



The Rise of Ransom City

By Felix Gilman

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This is the story of Harry Ransom. If you know his name it's most likely as the inventor of the Ransom Process, a stroke of genius that changed the world.

Or you may have read about how he lost the battle of Jasper City, or won it, depending on where you stand in matters of politics.

Friends called him Hal or Harry, or by one of a half-dozen aliases, of which he had more than any honest man should. He often went by Professor Harry Ransom, and though he never had anything you might call a formal education, he definitely earned it.

If you're reading this in the future, Ransom City must be a great and glittering metropolis by now, with a big bronze statue of Harry Ransom in a park somewhere. You might be standing on its sidewalk and not wonder in the least of how it grew to its current glory. Well, here is its story, full of adventure and intrigue. And it all starts with the day that old Harry Ransom crossed paths with Liv Alverhyusen and John Creedmoor, two fugitives running from the Line, amidst a war with no end.

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Editorial Review

Review

“On my being handed the book now in your hands, I promised myself - tacitly, of course - I'd only take a peek. But will you look at what's happened? Mr. Gilman's appeal promptly poured itself all over me, and I, by golly, in superb reciprocity, pored all over his pages from first to last. Is this not the joy in reading, no less in being? - enforced attention, the delightsome entrapment, a thorough-going filling and the rare repose of one's having been emptied -- utterly, gratefully - out?” ?*Gordon Lish on Rise of Ransom City*

“Felix Gilman has a sly wit and an assured hand. He is a fresh and original voice in fantasy.” ?*Lavie Tidhar, author of Osama on Rise of Ransom City*

“A fantasy that Mark Twain would have been proud to write. Felix Gilman's theme is nothing less than the Matter of America, the story at the root of the whole continent. Never has fantasy been darker, cleverer, more sly, or more touching in its refraction of our own world. I scratch my head in awe.” ?*Francis Spufford, author of Red Plenty on Rise of Ransom City*

“This sequel to *The Half-Made World* stands well alone; written like an old-fashioned memoir, it seamlessly blends whimsy with deadly seriousness.” ?*Publishers Weekly on Rise of Ransom City*

“Like *The Half-Made World* that came before it, *The Rise of Ransom City* brings us a re-imagined tale of America's Old West, mixing steampunk and magic realism to great effect.” ?*Kirkus Reviews ("Best SF/F Reads In November") on Rise of Ransom City*

“Gripping, imaginative, terrifically inventive . . . We haven't had a science fiction novel like this for a long time.” ?*Ursula LeGuin on The Half Made World*

“The Half-Made World takes the brutality of the wild west and twists it into an epic fantasy that left me staggered. It brings the sense of wonder back to fantasy by creating a complex and visceral world unlike anything I've read. This is a stunning novel.” ?*Mary Robinette Kowal on The Half Made World*

“Refreshingly unlike any other novel I've read. Felix Gilman writes like a modern-day Dickens drunk on rich invention and insane war.” ?*Stephen Donaldson, author of The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant on The Half Made World*

“A much-needed breath of fresh air in dystopian fiction. Utterly compelling. Trembling with invention and adventure. Reads as if it's the love-child of McCarthy's *The Road* and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. Highly recommended!” ?*Eric Van Lustbader on The Half Made World*

“Felix Gilman's third novel is his best, and a somewhat stunning mix of Cormac McCarthy and Steampunk.” ?*Jeff Vandermeer on The Half Made World*

“Great fantastical fiction has a way of suggesting metaphorical connections without insisting on them . . . *The Half Made World* does this with an exhilarating level of self-assurance. . . Reading this novel will make anyone who cares about dark adventure giddy.” ?*The Onion AV Club (A) on The Half Made World*

“Represents everything great science fiction should aspire to.” ?*The Cleveland Plain Dealer on The Half*

Made World

“New and exciting and well worth reading” ?io9 on *The Half Made World*

“This enormously creative, complex tale uses every trope - and transforms it - in the service of a greater vision that never really forgets its roots. . . . Alternately lyrical and scatological, brutal and haunted . . . For all its wild adventures, the object of [Gilman's] attention in *The Half Made World* is no less than America itself.” ?Locus on *The Half Made World*

“A page-turning narrative, engagingly complex characters, and deftly descriptive prose. . . . The Half-Made World is custom-made for those looking for a dark dystopia filled with weird west, gritty steampunk, and literary intertexts.weird west, gritty steampunk, and literary intertexts.” ?Tor.com on *The Half Made World*

About the Author

FELIX GILMAN has been nominated for the John W. Campbell and Locus awards for best new writer. He is the author of the critically acclaimed *Thunderer* and *Gears of the City*, and *The Half-Made World*, which was listed by Amazon as one of the ten best SFF novels of 2010. He lives with his wife in New York City.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTIONS

My name is Harry Ransom. Friends call me Hal or Harry, or by one of a half-dozen aliases, of which I have had more than any honest man should. Don't let that shake your confidence in me. I was a victim of circumstance. Often I went by *Professor* Harry Ransom, and though I never had anything you might call a formal Education I believe I earned that title. For the last few years it's been *Excuse me, Mr. Ransom, sir*, from those beneath me and just plain *Ransom* from those above. I never cared for any of that and now I am free and on the road again with nothing but my name and my wits and my words.

