



I Know Not

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Being a bastard is sometimes a survival trait.

I am not a bad man. Well, I must be honest with myself: I don't try to be a bad man. It just seems to... happen.

I woke up in a castle populated by corpses. Devoid of past or present, bereft of even a name, so I must be honest with myself.

I discovered I am a wizard with a blade, silent as the wind, and as deadly as a forest fire. When other men look and see safety, I can feel the ambush coming. When others see only smiles, I can smell the hidden plots and secreted knives. When others only see walls and guards, I can find a highway to the heart of the most imposing castle. I wish I knew what all these things mean, but I must be honest with myself and say I know not.

I must be honest because I am a fantastic liar. If I begin lying to myself I will not be able to survive. And I intend to survive.

A virtuoso in the symphonies of death, follow Fox Crow as he begins a journey of self discovery begun in an abattoir, that continues through forbidding lands and the courts of the highest born, and culminates in the coldest darkness filled with temptation and murder.

The first fantasy novel of award winning author, James Daniel Ross, *I Know Not* is a hard hitting, gritty, adventure. Welcome to a world with far more shadows than sunshine. Walk the forest paths where the faeries eat human flesh. Explore a world where the heroes may wear black.

I Know Not Details

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Author : James Daniel Ross

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From Reader Review I Know Not for online ebook

jD says

Although this book has a generous distribution of typos, it's still one of the best Fantasy works I have read so far this year. Yeah, it's only February but this one is going to be a top fave in December. Of this I am sure.

Typos aside, this story had everything I love. The hero, Crow, is a man who does not remember who he is when he awakes surrounded by hundreds of dead bodies, all slaughtered in a gruesome ways. He finds he is unmoved emotionally by the carnage and it does not surprise him. He has a head injury and a sword he calls "Phantom Angel". As he journeys from the scene of the killing field, he discovers he has survival instincts that are well honed and spot on. He remains indifferent to anything but his immediate needs until he stumbles upon a small group of nobles being attacked by bandits. A woman's scream breaks through his indifference and he saves those that had not already been killed by the criminals. He finds himself agreeing to protect the young noble woman, Aelia, who needs to hire a trained sword to aid her on her journey. A mysterious journey that will take the small group into one dangerous environment after another. It is the journey that makes this story so engaging. Our hero is given the name Crow Fox by his companions as he exhibits traits of both. He accepts the name and begins to grow into the hero the name represents. But ghost of the past and a name come back to him along with the truth of what he is.

Crow narrates his story to the reader referring to the reader as just that. He is honest as he struggles to remember who he is while accepting that the only thing he seems to be good at is killing. It is his first instinct and he finds he understands the ways of killing as an art form. This is a flawed man but it is easy to follow his decisions, good and bad. There are magical elements to the story as is expected in most fantasy. Crow's tone is the best part of all, he explains it all in a humorous, sarcastic melody that seduces.

Yes, this is all of a five star story if the typos don't make you too crazy. The pace is perfect and the supporting characters brought just enough to the story to help the reader understand how personal the journey to the truth was for Crow and they gave him a reason to face who he was now not what he left behind. I recommend this book for those who loved The Way of Shadows.

Melanie says

A man wakes up and knows nothing about himself. He knows an awful lot about pretty much everything else, but his is a blank slate. Except there's a Fog. And a Beast who rears in anger whenever he is in danger or angry. And a scraggly man he sees instead of his reflection sometimes. And strange dreams of an alabaster angel. So there's quite a lot going on in his head, really.

The story goes from confusing to alright to WTF. I honestly didn't know what was going on there towards the end. If there had been a bit more foreshadowing to what was going on I might have understood a bit better but there was an awful lot of stuff introduced in a very small space of time. Note: introduced, but not really explained. Indeed, the world building was pretty lacking in general.

