



Soulstone: Awakening

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Aaron Hope plays video games, like a lot, just not professionally. When he entered the EpiX! Games! PVP World Championship on a lark, this college senior never expected to make it to the final round, nor to get drugged and shoved into the alpha test for World of Ruul.

The premise for this virtual reality MMO is simple. Find all eight treasures scattered throughout the world before the maelstrom's forces devour everything in sight. The only catch? You can't log off, and if you die... well, let's just say what happens in the game doesn't stay in the game.

Soulstone: Awakening Details

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Author : J.A. Cipriano

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From Reader Review Soulstone: Awakening for online ebook

Teresa S says

First time reading a LitRPG novel, so I wasn't sure I'd like it. I should have known that J A Cipriano wouldn't let me down! Lots of action, and unexpected twists. Good plot. Looking forward to the next book in the series.

Holly Lenz says

Soulstone Awakening is an amusing fantasy game adventure with wacky characters and a fast paced story. The narrator is in the audio book really adds to the story with his lively reading. I would recommend this book for adult listeners as it contains adult language and violence. This is the first book in a series, and the ending is a bit of a cliffhanger.

Sinisa Mikasinovic says

Holy hell!

Yeah, I know these two don't really mix well together, but I thought it may work better than "Holy shit!" We shouldn't be using bad words, after all.

I couldn't stop listening for the last few chapters and eventually gave up and made myself comfortable on the sofa for the big finale, while staring at the opposite wall.

And when the final word was said, and audiobook effectively over, I sat there stunned for quite a while.

Mind started wondering and theory-crafting about what's going to happen next that I didn't realize end credits started. I actually listened all the way through - production, tone master, best boy grip, stage lighting, catering and special thanks.

"Audible hopes you've enjoyed this programme" snapped me out of it.

My brain went into a dark alley and held a loud brainstorming session with itself: "There are so many possibilities now! The book is over, yet the main quest hasn't even started!" Well, technically it has, but I wasn't the one to argue with a rogue brain. "I must find the sequel!!!!"

Urged by higher powers I ran to check for it. A thousand angry goblins banged on their little war drums while the page was loading in a mind-numbing agony of internet slowness.

There it was! Crisis averted. I haven't been so happy to see a sequel since Alien 2. I clearly saw myself on coma-inducing medication until part 2 was published.

Okay. I may need to take a small step back.

I believe I sound like a newly converted Scientologist now.

"This shit is awesome! *Trust me!*"

Well, no.

I'll *tell you* exactly why is this so freaking awesome!

If you've been (or still are) an MMO gamer of any kind, whether it is a MUD, (A)D&D or - everyone's favorite - World of Warcraft (and/or its clones), you just can't miss this book. You're not allowed.

I haven't had so many flashbacks to my own life since *Ready Player One*. If you read it, you'll know exactly what I mean. If you haven't, then Gods have mercy on your soul.

Lucky for you, I read it before discovering Goodreads so there's no yet another hour-long review to read. I may work on that, though.

This is only my second book by J.A. Cipriano, and I'm forever hooked now. If this guys steps on a type writer in the middle of the night, I want to see what came out! *I need to see it!*

You can't possibly go wrong with Supernatural, right?

For those of you who read my review of his *Pound of Flesh*, let me tell you this one is even better. And comes with +10 to Geek stat.

After reading *Pound of Flesh* I noticed I have another one from Cipriano in the queue. "*Soulstone*, huh? This one was awesome but I'll space these books apart and will read the other one in two months or so." You should take all things in moderation, right?

Well, no again. You should read awesome books as soon as there's a chance. And if there isn't one, create it!

This book is filled with the same kind of new and refreshing humor only Cipriano comes up with. Whether it's a friendly jab, always relevant sarcasm or something utterly ridiculous which will make laugh out loud - you'll have loads of fun reading or listening. Belly laughs of the best kind.

Of course, it's possible you won't find it funny at all. Especially if you had a sense of humor surgically removed or you're an alien overlord trying to learn more about humanity. In the former case, please stop reading now and seek the nearest bridge. In the latter, seek the nearest black hole.

