



I Know Very Well
How I Got My Name
Elliott DeLine



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The night he loses his virginity, he becomes Dean. Amy Wagner names him—and she would know best. Amy knows all kinds of things that Dean doesn't understand—things about sex, music, and the darker side of life. All Dean knows is his safe suburban home with his parents, books, and imaginary games. Until now, he's been able to hide his true identity, even from himself. To the rest of the world, he is a teenage girl—an awkward, boyish teenage girl, but a girl nonetheless. Meeting Amy changes everything. Soon that protected world around him begins to fall apart, and he is left with no other option but to face himself and the truth.

I Know Very Well How I Got My Name chronicles Dean's clumsy progression through the American public school system. It is the 90's and early 2000's, in suburban Syracuse, New York—a world in which LGBTQ bullying is not yet a hot topic in schools, and there is little tolerance for outsiders of any kind. A prequel to the award-winning novel *Refuse*, Elliott DeLine's second book is about the prevailing myths surrounding bullying and abuse, and the hardships of being young and transgender without a community, support, or a roadmap.

I Know Very Well How I Got My Name Details

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Author : Elliott DeLine

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From Reader Review I Know Very Well How I Got My Name for online ebook

Jaylee says

TL;DR - This book is hard to read, emotional, and stirred up a ton of shit I needed to think/feel/process - but it's masterfully done and an incredible, honest piece of writing by a trans guy about a trans guy. **TRIGGER WARNINGS** for rape, abuse in a romantic relationship, homophobia, transphobia, suicide, graphic depiction of alcohol use/being drunk, dysphoria (esp during sex), and forced penetration of someone with vaginismus.*

This book was exceptional. It follows a(n autistic?**) trans guy through age 4-18, told in his own voice, which changes with every chapter as he gets older. The voice in this was brilliantly done. He captured every age perfectly and so many opinions and feelings conflict each other because of how the character is growing.

The writing starts out incredibly simple but grows along with the character. The simple sentences and stating the obvious are because it is the voice of a four-year-old. It's really just brilliantly done.

And I stg the chapter about third grade reflects my 5th grade experience 100% perfectly, right down to the bands, the clothes, the lipgloss. I have never seen my childhood so strongly reflected (maybe I just haven't been reading books by people who grew up in the 90's).

The junior high/high school portions are really hard to read. They deal heavily with homophobic/transphobic bullying, abusive relationships, and rape. The character is graphically raped (view spoiler) so I definitely caution a big fat trigger warning on this book. The entire abusive relationship that weaves in and out of the last half of the book is so heartbreaking, and perfectly captures how complicated those relationships are, because they have good moments, and very important moments (view spoiler) but she does so much harm as well.

I rarely intentional seek out books dealing with the difficult "issues" of being LGBT or dealing with hard topics like this one did, and would never have picked this book up for myself. I'm not even sure if I'd recommend this book - it's hard to read, emotional, and stirred up a ton of shit I needed to think/feel/process - but it's masterfully done and an incredible, honest piece of writing by a trans guy about a trans guy.

*While this is just part of the graphic rape, it was especially difficult for me to read due to this aspect. The character has vaginismus (as do I) and penetration is incredibly painful. It's a very specific element that hurt so hard and made the rape scene that much worse for me personally, so I'm adding that note for others.

**The early chapters sounded like something out of my childhood psych textbook about recognizing autism in children. Doesn't like to be touched, has "weird" hobbies inappropriate for his age, loves animals, can't/won't discern between imagination and real life. I really don't know enough about autism to comment further except that I got the impression that was what was happening? idk man.

Kaleb Fischer says

This rating is more like a "2.4". While I'm all about more trans* narratives being published, I don't agree with giving them unjustified boosts in ratings/reviews solely on the basis that they tell a reasonably undertold

story. They should be held to the same standard of all written works.

This novella was not gratingly sophomoric and narcissistic like *Refuse*. It even shows development in structuring, cohesiveness, and accessibility on the author's behalf. This time around, the flaws in editing are in grammar(I'm not talking about the stylistic exclusion of quotes) and typos.