Then we get to the writing itself. It wasn't in general particularly bad, per se, but it was screaming out for some more stringent checking. Simple mistakes where words are missing or there are too many words, exaggerations which make strain belief - not breathing for several minutes, parrying four swords blows in a

single second - and so on and so forth. Then comes the worst one in my opinion. Semi-colons. Please, James Daniel Ross and whoever edited this: learn how to use semi-colons. Because in spite of the fact that you think you know how to use this particular form of punctuation, *you do not*.

I finished this book, but I won't be reading the next.

Ashish says

This can pretty much be read as the Monster Manual of Medieval Murder. Almost the entire first half of the book's an exquisite exploration into the art of killing - with blade, with blunt force, with hands and feet and teeth, poison and pestilence... it's a brilliantly crafted, harsh, ferocious and grim adventure that starts out like a fine dark-fantasy version of *Bourne Identity* but evolves into a complex, metaphor-laden inspiring tale; *Dishonored* becomes *Bioshock Infinite*.

It's fast, bloody, brutal, satisfyingly gory, with just enough supernatural horror to elevate it out of pure medieval fantasy - but it's also, in every sense of the word, unputdownable. I went through this in about three days.

Carol says

looks intriguing. The author's style is interesting, at least from the excerpt.

Dave Wagner says

It is a remarkable character study, skillfully shoe-horned into a visceral, violent, tightly-scripted action story. It reminds me of what I love best about Joe Abercrombie - the action, the humor, the violence, the good "bad guys" and the bad "good guys"...

And yet, the Kindle version I bought was literally riddled with typos. I couldn't go two pages without catching something that even a moderately-skilled proof-reader should have flagged immediately. It speaks volumes to me about the author that he could so enthrall me, in spite of the grating formatting. That, plus the rather limp cover design, screams the kind of careless apathy of a person who is naturally gifted at many things, but doesn't care enough to polish up what he does before moving on to the next thing that he/she wants to do.

The story is extremely compelling, very well-told, with some flashes of truly incredible phrasing and laugh-out-loud dialog. I cannot stress strongly enough how surprised I was at this book. And yet, it screams out for a little more love and polish and professionalism. It could use a deft editor's hand as well. When a perfect descriptive phrase is used, it greatly enhances the reading experience... but when that same phrase is used a second, and third time, it detracts as much as it initially enhanced. Redundancies and typos -- how the author can offer something like this, which is at once so half-baked and brilliant, puzzles me to no end. It's almost like the reader has to contribute to the writing process, which should really be unnecessary.

Brian Williamson says

An excellent story told in a casual, funny style. I enjoyed the concept of story (A man wakes up not knowing who he is after an apparent battle has been waged and he winds up as the protector of a Princess on her way to meet with several noble families. Oh, and he's a bad-ass. He has to find out who or what he is.)

I think the story voice changed toward the end, but the narration was very well done throughout. I highly recommend it.

Nancy says

I just got this book today thru the Goodreads giveaways.

(1) This guy can write! The story is true fantasy (incredible action, unbelievable results) but it works because almost the whole focus of the novel is on this one major character. I think any one who enjoys reading fantasy/adventure/action novels will enjoy this one. I felt I understood what his story was even before we truly knew the whole tale. Buy it!

(2) I dislike the front cover art-- the sword is representative of the one in the novel, but the rest of the art work is useless. Doesn't inspire dread, interest, or even laughter. Also don't like the font used for the title on the front (too thin, spindly). The red 2 line border is ok as it at least breaks up the heavy charcoal gray and black that is the majority of the cover art.

(3) I dislike the font used for the print in the book. Seems cramped and muddled. Now, I do wear bifocals, but no matter how I've held this book, the font is annoying. Personally, I'd prefer a clearer type face. Speaking as one who has sold books for 17 yrs, I know that there are a lot of readers who check the type face for size and clarity before purchase.

