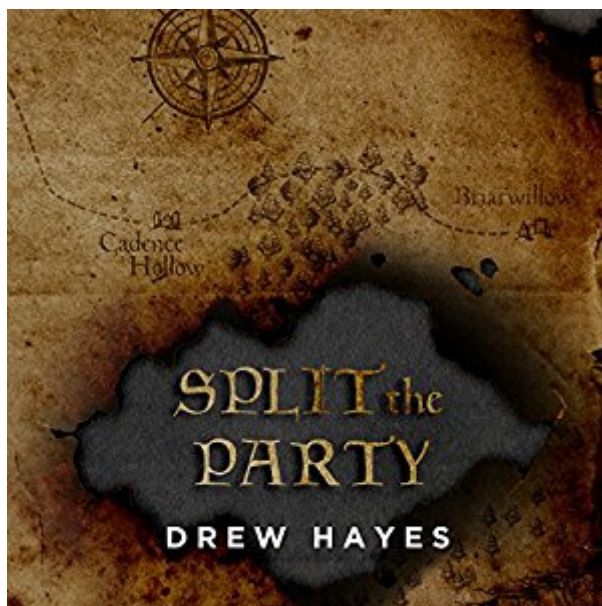


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# Split The Party: Spells, Swords, & Stealth Series #2



## Synopsis

Fleeing from a vengeful king has sent the former NPCs across Solium's borders, into the kingdom of Alcatam. As wanted fugitives, they head to the small farming village of Briarwillow, hoping to blend in, lay low, and avoid trouble at all costs. Unfortunately, Briarwillow has problems all its own, and its troubles quickly become theirs. If they hope to survive long enough to escape, they'll have to tackle an all-but-forgotten mystery buried at the town's border as well as seek the wisdom of a mysterious group of mages. With time, magic, and at least one god against them, it will take everything they've got to save Briarwillow - and themselves.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Another brilliant installment of Spells, Swords, and Stealth! I love the original adventures. I love the well thought out characters. I love that I can read both books of the series in rapid fire and not get bored! (A feat I find difficult to combat lately.) So many questions arise after books 1 & 2 that I hope Mr. Hayes addresses in a 3rd book. I want to know about Fritz's past and her magical abilities. How does she know about Gabrielle's and Grumph's abilities? And Deji's for that matter? Is she of relation to the elf we met at the contest in the first book? The one that gave Thistle his dagger belt? Does Grumph go back to Cadence Hollow to work with Deji? Is Deji the archmage that will open the blood-sealed box? Will Kalzidar seek revenge against the party? Is there more to Mr. Peppers' existence than meets the eye? Is there a god that serves over those who feel only partly real? Will he/she accept Timuscor as his/her paladin? What of the writers of the SS&S book? What will they

have to say to Russell? Mr. Hayes, don't leave us dangling! I can hardly contain myself waiting for the next adventure!

I wasn't certain, last year, whether Drew Hayes was planning to write a sequel for his novel *NPCs*, which just so happened to be the book that introduced me to someone who's become one of my most-watched authors. *NPCs* left plenty of room for more adventures, but stuff like sequels can depend on reader interest—and even though I thought the whole thing was just great, I wasn't convinced the general public would take an interest (or get some of the concepts the book was poking fun at), or that the target audience (fantasy RPG gamers) would be big enough to inspire a continuation. Well, here we all are, so something must have gone right. I admit, though, I had a bit of a sinking feeling at first. Part of what delighted me so much about *NPCs* was the concept. It took all the stereotypes and tropes of fantasy RPGs—and forget the PnP games, these are things that anyone who's even played a single video game probably started taking for granted early on—and it laughed at them. The concept of it all was plenty strong enough to prop up the first novel, but that concept only had so much momentum. Fortunately, the whole *NPCs*-turned-adventurers thing stayed in the background; this sequel is more about them settling in to actually BE adventurers, rather than just pretending. And that's good; I really liked the concept of *NPCs*, like I said, and I'd really hate to see something so genius turn tedious. And it didn't; far more focus was placed on the capital-Q Quest itself, and the growth of the characters, and the introduction of a few new faces. Just like the last book, there were short interludes in the real world showing an actual tabletop game being played in the fantasy universe, but this time, the role players' quest ended up diverging from the *NPCs*, though there were reminders of the overarching plot tying everything together. (Also, the real-life role players weren't nearly as aggravating, which was nice.) All in all, I'd call it a huge success. As if you couldn't guess from the score I gave it, right? Since it's hard for me to write a review without finding \*something\* to complain about, I will point out one negative, at least as far as I'm concerned: anyone who's familiar with Hayes's other series, the *Super Powered*s, will see a lot of similarities in the way he draws his characters. It wasn't hard for me to find a parallel character for, well, pretty much the entire cast of *NPCs*—and I'm surprised he even bothered to come up with a new name for SP's Angela when he plopped her in this book as the real world GM's big sister. I'm not saying I don't like Hayes's characters, in whatever incarnation they're taking at the moment, and I'm sure he taxed himself writing as