I Know Very Well How I Got My Name reads like a journal restructured as a narrative. It deviates from the trite tale of "LOOK HOW GENDER NON-CONFORMING I WAS AS A CHILD AND I ALWAYS KNEW BECAUSE *insert gender expression/roles here*." Well done. However, despite improvements in cohesiveness and structuring, I was left with a "why did I read this/what purpose did this serve" taste in my mouth after reading it. It doesn't really seem to have a solid direction/message/plot.

Overall, this novella reflects growth on the author's part and I look forward to checking out *Show Trans* when it becomes available at HCLIB.

Hope says

I won this novella through a Goodreads contest. I get self-publishing, but there were at least six or seven typos and misspelled words in this book. The worst and most glaring was "are thighs" rather than "our thighs." Find other people to proofread your manuscript. For these reasons, and the anti-climatic and rather warp speed ending, I cannot give this book more than two stars.

Sebastian Nemec says

Reading this book after "Refuse" explained a few things (as it is the prequel). Not as relatable to me as his first book, but every transgender person has their own journey.

Ray Tonks says

I liked this book! (actual rating: 3.5)

It was written very nicely, even if I wished it had been a bit more suspenseful at some points.

The narrating voice was honest and I think the story gives the reader a perspective that is either very relatable for people who also identify as transgender or that gives cis readers a better understanding for their situation. I also liked the development that can be seen throughout the story. It goes from his early childhood to his adolescence and this way, the reader gets to know about the events that had the most influence on him in his life.

Some of them, like his father's aggression were not very detailed and since the family has a huge impact on a child, it would've probably been important to address this issue a bit more.

The main character struggles a lot with his identity and while not even knowing himself yet, he is harassed for what other people think he is. It took a while, but finally, in the end, he comes out to at least some friends

and plans his next steps for his life, most importantly, his transition.
I liked how the book ended with a hopeful look into the future.
(I did not read "Refuse" so I don't know how Dean's story goes on!)

Eli says

Best trans novella (slash memoir?) I've ever read, because the ones by non-trans folks don't fucking count.

Red Thomas says

DeLine's awesome storytelling skills shine through, once again, in this prequel to "Refuse". This collection of coming-of-age stories spattered with the blunt realism of what it is like to be a transgendered teen make this one great read. A page-turner in its own right, these slices of life will leave you wondering what, exactly, *hasn't* happened to Dean?

Aaron says

good

Logan Plonski says

Like Refuse, this book scratched the surface of a lot of things that I wish it had explored more deeply. I was especially bummed that it didn't explore Dean's relationship with Vivian as a contrast to Amy.

I appreciate that it went into abuse and rape in the queer community, and a lot of the depictions of being a trans child and teenager resonated with my own experiences. However, the plot line itself is shaky at best and doesn't have much of a cohesive conclusion. After reading the last page, I turned the page again because it didn't seem like the book was really over.

Like Refuse, there's the beginning of something good here but it feels like it was hastily thrown together. Elliot DeLine needs to write his books more thoughtfully and have them edited more thoroughly. His current works are somewhat sloppy and amateurish.

Erik says

Powerful coming of age transgender story.

Logan says

My short review is: I loved it! I hung onto *I KNOW VERY WELL HOW I GOT MY NAME* for about a week, not feeling ready to dive in, but just flipping through and enjoying the few lines I read at random. I found DeLine's *REFUSE* such an intense book with so many things that I uncomfortably related to. I wasn't sure if I was ready to do that again, maybe even more intensely, with this story of Dean's childhood and identity exploration.

This novella is intense as well (for me, particularly in a nonconsensual and painful sex scene), but is a quick read, with short chapters moving through the years and school grades of Dean's life. Vivian from *REFUSE* shows up here but she's one of several of Dean's friends and frenemies. You don't need to have read *REFUSE* to understand *I KNOW VERY WELL*. It would be interesting to start with *I KNOW VERY WELL* and move chronologically.