(4) There are several errors in either spelling or pronoun choice such as, "She had me lay my head in my lap." I'm fairly certain the author meant for him to put his head in HER lap. :) Most of the other errors were missing or duplicated words. The missing are usually 'of, the, by, for'. I think a better proof-reader would have caught the majority of these. James, if you do the proofing yourself, my best suggestion is to read the whole thing out loud. Quite often, this will point out errors such as these or in punctuation, etc.

Michael says

Really great story and the main character's observations are interesting and entertaining. One of my favorite lines in the book,

"Then I knew from the whispering of the Fog that there is a special tactica for fighting three armed men: Don't, you will die."

Looking forward to reading the second book in this series.

Lolene says

Enjoyable read, recommended. I was strongly reminded of the Waylander character in David Gemmel's books.

"Have I mentioned that stealth was good portion of patience? Have I mentioned it was cold? Have I mentioned that there was an assassin coming? Good, now you're all caught up with my state of mind" These words are typical for Fox Crow and leaves the reader at times amused but always engaged in the unfolding of the story.

Fox Crow is no perfect Hero, this is a man making choices at the worst of times and sometimes regretting them. I really liked getting to know a bit about the parts that he shares in his narrative, as he puts it you cannot get to know a man that does not know himself.

Barbara says

I really enjoyed this book up until the last chapter and the epilogue, but I'm giving it 4 stars based on the rest of the book. It built up, in a suitably twisty fashion, to a great crescendo and then just fizzled out.

The author clearly has a lot of talent and has done a very polished and professional job, last 2 chapters notwithstanding. However, his publisher really let him down. The copy editing was dire. It would be a rare book that had no typos but this had several in every single chapter. There were extraneous words, missing words, the wrong word (e.g. palate for pallet) and my personal favorite - sentences that changed tense halfway through. A few sentences were so mangled I couldn't work out what was intended even after reading them 2 or 3 times.

Melinda says

This has to be the best book that I've read all year. The writing is superb, the cadence is musically poetic, the characterization is masterful, the plot is carefully crafted, the pace is non-stop, the ending knocks you off your feet and the overall impression of the book is simply outstanding. I can't say it enough, this author is truly superlative. I can't wait for more of Mr. Crow, and more of him I will get in the future I am assured by the author. So, now down to the details of I Know Not.

THE PLOT: A gentleman wakes up in a castle with a nasty headwound and no memory, surrounded by dead bodies and body parts, after a hellacious battle has taken place. After collecting himself somewhat, he explores, his surroundings, and finds he is the only living human in the place. Two sides have battled it out, taking heavy losses on both sides and left him for dead. He has no idea of who he is. No idea of his name. No idea of what side he has fought on. His response to all the questions in his head is I know not. After passing

out several times, he believes that it would best if he left the castle, as death tends to bring with it the plague, so he takes off in a direction that looks good and that is where our story begins. The story is about the adventures of the man who eventually garners the name Fox Crow. His only natural talent it seems is for killing. He can kill with just about any implement, be it a needle, rod, sword, exotic poison, scarf, garotte, or his bare hands. He knows all the ways. He also knows all the ways of stealth, as well as the ways to manipulate people into doing what he wants. These seem to float up out of his memory unbidden. Like floating up out of a fog. He also seems to know the normal behaviours of people at work, such as farmers in fields and other laborers and traders. But if you ask how he knows, he will tell you, "I know not." His adventures lead him into adventures as a rescuer of a damsel in distress, as a bodyguard, as a guard commander, as an assassin hunter, as teacher of boy guards, as a travelling guard, as a personal bodyguard, and finally, as a guest to a noble. The action is thick and fierce. The twists in the plot come quickly as we find out with Fox, bits of who he is at the same time as he battles people everywhere. Some people know more about who he is than he does, but won't tell him. At the same time, supernatural forces are trying to lay claim to his soul. The plot is amazingly complex, yet building from nothing, Ross layers complexity like an artist layers paint on a canvas to create a masterwork. When he's done - you have something beautiful. For Characterization I give Ross an A+++