many different people as he did, considering the enormous cast of Super Powered, but it might have been nice had the NPCs grown their own unique voices instead of sounding so universally familiar. Now, I've read enough e-books that I almost feel obligated to address the usual technical issues. First, cliffhangers: I'm happy to report that we don't have one. Like he did in book one, Hayes left plenty of dangling threads so there's room for the story to grow and flourish, but this is a complete book. (I'd wish any number of other authors would read this and see how it ought to be done if I didn't know I'd be wasting my time.) Second, editing: it's good. I caught one mistake: he used the word "coetnants" when he meant "coetnets" (as in "the tenets of a god's faith"). I wasn't looking for errors, but since they usually jump out at me whether I'm looking or not, I'd say one whoops is pretty darn good and it's consistent with what I'd expect in a traditionally-published paperback book. So, I'll assume that if you're here, checking out reviews for Split the Party, you've read NPCs. If that's the case, I can recommend this one strongly: the story could've easily stagnated, but Hayes moved the story and the characters in the direction it and they needed to go with some real precision. The very moment the cleverness of the first book's concept started to get old, he moved the focus elsewhere, and the series is stronger for it. Now, if you stumbled onto this book by mistake and haven't read NPCs, go and do that, please. Split the Party will still be here when you're done.

I was actually not horribly excited to read this book originally. I was never a fan of D&D, mostly due to my lack of imagination. But since I really love Drew Hayes as an author, I decided to give the book a shot and I am happy I did. I still will never play D&D though now I am jealous of those who do and who can actually build that kind of world to play and without feeling silly. The characters in the book were easy to care about and the plot was very interesting. Even if you don't like D&D, give the book a shot, you forgot its D&D most the time anyways

This was the second book in the spells, swords and stealth series. First a little negative point. If you read the first book some time ago then the story is a bit hard to pick up. Having said that I like how this story picks up after our unlikely heroes are fleeing for the mad king. While it is a bit strange how this story is linked with the real world it is done nicely to set it up for the 3th book. I like how the author uses some humor to break the mold without really breaking out of the genre and without it going really out of control. I recommend this book and give it 4 out of 5 stars. Now I only have to wait

9 more months to read the next part.

Good follow up to NPC. I'm not a gamer but I do understand how they work. This continues the story of the folks we met in NPC. The characters develop well and along a reasonable path (many series books have sharp changes in characters from book to book, not so here and it is a nice touch to see gradual change)I particularly liked the price paid by some (I'll avoid spoilers) for what they needed. You must start with NPC, this is not a stand alone, it definitely follows the previous book.Kudos to Hayes for this chapter, looking forward to the next.

Very impressive sequel . If he keeps writing I predict he will rank with Eddings and Aspirin . His characters , mundane and fantasy , have some depth without burying you in angst . The plot pushes the characters to make decisions without compelling them into a course of action . The style is Heinlein-esque . I recommend this to anyone who likes imaginative literature .

I listened to the audible version of this and it made my drive to and from work go by faster and I can't ask for anything more than that.This book did a great job of bringing to life the NPC's in a role playing game in a funny and entertaining way! This is my first series in this style and I will say I will get the future versions of this series as well. Because this was the last book done at this point I have started Critical Failures by Robert Bevan which is also turning out to be quite good if anyone is looking for another series to listen/read.

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