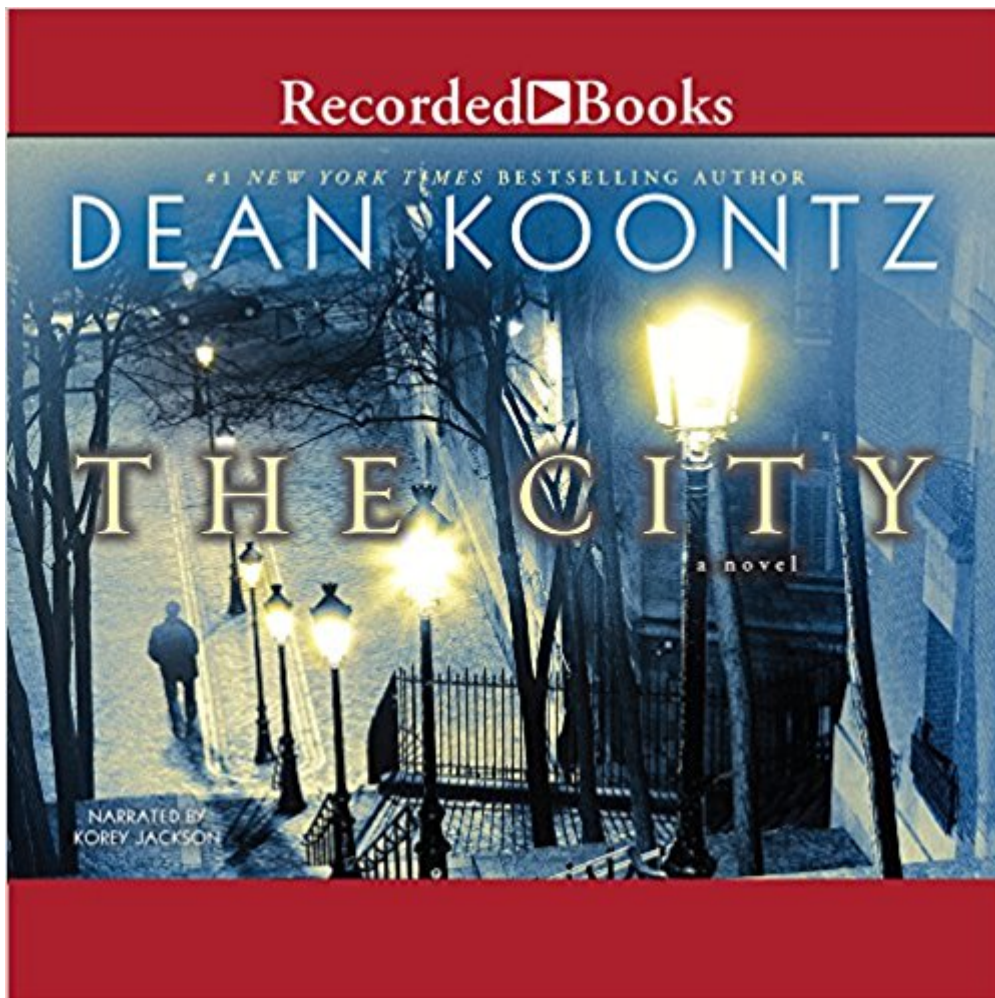




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City, The



Synopsis

There are millions of stories in the city - some magical, some tragic, others terror-filled or triumphant. Jonah Kirk's story is all of those things as he draws readers into his life in the city as a young boy, introducing his indomitable grandfather, also a "piano man"; his single mother, a struggling singer; and the heroes, villains, and everyday saints and sinners who make up the fabric of the metropolis in which they live - and who will change the course of Jonah's life forever. Welcome to The City, a place of evergreen dreams where enchantment and malice entwine, where courage and honor are found in the most unexpected corners and the way forward lies buried deep inside the heart.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for The City ["Beautifully crafted and poignant . . . The City is many things: serious, lighthearted, nostalgic, courageous, scary, and mysterious. . . . \[It\] will have readers staying up late at night."](#)
["New York Journal of Books](#) ["Koontz\] can flat-out write. . . . The message of hope and depiction of how the choices you make can change your life ring true and will remain with you once the book has been closed."](#)
[Bookreporter](#) Acclaim for Dean Koontz ["Perhaps more than any other author, Koontz writes fiction perfectly suited to the mood of America: novels that acknowledge the reality and tenacity of evil but also the power of good . . . that entertain vastly as they uplift."](#)
[Publishers Weekly](#) ["A rarity among bestselling writers, Koontz continues to pursue new ways of telling stories, never content with repeating](#)

himself. *Chicago Sun-Times* "Tumbling, hallucinogenic prose. Serious writers . . . might do well to examine his technique. *The New York Times Book Review* "[Koontz] has always had near-Dickensian powers of description, and an ability to yank us from one page to the next that few novelists can match. *Los Angeles Times* "Koontz is a superb plotter and wordsmith. He chronicles the hopes and fears of our time in broad strokes and fine detail, using popular fiction to explore the human condition. *USA Today* "Characters and the search for meaning, exquisitely crafted, are the soul of [Koontz's] work. . . . One of the master storytellers of this or any age. *The Tampa Tribune* "A literary juggler. *The Times (London)* --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Dean Koontz, the author of many #1 New York Times bestsellers, lives in Southern California with his wife, Gerda, their golden retriever, Anna, and the enduring spirit of their golden, Trixie. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

