

Emerilia Book 1: Trapped Mind Project

8/10 Rating

The Emerilia book series is a LitRPG story written by Michael Chatfield, the author the *Harmony wars series* and *Free Fleet series*. Trapped Mind Project, is the first book in the Emerilia series and follows the story's protagonist, Zane Austin or Dave as he is later known, who after playing the new VRMMORPG discovers a world shattering secret that changes his life forever. The game he thought was fake was reality and the reality he thought he had been living was fake.

LitRPG stands for Literary Role Playing Game. There are generally two major templates for the LitRPG genre; the first template is where the protagonist plays and has adventures in a MMORPG or Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game, usually this game is full immersion virtual reality, however, there are a few that have not been. The second template is where RPG game elements merge with the protagonist's reality. The Emerilia book series is unique in that it is a mixture of the two.

The LitRPG genre is fairly new in the U.S. and Canada, but has been a really popular genre in eastern countries such as Japan, Korea, China and Russia for some time. Because of this, American authors who are now catching on the genre tend to either follow their tropes or make some fatal plot errors. Chatfield's Emerilia series however, for the most part does not make such mistakes.

However, that is for the most part. The introduction of the book is not only pointless and unnecessary since everything learned in the opening scene is explained to the protagonist later, it is drawn out and boring. Once the reader gets past it however, and makes it the part where the protagonist finally enters the game, the story quickly picks up and flows fairly well.

Another quasi major error Chatfield makes, is the alignment aspect. Chatfield makes David, Chaotic Neutral aligned when he befriends and entity known as the Grey God. However, David's character is not chaotic neutral. Especially since both he and the Grey God in which he follows, make too many neutral alignment "sins" for them to qualify for such an alignment. Although this isn't much of a story error since it doesn't have a direct effect on the story, it is still a major character flaw.

The last major error I noticed in the Trapped Mind Project is the respawn feature. Since Emerilia was supposed to be a VRMMORPG, it has a respawn function, which essentially means when your character dies, you get sent to a graveyard or respawn point. The reason why is a problem is because, Chatfield makes the bold move of making all of his fantasy and magic aspects explained by futuristic technology. However, the issue of transferring the human soul to another body is left unexplained, so for all the reader knows, when Dave dies and respawns, that isn't really Dave, but a clone that thinks he is.

With that said, Chatfield also does a lot of things right in his story, like not following certain tropes that other authors fall victim too. Tropes such as the main character getting permanently digitized into the game, which is a fatal error that would have more than likely killed the story no matter how good it is. Some other lesser tropes that other fall victim too are; the protagonist finding and exploiting a cheat, receiving an over power weapon, or leveling too fast. In Chatfield's story, Dave, doesn't necessarily exploit a cheat, his great strength was acquired on his own and through his hard work, because of this he tends to set trends and discover secrets before other people.

Another plus that Chatfield does for Emerilia, is that he takes his time. The LitRPG genre tends to be more compatible with Light Novels over full length novels, because it tends to do better in a longer drawn out setting. However, Chatfield overcomes this challenge well. Unlike a lot of other authors, that in their rush to tell the story end up make the character level to explosively fast and access end game content areas way before they should.

Although Chatfield makes some major character and logic mistakes, they still aren't fatal or irreconcilable mistakes that would ruin the story. Couple that with his good pacing and story and development, the Emerilia series is defiantly one of the best American/ Canadian LitRPG series to date, if not the face of genre here in America. The Emerilia series is a definite recommendation for those that are a fan of the LitRPG genre or that that might want to get into it. 8/10 rating.