There are too many good jokes and situational humor, but I won't say a single one - for two reasons. One, taken out of context the joke may not be even remotely as funny as you'll find it while reading. Two, I don't enjoy spoiling things for people.

Did you notice how I managed to write a 700-word essay without mentioning neither the plot nor the characters? :-)

Yes! This review will be as spoiler-free as possible. You know the target audience now (everyone who likes fantasy, humor and has played a game in their life) and you can thank me later!

If you chose not to pick it up, however, you'll be forever sorry you didn't, but you'll also be oblivious to it. Kind of like never watching Game of Thrones or The Walking Dead.

You'll hear from other people everything there is to know about it, and the sequels, and comics, and games and the entire franchise, but you really won't know anything. And that will be your cross, for the rest of your life.

I noticed how a couple of friends added *Pound of Flesh* to their to-read book shelf on the same day I wrote a review for it. That makes me very happy. If you found out it was a good move back then, you'll want to do the same thing now as well.

Nik Magill made listening a breeze, for which I'm endlessly thankful, and took the somewhat excessive amount of cursing (No, not talking about Warlock spells here) like a real pro.

It was exactly appropriate amount of cursing for an MMO gamer, but people raised in conservative religious families might disagree. Still, if you don't count Bible, those people don't read Fantasy genre so I'm not too worried.

I've been channelling my inner geek for so long while reading this book, it almost felt I went back in time and played the game at my very best. Such a satisfying experience. Deja Vu overflow.

Mandatory Audible links - US / UK. 20 USD or 17 GBP. Or 1 Audible credit for members (10 USD / 8 GBP), best way to go.

Also mandatory disclaimer: *This book has been provided to me free of charge in exchange for an honest review.*

Unusually enough, Audible version hadn't been added among editions of the book. But by the powers vested in me by Goodreads Librarians, I pronounce this injustice resolved appropriately. I love Goodreads <3

In case it wasn't clear by now, and we're rapidly approaching 1100 words, this is a strong 5* material.

You, also, should get top marks for actually staying with me through all the ups and downs of this novel of a review.

I prefer Liz, but can't deny Jenna was, indeed, a tremendous actress ;-)

Nicole Dunton says

Aaron Hope finds himself in a tournament that he's been trying out for for a long time. Not only is he in it, but he's in the finalist rounds! He can't believe his luck. After the tournament before the final round, he is drugged and sent to an alternate reality where he's to defeat game bosses and retrieve soul stones. He can't get back to his body until he defeats the game. Can he do it or is he doomed to stay in the game forever?

I listened to this audio book with my boyfriend. We both loved it! He's a gamer so he got more of a grasp on certain things than I did, but as a former gamer myself I did understand and love most of it. I kept drawing parallels to a game I used to play called Conquer. Not enough to assume it's from that game, but enough to

fully picture the game at hand. I loved it and can't wait to read the next!

The narrator did a great job as well. He gave each character their own personality. It was pretty amazing. It was kind of obvious that he had a lot of fun performing for the book. I really hope that he is the one that narrates the second book honestly. It will be weird without him as narrator. I guess we'll find out when we cross that road!

I fully recommend this book! While it's more directed at the gamer world, I think many people could find enjoyment out of it. The characters are witty and funny. There's action and fighting in it. It's pretty amazing. I loved it. I can't wait to read the rest, and I can't wait to read other books by this author!

Montzalee Wittmann says

Soulstone: Awakening: A LitRPG novel (World of Ruul Book 1) by J.A. Cipriano is an action packed role playing game where the game is life or death. The book is about gamers locked in the world of a game with their mind only but they feel everything that happens to them. If they die, their body dies so they have to be careful. The characters are awesome and the plot and creatures imaginative. But what really makes this book POP is the fun side stuff thrown in! The fun and great dialogue, the strange creatures that are hilarious, and I love the inappropriate, crazy bunny George! I laughed a lot due to this crazy bunny! Great story!

Kristen says

(A bigger and prettier version of this review is here, on my blog.)

