

As the Crow Flies

Robin Lythgoe

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For a thief, getting caught is never a good thing. Getting caught by a wizard is even worse.

"One more job" meant that Crow, a notorious thief, could retire with Tarsha, the woman of his dreams, but "one more job" may just mean his life.

When he sets out to abscond with that last brilliant treasure and seek a life of ease and pleasure with the jewel of his heart, Crow seriously underestimates his mark, the Baron Duzayan. Under threat of death by poison, Crow is coerced into stealing an improbable, mythical prize. To satisfy the wizard's greed and save the life of his lady love, he must join forces with Tanris, the one man he has spent his entire career avoiding.

But what's a man to do when stealing that fabled prize could level an empire and seal his fate?

From a dungeon black as night, to the top of a mountain peak shrouded in legend, a man's got to do what he must.

Until, of course, he can think of a better plan...

As the Crow Flies Details


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Author : Robin Lythgoe

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From Reader Review As the Crow Flies for online ebook

Nate Philbrick says

Fantastic story with one of the most entertaining protagonists I've read in a long time. The witty dialogue and wry humor is brilliant. My only "complaint" is that the plot pacing felt a bit slow at times. I seriously recommend this book!

Férial says

Oh it was such a good read ! Crow, the main character, deserves to be acquainted with.

I love how the author has brought the changes in his (Crow's...are you following ?) way of thinking, of dealing with others. It was done delicately. The descriptions were not boring and apart from the first part (before the journey starts) that I found a bit too long (though enjoyable), I have loved this read.

If you want a moment (or 10) of fun, action, magic (and deep feelings), I recommend this read.

One thing Mrs Lythgoe (if you read me). Will there be a sequel ? The Druids ? What are they ? Girl ? What/who is she ? Not-an-Egg (oh THAT is a great name) and the bond ? ...

In short, I'd love to have more. I'll pray to the god of writers if it's what it takes ;)

Tammy J Rizzo says

Full disclosure: I received this book free in exchange for a review. Having read the book, here's my honest review:

I thought this book rocked! The main character, Crow, was smart and snarky, and very funny. Living in his head was a real hoot. Of course, he seemed to have superhuman stamina, keeping on keeping on with injuries that would have put me in a hospital bed, but hey, it is quest fantasy - you expect your heroes and your antiheroes to be, you know, heroic.

Crow's characterization was brilliant. I loved him, and I loved his story. I loved his smartassery, and his matter-of-factness about thieving and climbing sheer rock walls and such like. I loved his snarking at every little thing that was going wrong, even as he praised all the gods that he was so beloved of them that they constantly smiled down on him. I loved his naming convention for things that he felt needed names. I loved his banter with his best enemy, Tanris, the guard who had been trying for so long to catch him. I just loved everything about Crow, and his story, and the world that Robin created for him. The story was well-crafted and kept me guessing as to just HOW they would get to the most-likely-though-apparently-impossible ending.

There was only one false note with me, as a reader, and that was that Crow complained about everything about his first time on a horse, except he didn't even mention being saddle sore. Of course, he had lots of

other things on his mind to complain about, but it just felt like the saddle soreness would have been the tiny little topper to top everything off, you know? I've been on a horse, and I missed that detail, but not enough to stop reading. The rest of his story was just too enthralling to let one false note ruin the symphony!

I would certainly recommend this book, even without the saddle sores - it's a funny, witty, tight adventure with a thoroughly enjoyable narrator in Crow, and it's well worth the time and money you'll put into reading it.

Traci Loudin says

Proof that indie authors can create compelling stories with cool endings and no typos! This is a rather unique fantasy, with a heist story embedded in it. While it's told from first person, I enjoyed the narrator's voice enough to keep reading.

One thing that bothered me about the book is that the two main characters are male, the villain is male, and the only female character who's not tertiary is a mute who cries constantly. I thought maybe part of that was just the perception of the somewhat selfish and narcissistic narrator, but no. The other female characters are minor and mostly act as motivation for the main characters. But I appreciated there wasn't any sappy romance in the book, at least.

M. Joseph Murphy says

As the Crow Flies is a solid, entertaining epic fantasy. It hits all the right notes at exactly the right time. I can easily recommend this book to anyone who likes the fantasy mixed with comedy, tragedy, magic, dangerous heists and, yes, a dragon.

I received As the Crow Flies in exchange for a review. That means I have to read the book whether I like it or not. I read through fairly quickly mostly because I couldn't put the book down.

Brief Synopsis

Crow is a thief pulling one last heist before he retires with the lover of his life, Tarsha. Unfortunately for him, realizes after the fact that he stole from a wizard, Baron Duzayan. Tarsha is captured and Crow is poisoned. To free her and get the antidote he must do the impossible: steal a dragon's egg. Duzayan doesn't trust Crow, of course, so he sends along Tanris, a member of the city guard who has hounded Crow for years.