I was impressed by the way that DeLine changed Dean's style of narration as he got older. A lot of lines in the early chapters reminded me of things I wrote in my diary as a kid. There are unexplained things that happen to Dean when he's young (his father suddenly becoming angry, strange teachers) that took me back to some of the mysteries of my own childhood.

I'm sorry to be finished with DeLine's novels for the moment. I can't wait to see what he writes next!

A couple favorite quotes:

"They have a symbol - they pretend it is top secret, but everyone knows it is the symbol for hating me. They draw it in the corners of their papers. It looks like an atom, like we learned about in science."

"Fuck you dyke, he says, You don't say no to me.
Fuck you I just did."

Andrew says

I'm really happy that this book exists; I really, really loved *Refuse* and I'd probably classify it as an (if not *the*) all-time favorite book of mine. I'm really pleased that Dean gets a further back story. I could really identify with this book as I could with *Refuse*, too, and the portion of the book where Dean is in elementary school hit a lot close to home for me.

I'd also consider this a good book for teenagers or adults who are currently questioning their gender identity to read; to see if they can relate to it in some way, or because of how information regarding transitioning is written once Dean reaches his realizations, making the idea sound a lot less confusing and a little easier to understand.

Raven Engelking says

I loved the storyline and it spoke to me. It was how the characters made me believe in the problems and troubles the main character was going through. I felt the characters coming alive. I think the writer is awesome

Nora says

Loved this novella about a kid who is transgender. It begins when he's a child but most of the book is focused on his early adolescence. The voice was really true and sweet. It was a little more complicated and messy than the "I knew since birth that I had been assigned to the wrong gender" stories that I seem to usually read.

This book was a prequel to another novel about this same character, Dean, which I also read and loved. I really liked reading this book second but I can't quite articulate why, so I guess there's no reason they couldn't be read in chronological order with this book first. To me, this book seemed even more memoir-y than the other. It feels real real real. Be warned that bunch of incredibly sad and painful things happen in this book, so it's a quite intense reading experience. But it left me with a hopeful feeling.

It was funny to read a novella about the Harry Potter-reading, Power Rangers-loving set, because when I was a teenager those were the kids I babysat. I felt like, how can people that young have grown up to write outstanding novels? How can someone who wanted to be the Red Power Ranger even be old enough to write a novel? It made me feel really over the hill and ready for the grave for a while, but then I got over it because I was distracted by reading this great story.

This book is specifically a transgender story, but there were a lot of elements that seemed—I don't want to say universal because that whole concept is dumb in a variety of ways, but struck me as integral growing up things. Well, that sounds just as dumb; I guess I should just use "I statements" and say that a lot of different parts of the story hit home for me. Or let me put it like this: *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* has the same kind of starry literary merit that gives people the impulse to say that *The Diary of Anne Frank* is universal when it so clearly is about being an outsider.

What other book is this one similar to? The only thing I can think of is *The Sweet In-Between* by Sheri Reynolds, only because they're both about gender-non-conforming teens and depict sexual assault in the same kind of youthful voice that is matter-of-fact and not yet ready to acknowledge that is even what happened, which is extra realistic and heart-breaking. Oh, I should say that *I Know Very Well How I Got My Name* isn't YA but I think teens would like reading it especially if they're OK with things not being spelled out for them and not broken down into tiny bite-sized chunks and if they're OK with some things being quite disturbing, which how could you not be used to that already if you're a teen?

The boring part where I talk about book design/copyediting: I liked the cover a whole lot, and it looks good from far away. The interior was clean and nicely laid-out, with very few typos. I'm not a big fan of the whole thing where the cover image is repeated and lightened for the back cover, but whatevs. So, overall very cool, with my one complaint (of course! what, like I'm going to not have one? that'll be the day) being: there is nothing written on the spine, so when you put it on the shelf you don't know what book it is.

Elliott DeLine says

My mother told me, "always vote for yourself." I'm proud of this book, and I give it 5 stars.