So, I don't have a toooon of experience within this genre, but what I have read is very similar in some way to either Sword Art Online, .hack, The Matrix, or Ready Player One. This one isn't too different from those in the basics either. Hell, it even uses RPO as a reference at one point. I knows what it is, and I liked that about it.

In this story, a college senior is drafted into saving the world from a nearly-sentient virus by being very good at a video game that was expressly made to mirror the game that the virus itself has created. So, it's got some common tropes in this genre, which is not necessarily a bad thing. There's only so far you can go to make 'this is a virtual-reality MMORPG except that it's actually real on some level so don't die or you'll really die' seem different, you know? For me, first and foremost, how entertaining a novel (of any genre) is to me is always the most important factor. I appreciate good writing when I find it, and super-original ideas, but if a story is compelling and told in a compelling way, I'll enjoy it all the same. Even if it uses tropes that are very familiar to me. If it has characters that I like and that I root for, chances are that I'm going to not hate it.

Anyone who reads my reviews regularly (and I can't imagine that anyone actually does >.>) will know that I love it when books reference my favorite things in enjoyable ways. So, this book pretty much wins on that front right from the beginning. In chapter one we get a character that is cosplaying Tifa Lockhart, red gloves and all, so I did a little 'heheeee!' because FFVII is absolutely among my favorite games of all time. Plus, it's from my generation, and so there's something specifically for someone who grew up or lived through my generation to relate to....

Gets in my old lady duds and shakes my cane Kids these days don't appreciate FFVII for how amazing it is, because it's graphically inferior to the games they know. You're missing out, kids. You're missing out. That's okay though, because they're remaking it... probably. And, I sort of understand where they're coming from. I had a hard time getting into old B&W movies for the same exact reason...

Anyways, I mostly enjoyed my time with this book. Aaron was an enjoyable character and I quite liked his adventures in leveling. He is absolutely foul-mouthed (like me!). He references a lot of real life things that I also like (Diablo, Penny Arcade, Star Wars, Skyrim, etc, etc, etc.) so my inner (and outer) nerd nearly always had an opportunity to have a little smile of recognition. These sorts of things make parts of the story you would think are boring (like level-grinding) not actually as boring as actual level grinding is. George the Bunny was also a pretty good character, though there were times that I thought he was a bit over-the-top. Ok, a few times... but I still appreciate a bunny who swears that much.

This was a pretty easy listen, because it was quick, and I never found it to be overly plodding, even during the level grind, but it was an easy listen because Nik Magill nails the narration. I liked Nik's narration of one of my favorite books ever, and so seeing his name on this one made me very excited to have a listen. He did a real great job with this one and I enjoyed my 8 or so hours with it. I will definitely put 'listening to books Nik Magill narrates' on my to-do list. As I said in my review of the last book I listened to him narrate, his voice is mesmerizing. This sounds a bit like I'm fangirling (and I guess I am in a way?), but I actually mean this as in his voice hits a note, or a timbre or a tone or whatever it's actually called that just sounds.... nice. I like some narrators because I love the accents they can do, or I love the accents they have. I like this one because I just like the sound of his voice. *shrug*

My one criticism that I can think of is that Dora, the merchant (and one of only 3 women that Aaron ever meets throughout the book) was fucking ridiculous. She's a merchant, FFS. Her job is to buy fucking trash items and sell some potions. So, my eyes rolled as far as they could go when the first thing out of her mouth was something along the lines of 'Hey there big boy... how can I heeeeelllp you?' *touchy touchy* (paraphrasing, but you get the idea). I'd have ignored it, but then she did the same thing to Player Two as soon as she met him. Having her just buy some trash instead of the more or less 'oh sure, I'll buy your goblin swords, but first can I have a go at your +69 Staff of Penetration?' out of nowhere for no reason would have gone over better.

Thankfully, other than Dora the Cocksporer, this book has 2 other capable women (that's actually a lot for a LitRPG in my experience), Darkheart, who is a Paladin and the leader of the 'We need to beat the Maelstrom!' initiative, and Jo, a pink-haired sassy blacksmith. I actually really liked Jo, but she was only introduced within the last 20 minutes or so. So, we'll see what happens with her in the future perhaps.

