



Jestin Kase and the Masters of Dragon Metal

J. Michael White

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Jestin Kase and the Masters of Dragon Metal is a lighthearted fantasy novel whose funny lines pair well with its demon-fighting action.

In J. Michael White's electrifying novel *Jestin Kase and the Masters of Dragon Metal*, an orphan goes against demonic powers in order to save the world.

Jestin, an orphan with an affinity for "dragon metal," a mystical substance that allows mortals to fight with demons, lives for the chance to fight for himself—and to take out some evil along the way. His decisive thinking and knowledge of magic make him the perfect candidate for becoming a dragon master. Indeed, his natural talents lead a powerful wizard, Gideon, to seek him out for help in a battle with mythological gods and demons.

Jestin is on the run at the book's start, having discovered that some of the people working at his orphanage were demons—and having set the creatures on fire. Still, he's a young hero who is disinclined to be too serious. The text's playfulness here and elsewhere distinguishes it during its ripping ride through otherwise familiar terrain—as when impatient Jestin, embedded in a magic school on an undercover mission, says "Let's drop out," and is reminded that he's barely arrived.

The prose is campy and humorous, too, playing fast and loose with the trope of a special boy in a mysterious, magical world. Jestin engages in plenty of fun battles with strange and disturbing demons, including some that can warp time and space, leaving abandoned towns quiet in their wake. Spirited exchanges featuring magical blasts and thrown knives abound. But amid this action, it soon becomes clear that the troubles Jestin meets are all connected: the Great Silence is spreading.

Jestin finds help among fellow dragon masters, including his friend Colt, who counters his humor well, and cranky, distant Gideon, who works to keep Jestin alive (and somewhat healthy) as he moves through his training. But Jestin's most unique friend is his cat, Growly McHissy-Face, who can transform from a mild-mannered, sleepy creature into a pouncing panther at will. By midway through the novel, Jestin and his friends trade up destroying thralls and demons for investigating the secrets of the Verum, one of the world's great schools of magic.

Despite its serious developments, the text is filled with off-handed remarks and winking asides; it shows refreshing willingness to roll with the absurdities of life, especially in Jestin's world gone crazy. While its light, entertaining events carry interest throughout the book, its climactic battle against the evil entities who are trying to cause a great stillness also holds attention, helping to make *Jestin Kase and the Masters of Dragon Metal* a lighthearted fantasy novel whose funny lines pair well with its demon-fighting action.

JEREMIAH ROOD (April 6, 2022)

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