If you know my name maybe it's as the inventor of the Ransom Light-Bringing Process, or maybe you believe in all that secret-weapon stuff they wrote in the newspapers, in which case I intend to set you straight. Or you may know me as the man who lost the Battle of Jasper City, or won it, depending on where you stand in matters of politics. If you're an Officer of the Line who has intercepted this in the mails, then you know me as a Wanted Person but maybe you know to think twice before coming after me.

If you're reading this in the future maybe you know me as the man who founded Ransom City. It lies out in the unmade lands, or it will, one day. Maybe as you read this it's a bright new century and Ransom City is a great and glittering metropolis and there's a big bronze statue of me in a park somewhere—if I have any say in the matter there will be parks—well, who knows? I am an optimist. Maybe one day these pages will be read by every boy and girl in the West. Your grandfather will look over your shoulder and say, *I remember old Harry Ransom, I saw him back in Nowheresville one time, that was a hell of a show but the bastard still owes me money.*

* * *

I am writing from no place in particular. All I'll say is that it is a big red barn not so different in architectural grandeur from one of those old-world cathedrals you see in picture-books sometimes, although I guess more full of straw and dung. I have never been in a cathedral but I have been in a whole lot of barns. There are thousands like it in the Territory. The fields all around and the mountains in the distance are brown like an

old coat. The man who owns the barn and the cows and the horses and all the straw and the dung is a good fellow, not educated but one of nature's Free-Thinkers, and when we strike out West again he will come with us.

I am writing on a typewriter that I salvaged from the old man's office after Jasper City fell. Naturally it's the very latest state-of-the-art machine. Nothing but the best was good enough for the old man. There's a bullet-hole in its casing and some water-damage to its innards. Nobody thought I could get it working again but I did not get where I am today by being a fool, at least not in matters mechanical. In spite of my efforts the letter *R* still sticks one time out of four, and that is no small inconvenience for a man who likes to talk about himself as much as I do. On the other hand the machine types in triplicate, through an arrangement of carbon papers and clever little levers, so that when I type RANSOM it echoes across one-two-three sheets of white paper. The old man used this device to convey orders with the greatest possible efficiency. I want to talk to a lot of people as I go so this is a great time-saver.

* * *

Well, we moved on from the big red barn. One of the Line's Heavier-Than-Air Vessels was spotted overhead. It circled, writing a kind of black-smoke question mark in the sky. Most likely it had nothing to do with us—there's fighting not far south of us, or so I hear—but we're taking no chances. We left by night and took the road west. I am sitting and typing under the shadow of a big old cottonwood tree in a valley of rank grass and blackberry bushes and old tin-plated junk and fat dragonflies. Our numbers have been swelled by the barn-owner's younger son and two of his friends, and I have just eaten one of his first-rate apricots, but the man himself stayed behind to sell off his furniture and settle his affairs. If all goes well we shall all meet up at a certain location on the Western Rim.

I left a triplicate of letters in his care all about who we are and where we are going and what we are going to do when we get there, by which I mean the founding of Ransom City. We are going West. I waxed eloquent about the glories of the free city of the future and true democracy and the Ransom Process and the parks and the tall buildings I have planned in my mind's eye and all the rest of it, and how every person who wants should follow us. One of the letters is to go to my onetime friend the famous Mr. Elmer Merrial Carson, formerly of the *Jasper City Evening Post*,* one is to go to the editor of the *Melville City Gazette*, and because I do not know any other journalists, the third is to go to an editor of Mr. Barn-Owner's choosing. I thought everything would be easy to explain but it is not. I mean to set the story straight, because a lot of things have been said about me or by me that are not exactly true. It is not easy to tell a true story. Most of my practice with words has been selling things, which is not the same at all, it turns out.

I am not yet thirty but I have had an odd kind of life and I have a lot to say before I go. Anyhow this is my AUTOBIOGRAPHY I guess, and so I will call this CHAPTER ONE, and below that INTRODUCTIONS, just like a real honest-to-goodness book.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jerry Day:

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