(Also, I was given a free copy of this audiobook by the author in exchange for an honest review.)

Jim says

I found this to be an entertaining read with characters that each had unique personalities. The interactions of the characters felt real and helped me to care about them. The story was fast paced without getting overly bogged down with the LitRPG elements and causing the pace to falter. I am looking forward to reading the next installment of the series.

Kay says

This is an entertaining, fun read filled with adventure, action, and snarky humor. Purely escapist young adult reading, this is a tale of a video gamer who suddenly finds himself in an environment of life and death in a game-like world where death is real as well as his search to get out of it. This tale acknowledges *The Matrix* in that the impact of death is real although all of the other conventions of gaming apply such as health, manna, and leveling up. (This is a fantasy so one just has to appreciate the explanation devised to bring all of this about.) This flows far more smoothly than any game I've ever played as the tale takes advantage of gaming without the frustration of getting stuck that I've always experienced in gaming. This is the first book of a series so it covers the first major adventure with the journey far from done. I rated this as 4 stars because there are no deep themes or content here, but it's so fun to read and snarky that I enjoyed it greatly.

Jane says

2.5 stars for the Audio version as narrated by Nik Magill.

Oh dear. I wanted to like this story. Like, I really, *really* wanted to like it. It came to me highly-recommended, I thoroughly enjoyed NPCs, and I've gotten a kick out of the *Off to Be the Wizard* series, so this seemed like a no-brainer.

Things start off enticingly; there is some really interesting world-building going on right from the first pages, and the premise is really good! Our protagonist, Kahn (Aaron's game name), finds himself yoinked from a gaming tournament and plunked down into a real-life -- or at least a very real virtual reality -- version of *World of Ruul*, where the consequences of his actions could result in the very real death of his real body in the real world.

I was anticipating that this would be a shiny new series to add to my 'fun' list. Unfortunately it did not take long for me to start to feel a bit deflated.

Marty Stu might be a more apt name for our friend Aaron. Out of the gate he discovers that if he visualizes things hard enough they'll just magically work for him. For him this means he can learn and level up much more quickly than the average player, and also that he can just "think" of ways to weasel his way out of some tough situations. For me this meant that the world didn't seem to have a consistent set of rules (and I like me some rules).

However, despite Kahn's ridiculous good luck, I was still mostly enjoying the ride. There are some action-filled battles, the world descriptions are fantastic, and the way he interacts with the world and the NPCs is a fun ride. And, of course, George the bunny is highly amusing.

At about the halfway mark, though, I realized that although there are many references to women and their assorted body parts, up to that point there are exactly two female characters who have been introduced: the first female lasts all of about 10 paragraphs in the first pages of the story as she uses her feminine wiles to trick/trap our hero into this VR world, and the second is an NPC shopkeeper whose actions should have been purely of a retail nature but, of course, she had a healthy dose of sex kitten mixed in. I began to imagine most

of the monsters in the battles were females just to even the score a bit.

But then, just as I was internally ranting that there would be a zero Badass Female Character score for this book, at the 60% mark a woman finally joins the party! Woot! Right?

Well, kinda. Turns out she's badass, but she's also kind of a bitch, a fact that the male characters repeatedly remind themselves of (at least when they're not using her as a mechanism for more titty jokes). In the end, the only female character I really wanted more of was the NPC blacksmith, and she doesn't show up until the final pages of this instalment.

Overall, I enjoyed some aspects of this story. The world-building is fantastic (even with the lack of consistent rules!), and the battle scenes are engaging. The characters interact well with decent dialogue. I LOVED George the bunny. I'd probably be ready to jump into the second book to see what happens next (especially to see if maybe that blacksmith would play a bigger role), but there are some issues that just dragged things down too much for me, and I think I'll pass on this author in the future.

In general, this book could really use the skills of a better copy editor. The author's ideas are great, but the writing style misses the mark on a technical level with grammatical errors and annoyingly repetitious sentence structure and device use. For example, the pop culture references are fun at first, but I found them to be a little too liberally sprinkled into the story, especially since they are nearly always used in the form of a simile. When I'm reading (or listening) for fun, I definitely do not want to have to deal with editing, and every single error pulls me out of the story in an irksome way.

