of this very short tale.

However, the ending is decidedly sinister and so off-hand and abrupt in its telling that I wasn't quite sure how it fit with the rest of the story. Perhaps the ending marks a change in the tone of the trilogy going forward - the commencement of a darker second act?

I only saw one typo (incorrect pronoun used) and what appeared to be a small logic error in the plot, so the reading was relatively unfettered. At only around 80 pages this isn't going to require much of a time investment and the other two books are similarly small.

I will definitely be finishing the trilogy as the story doesn't even feel like it's started yet. I really want to know a bit more about this place that isn't. I mean who wouldn't?

Kristy says

Good story, definitely interesting; has a lot of humor in it. I wouldn't call it the best fantasy book I've read, and I think the fact that the trilogy name is Dragon City threw me off into thinking it was about dragons, but otherwise it's good. Kids find a street name that doesn't actually exist and discover that it might be an alternate reality.

Merissa (Archaeolibrarian) says

I'll start by saying this is the first of four books so I wasn't expecting it to "conclude". It centres on 3 children, Alex and his younger brother Argus, and Alex's friend, Sapphire. They find a name on a bus map that they can't find and so the mystery starts. Well written with good character development although lots of room still for more.

It's quite a short book so I will be moving onto book 2 swiftly.

Suzie Hunt says

Had a weirdly hypnotic feel to it. Conclusion was slightly disappointing, but the build up was nice.

Krystl Louwagie says

I feel like this book might have been the best in this little not-so-great series. It even felt better written, which is odd, because it's the first one as far as I know. Maybe the author had more vision and drive, and by the other ones he was just finishing it up. This story did seem to have more purpose and direction. And maybe since it centered on kids, the "simple" style of writing seemed more fitting.

Anyways, this told the story of two young best friends investigating the bus route in their town, realizing that one location was only on there for one year and then disappeared, and finding out why.

So, a little better than the other two perhaps, but still missing a lot of life and it didn't keep my interests excited.

moxieBK says

Book 1 on Dragon City.

I wasn't sure what to think of this younger child (middle-school) story when I first started reading it. It didn't make a lot of sense to me. But it was reading fast. At the end of the book, I'm still not sure what to make of it. But it did read fast! (In all honesty, this book was on my "To-Read" pile for so long that I didn't remember it was a kid's book.)

I did like it, but when it ended, it just ended, and then jumped ten years into the future. That was kind of weird. Also, I didn't know this was a book series until the end. I'm sitting on the fence as to whether I will read the second book or not. I have a lot more "To-Read" books, so I that might push me off reading it.

The characters were fine. But maybe you need to be a younger reader to fully enjoy the story?

Two stars.

Charlotte Jones says

This was a simple but fun mystery novel, suitable for all ages, about a group of three children that discover a road that apparently doesn't exist. Although it is short, it ends in a really interesting and mysterious way that has made me anxious to read the next instalment in this four part series. The protagonists are all very young which adds to the innocence and endearing qualities of the novel and I will definitely be checking out the sequels!

Pop Bop says

Like Most Lichtenberg, It's All About the Journey, Not the Destination

This novella has a plot. Some kids find a mysterious reference, on an old bus route map, to a street that doesn't seem to exist anymore, (if it ever did). Said kids head out to find it. Maybe they do and maybe they don't, and maybe they should and maybe they shouldn't. Doesn't really matter. At least the story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and as post-postmodern playfulness goes this is more coherent than most. What does matter is the many, many exquisitely phrased observations, descriptions, moments, and little scenes that are peppered generously throughout the book.

The main characters are kids, but that doesn't make it a kid's book. I can't imagine a young reader getting into this, as a general rule, unless that young reader were particularly ambitious, flexible, and open to experiment.

The book struck me on two levels. On one level Lichtenberg treats the prospect of an escape or gateway to another reality with restraint, melancholy, and a hint of quiet desperation, which is not your usual approach to fantasy gateways. His various characters approach the prospect of such a gateway with reluctance or zeal or enthusiasm, but always tinted by an undercurrent of sadness or disappointment. An appealing approach that can get under the reader's skin.

Of more immediate impact, for me, was the second level - the level at which the author created his kid characters. The two older kids, who first explore the references to mysterious Snapdragon Alley, are distinct and memorable characters, built from the ground up and unique in their perspectives and presence. Only relatively briefly on the stage, they remain in the mind. The third kid, Argus, is the youngest and the one most attuned to the ineffable mystery of the gateway, and he sneaks into the story and then takes it over about halfway through. I enjoyed every moment spent with this character, (and I understand that he reappears in later stories, although I have not read them yet).

So, if you would like to enjoy some lovely, restrained, but also edgy and acrobatic writing, well this might be

just the right choice for you. (Please note that I found this book a while ago while browsing Amazon Kindle freebies. At this point in time I believe it is still free. I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)