All great cities have a soul. At the age of eight, Jonah Kirk meets a woman who tells him she is the soul of the city made flesh. Jonah calls her Pearl. He introduces the reader to Pearl when, at 57, he starts dictating the book we are reading. Jonah attributes the appearance of a new piano in the community center (and thus the beginning of his career in music) to Pearl, whose connection to the supernatural is immediately apparent to the reader, if not to young Jonah. Despite the supernatural elements that you would expect in a Dean Koontz novel, *The City* is not the kind of story that Koontz typically tells (a fact that may disappoint Koontz fans). *The City* is a tale of crime and conspiracy, but I liked it less for its moderately engaging plot than for its cast of fully developed characters. Among other topics, the early chapters of *The City* recount Jonah's love of his mother and grandparents and his difficult relationship with his (mostly) absentee father. The occasional appearances of Jonah's father build a sense of dread, as do the dreams that sometimes trouble Jonah's sleep. One is about a dead girl named Fiona Cassidy. Another is about Lucas Drackman, who murdered his parents. Not unexpectedly, both figures make threatening appearances in Jonah's life. Perhaps the dreams are prophetic, but prophecies are easily misinterpreted. Still, this is a novel that builds characters more than it builds suspense. Courage and heroism are among the novel's driving themes. *The City* reminds us that those qualities are exhibited by ordinary people every day. "And one form of heroism," Koontz writes, "is having the courage to live without bitterness when bitterness seems justified, having the strength to persevere when perseverance seems unlikely to

be rewarded, having the resolution to find profound meaning in life when it seems the most meaningless." Courage is, in part, the ability to overcome adversity and fear, but it is also the ability to overcome anger and guilt -- a wise lesson the novel teaches repeatedly. To an even larger extent, *The City* is about the power of friendship. When Jonah needs help understanding the evil that has entered his life, he turns to the Japanese-American tailor in his building who has become his friend. The tailor enlists the help of his own friends, who seek help from their friends, and so on, each acting solely from the desire to help a friend. Another key character is Malcolm Pomerantz, a child prodigy with the saxophone who becomes Jonah's lifelong friend at the age of ten. Malcolm is a misfit but his beautiful older sister is the personification of grace and sweetness. She is white, Jonah is black, but (like Malcolm and the tailor and Jonah's grandfather) she does not view race as a barrier to friendship. A related theme of *The City* is the power of kindness. Many of Koontz's characters (from neighbors to cab drivers to victims of Japanese internment camps) are exceptionally (perhaps unbelievably) kind. It is a way of life for them to do good and unselfish deeds for others, friends and strangers alike. Kindness, Koontz seems to be saying, is the antidote to evil, even if it cannot shield us from evil acts or tragic events. And if the goodness and generosity of the characters makes them difficult to believe, I think Koontz intended them as archetypes, as models of the people we should all aspire to be. Koontz establishes the time (mid-1960s) and place with great clarity. The focus, of course, is on historical events that increase the novel's atmosphere of dread: race riots, serial murders, bombings, and other violent episodes contribute to the reader's sense of unease. Balanced against that chaotic environment is chaos of a different sort, expressed by Jonah's love of music, from the jazz standards that his mother and grandparents extoll to the Beatles, Dylan, Motown, and the explosion of artists and musical forms that characterize the time. *The City* might not appeal to readers searching for a strong, plot-driven narrative, but even if *The City* told no story at all, it would be a joy to read for its evocation of a tumultuous and musical decade. It is made all the better by the moving moments in the story it tells and by its memorable characters.

I don't know how I missed this story by author Koontz when it first came out but I'm glad I discovered it now. This book is much different than other books written by Koontz. In some cases that's good and in some bad. I enjoyed it. I read the short story that is a prequel to this book *THE NEIGHBOR* first and enjoyed it too. I purchased it separately and then found out it's included at the back of this novel. Oh well. This book is called *THE CITY*. It never actually names a place and I guess us readers are to assume this could take place in any large city - the locale doesn't matter;

it's the people who inhabit it who are important. Jonah, the protagonist of this story, is a pre-teen. He comes from a musical family with his mother being a singer and his grandfather being a pianist. He finds at an early age that he is a piano prodigy also with an eidetic memory, remembering and being able to play songs after hearing them once. His best friend, Malcolm, is a couple of years older and is a prodigy on the saxophone. Jonah has a real hound dog of a father who ends up divorcing his mother (no huge loss there). After his father is no longer in the picture, Jonah becomes friends with an upstairs neighbor, Mr. Yoshioka, "a polite and shy man, an impeccably dressed tailor of great skill," who helps fill in that empty spot as a surrogate father. I loved Mr. Toshiba - great character. This novel is a coming-of-age story, a suspense thriller, and has a bit of the paranormal thrown in. It has really good people in it but also has really bad ones. I thought this was a fun story to read but thought provoking enough to hold my interest all the way through.

This is my first experience with a Dean Koontz novel and I really enjoyed the book. He builds the tension and carries it off very well. There were surprises around every corner of the city. I enjoyed the nostalgia of the novel as well because the setting was the era of my childhood as well. It brought back many memories of my own childhood in a large city. Mr Koontz is not only a good storyteller but a gifted writer as well and I laud his artistry in this book. His way of telling this story was amazing as he took interesting twists and turns through Jonah's coming of age as he tries to deal with adult situations and matures prematurely and the adults who help and hinder his journey. Fiona and Lucas are truly creepy characters that used the movements of the Vietnam War era to fulfill their own twisted psychotic fantasies with a nefarious Sancho Panza in the form of Smaller and Tilton as a wannabe hanger-on. Miss Pearl adds a supernatural touch and by the end of the book, maybe she is a guardian angel in disguise. It was refreshing to see noble characters like Grandpa Teddy, Mr Yoshioka, Sylvia, and Amalia who turn their pain as opportunities for growth. I found that while there were tragedies in the novel there was spiritual growth. Jonah was blessed with inspiring role models. I highly recommend it and will be looking to reading more of Mr Koontz work.

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