BAFC score: 2.5/5

The only female character with any action at all doesn't show up until the final 40% of the book so I can't really give her more than 2 stars. The blacksmith gets .5 stars 'cause she was tough and cool.

John says

An irreverent talking bunny, and more

Nice pacing and an awareness of being a brain in a jar.

A lot of funny banter.

Our hero, Aaron Hope, is flawed and self-aware of his flaws. Dark Heart, the main female adventurer, maintained her aloofness and mystery through out. Two Manchu was good comedy relief, and also provided a good foil for character debate about situations, rather than contrived internal dialog. And the bunny, George W. Bunny. Ribald, audacious, bold, back-flipping, just awesome for a BUNNY!

LitRPG elements handled well.

Adam Mccauley says

I don't think this was well written. It seems a bit sloppy at times and the language used often makes me think about the writing and not the story. The story itself is well done if you like MMORPG's which I do so I could relate. Also there are a lot of references to both modern events like the NE vs. ATL super bowl last year to older 80's references and starwars. I liked a lot of this because it is nerdy and I can relate. So if you like MMORPG's and not just playing them but reading about them it is probably a good novel for you. But what do I know about writing I think the Great Gatsby is one of the worst novels ever written and can't stay awake with 12 hours of sleep and 3 cups of coffee before I read that. So maybe this is good writing and I just can't see it. 2 stars.

Travis says

This was an excellent book.

But, as usual, (this seems to be a theme for LitRPG books), it suffers from poor editing. Better than a lot of the genre, but still not professional quality I'm beginning to wonder if being a LitRPG title requires poor editing.

That said though, this one was much much better quality than most, so cudos to the author for trying anyway. All that aside, I have to say, this was one of the better titles I've read, and I fully intend to continue following this series, as It's very interesting. The only real story related complaint I have is that after the original character meets with the 3rd and 4th characters (and no, I won't say how), those two keep harping on the fact that they want to sleep, I seem to recall once even having logging out being mentioned. A bit tough considering they can't do that because of their unique circumstances. That struck me as a little odd, but I considered it a minor error in the otherwise very well told story.

Recommended for those who enjoy game related stories, and for LitRPG fans in particular, very well done.

Lazybee says

Not a very good read.

Chris Evans says

I've read a few different LitRPGs at this point and this one is somewhere between average and good. Unlike some, this one has stakes, likable characters, and a logical plot/world setup. The setup is a bit morbid, but manages to sit in a sweet spot where it spices up the story rather than detracting from it. Most of the story it's self is a long string of battles, but the author does a good job at varying the setup and conditions to keep it interesting each time.

The one detraction that keeps this from being a 4/5 is the matrix logic. LitRPGs especially need a good solid structure and rules, and being able to bend or invent new rules at will turns things into a mess. Early on, the

author introduces a good mechanic, learning skills from npcs or using a skill discovery prompt (with significant possible down sides) which I really liked. I'm not sure why the author did it, but he then just threw that all out the window and had them be able to use what ever they wanted just by trying / believing. This turns one fight in the middle of the book into a mess as people just invent new skill after new skill. Also, Occasionally Aaron (and probably Darkheart) would go full matrix and be able to completely break the rules. While Aaron was warned about doing it, Nativity it blurs the rules of the world too much. Since there are no classes and anyone can learn anything, it would have been more satisfying if they had to search out the skills they want, especially since there are apparently possible skill combinations that are completely broken. Make skill books one time use items and let them choose who gets what and the natural fall out is specializations into certain areas. It makes choice more important, right now it's purely based on their initial rolls.

Andy Schmidt says

Very entertaining.

I'm not someone familiar with the MMO gaming world, I read books. That being said, I understand 99% of what occurred in this book.

The point is, I don't see why people are so hung up on Kahn being OP. It's not as if he's killing everyone with one swing or never taking a hit. It's the same with just about every fantasy hero written, they have the power to be the hero but they still must make the journey. That is what the book is. The trials and tribulations the MC faces along that journey.

I loved the book, and thought that George was awesome!