THE CHARACTERIZATION: Here too Ross had to start out with nothing. Crow didn't even have a name when he left the castle. He did have a sword, which was good, because the need to defend himself was paramount in this novel. Just like in the plot, Ross layers the characterization for Crow bit by bit as you go through the book, starting at the castle where we first see the man through his own eyes, as the book is told from Crow's POV. This was a stroke of genius, not ever switching over to other characters, as Crow is such a unique character, that he made the novel unique as well. His voice and thoughts set the tone for the book. He's a strong man, knowing and getting what he wants - you can see that right off. He's clearly a killer, but is he a killer for good or evil? But who is he really? We find out as he does. Surprises come in small packages along the way. The other characters in the book are all secondary, but get treated quite well in characterization. Aelia, Gelia, the boy guards, all get fully characterized as three dimensionally human. Even the tertiary characters get good treatment in Ross' hands. Some of the nobels for instance. Ross cannot put a character to a page without giving almost full characterization. I love that about him. It makes the book such a rich reading experience. For Characterization I give Ross an A+++

DIALOGUE; The most interesting dialogue and most numerous happened inside of Crow's head as he talked to himself about each situation at hand and what to do about it. Crow is articulate, observant and terse. The actual dialogue between characters is kept to a minimum. and consists of Milady this, or Sir that. Very short sentences that either give or receive orders. The only one who actually didn't talk this way was Gelia, who spoke to Crow as if he were a human being, and spoke in cryptic sentences, as she was one of the people who understood things about him that he did not. She knew that he was fighting a supernatural battle inside himself and she wanted his current self to come out on top, so she encouraged him. The boy guards every once and a while asked him questions about this or that method of killing people. They were in awe of him, and a little scared as well. The dialogue is all credible especially what is Crow's head, it is amazing. Depending on what comes out of the fog in his brain, it can be rather frightening as well. I give Ross an A+++ for Dialogue.

THE PACING; The pacing in the book grabs your whole head, brain and all, and won't let go until it's done with you. This is not an undemanding book. It demands that you read it until it's done with you, which is until you are finished with the book. Don't put it down. Don't walk away. Don't dare close the cover, because the book demands that you continue, as does Crow. I have never seen a book like this with pacing this quick, and a character that demands to be read. The action is non-stop. It never slows down. Just when you think you've got a reprieve and can go into the kitchen for a drink or a snack, you've been fooled. Whack! Out

comes the sword and off come arms, heads, legs and there are bodies bleeding everywhere, even animals a time or two. The only time the pacing lets up is when you turn that last page, indicating you are done, and with a heavy heart, you close the book, knowing no more Fox Crow. Sad and elated at the same moment, you sit and sigh. Should I read it over again just to get that same rush? For Pacing I give Ross an A+++

THE ENDING: The ending in the book left me totally surprised. Nothing and no one could have guessed what would have happened in the end of this novel. Not even the psychic hotline. The ending wrapped up the loose ends on Crow's part but opened up all new ones that leaves the reader reeling. The other loose ends in the story get wrapped up quite nicely and come to a quite pleasing ending. That part was very satisfying. As to Crow, his future is so open, you want his next novel to be here right now, so that you can immerse yourself in his next adventures to make sure that he is alright as he kills his way through his future. That his new associate doesn't cash in what is owed to him, at least not quickly, so that we can get some more Crow books before it happens. For the Ending, I give Ross an A+++.

THE UPSHOT: The upshot of all of this, is that, as I said in the beginning, is that this is the best book that I have read all year. This book is not for the squeamish. There are a lot of scenes where body parts fly and blood flows, some of it Crow's. If you don't like that kind of thing, then this book is not for you. But if you can get around that type of thing, or if it doesn't matter, then please join me, revel in this book. Anyone who reads English, should read this book. It's that good! I recommend it everyone who reads English that doesn't faint at the sight of blood. Crow is a master assassin who is a glory to watch calculating the odds of survival in any situation where he must either protect himself or his charge. His glorious intellect comes to the forefront when he is doing this, and it is amazing to see how the truly smart criminal element thinks, moves and watches, then acts. All I can say is WOW! Get the book and read it! It's a slice of life; like a hit man from the dark ages come to life just for you. Like Michael Corleone in the 1300s without his family. This is one adventure you don't want to miss.

Volpot says

3.5 stars. Well this was pretty good. It's not grand prose, but it was an enjoyable read

Andreea Daia says

*****Full Disclosure**** This was an ARC copy, that was received through the GoodReads Advance program. I am grateful for the chance to have read this novel, which I might not have purchased otherwise.

6/11/11

Currently reading - review to follow. Right now I just want to say that the fonts of this book are incredible hard-to-read, making the experience very tiresome. The publisher may want to consider a different format for the next edition.

6/15/11

This book was a really nice surprise: I expected it to be a young-adult reading, and was utterly amazed by the beautiful writing style. James Daniel Ross is not a metaphor-writer; he is a simile-writer, with a very

dramatic pen. I expected that reading his novel would feel like eating popcorn, when in fact it felt as if slowly enjoying a rich dinner (talking about similes :D).

"I Know Not" is most definitely a 99% action-and-adventure novel, and much less (last 30 pages) a fantasy one. Crow wakes up in the middle of a carnage, with no recollections of who he is, and more important, no clue whether he was among attackers or defenders. The whole book is told from his point of view, and represents the record of his adventures afterwards.

What I liked about it was the fact that there are really no completely good characters. Crow chooses to help others just because it's convenient for him at the time or because he sees a material gain. The Duchess is a spoiled noble-born, so obnoxious that although I always look forward for a forever-after, this time I was thinking that I hope he won't stay with her. The Reverend Sister wishes him dead and helps him only because the Duchess orders her. The only really good characters (although secondary) are the boy-guards.

The reason I gave it only 4 stars is because in the middle of the book, there is a part with so many fights that I got bored of them (and I usually love these parts if this says something). I also didn't think that Crow's profile fit with the fact that he chose to stay with the group once they reached their destination (he wasn't in danger anymore, he wasn't paid well, and he declared that he doesn't love the girl). Also this book needs a serious editing (there are typos, grammar errors, punctuation issues, capitalization in the middle of the sentence, etc.)

Finally, I'm really glad I won this book which I wholeheartedly recommend to those interested in the genre.

Sara Barthol says

This book was boring until the last few chapters. I was constantly frustrated by the spelling and grammar errors. I don't know if this is similar for the printed version, but the Kindle version was terrible. It took forever to make the story even halfway interesting. It seemed like the writing style changed constantly throughout the book, and not in any way to make the story any better. This book felt like it should have been a side story in some other series of books where details such as the make up and customs of this kingdom were at least familiar. If this was supposed to somehow be a fantasy novel, it fell short. There were a few random mentions of typical fantasy races and creatures, but that was about all. A random mention of a demon or dwarf does not make it a fantasy novel. The description of the book made it sound like it would be fantastic, so I jumped it up on my "to read" list, but I'm sorely disappointed.

Cindy says

This had the potential of being a really great book. However, it has a "first draft" feel to it. It felt choppy in places and it definitely could've used a good copy edit.

I liked the premise, and I think the whole "woke up with no memory" is a great way to start a story. Some of the secondary characters did feel a little flat (I wish Theo had been flushed out a bit more). The main character was very intriguing and very broken (and since it's First Person POV, maybe the choppiness was deliberate?). My kind of hero (anti-hero?).

The main plot line is very basic, with not a lot of twists and turns. All the tension really is about Crow and his mysterious past.

So all in all, not bad. The question is always "would you read the next one?". Frankly, while it doesn't look like the author is actually going to do more in this series, yes, I would continue the series.