What I liked

Let's start with characters. As the Crow Flies is written in first person subjective. We hear the story through the mind of Crow. He is a fully rendered, complete character. He's humorous and witty as befitting a thief. However, he's also not as strong and ruthless as he likes to think he is. He's flawed but incredibly likable. I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him I love him. I dare you to feel differently.

The plot is handled well. Like most good fantasy stories it is a classic tale told through fresh eyes. Pacing is

also handled well with no real "dragging" points. As a writer, I also appreciate the way Lythgoe follows Chekov's "Gun on the Mantlepiece" . It states that if you introduce something early in the work it MUST be important for something later on. Without giving any spoilers I can promise you every single thing that is introduced is important. She also occasionally reminds the reader of items that will become important later just so you don't forget them. It never feels overdone or unnatural. Instead it helps build tension and remind the reader of the stakes.

The ending is also completely satisfying. Every significant question raised in the book is answered and every character has a well-defined ending. That doesn't mean everyone lives happily ever after but you definitely know what happens. It also asks a few other questions which leaves me hungry for more Crow stories in the future.

Lythgoe also expertly works in worldbuilding information. She never veers into endless paragraphs of exposition. Instead, every time she reveals worldbuilding information it is believable and in context. She reveals enough to give you the scope and flavor of the world without turning it into an almanac.

What I didn't like

Some of the writing, specifically in the first 1/4 of the book, could use another edit. Several paragraphs are not as tight or cohesive as they could be. I noticed two spelling errors and there were a few formatting issues. The formatting issues could be related to the method in which I received the book and may not occur if purchased directly through Amazon.

However, none of the issues were significant enough to bring me out of the story and diminish the experience.

In Conclusion

I strongly recommend *As the Crow Flies* to any fans of fantasy. I also recommend it to writers of fantasy to use as an example proper worldbuilding, pacing and execution of Chekov's Gun.

L.K. Evans says

I LOVED IT

What a surprisingly fun, engaging, and addictive read. I wasn't planning on liking this book. I guess I hadn't heard much and my expectation was low. So when I found myself irritated by interruptions, I realized it was blowing past those low expectations.

Be warned, the plot isn't terribly unique. A thief is blackmailed into helping a baron so as to save his kidnapped love. So why did I love it so much?

First and foremost, I can honestly say I loved the voice of Crow. That's what drew me in. That's what made me want to keep picking this up. So that translates into a very well written book, in my opinion. The voice of Crow was addictively funny and solidly consistent even as his character grew during his travels. I loved the dry, cynical, realistic, clever, selfish, selfless, and sarcastic nature of Crow, which played wonderfully

against Tanris's altruistic personality. The two had a sort of chemistry that worked together. It wrestled quite a bit of smiles out of me.

The other part of Crow's character that I much enjoyed was his vulnerability. He had fears, and I love that in characters. I love to see them break down and not always be the stalwart heroes standard in fantasy books. Tanris had his moments as well.

Sadly, I had the plot figured out from the get go. I had already foreseen quite a few turns the book took. I don't think many jaws will drop at some of the revelations. That's not to say the book wasn't enjoyable. Again, it was Crow's voice that kept me entranced, not necessarily a complicated plot. Also, there were some definite slow parts. The farther along in the book we got, the more I noticed lengthy descriptions popping up. That's not to say they weren't there in the beginning, but since some of it is slow, I noticed these descriptions a bit more toward the end. The journey Crow takes is quite long. There's some adventure in it for sure, but it is long and therefore slow in some parts. But the more addicted I became to Crow, the less and less I could put it down, even through some slow sections.

The world isn't terribly complicated nor explored in depth. For me, I read for characters so it wasn't a hinderance for me at all. However, those into heavy world building probably won't find satisfaction in this book. What we were given was clear and simple and fit my tastes just fine.

I have high hopes that there might be a sequel. This is not part of a series, but I would love to read another adventure of Crow, Tanris, and Girl (yes, that's what they call her for reason that would become clear if you decided to pick this up). Speaking of her, I actually quite enjoyed her character. I found her humorous in her own way and she added some comical moments to the book.

So overall, I would highly recommend reading the entire sample available on Amazon. If the voice of Crow appeals to you, I can't recommend this enough. It was long, but fun and witty with a nice dose of adventure.

You can see this and other reviews on my website: <http://booksbylkevans.com>

Mike says

I do love a good rogue, and this book offers one. Though let down a little by editing issues and a lot by the female characters, overall it was enjoyable and well-written if I overlooked those factors.

Editing issues first. It's written in a literate, intelligent style, which makes the problems that much more vexing. There are only a few, but they are pervasive.

Firstly, apostrophe placement in phrases like "servants' entrance" and "merchants' quarter". I've just given the correct placements (since the entrance is used by more than one servant, and there is more than one merchant in the quarter), but the author writes "servant's entrance" and "merchant's quarter". Other examples: bandit's horses, peoples' stomachs (an overcorrection; "people" is what the stomachs belonged to, so it should be "people's"), guard's sashes, brother's knives, owner's food stocks, Ancestor's magic, visitor's menials, neighbor's houses. In all those cases, the noun was plural and so the apostrophe should be after the s. The apostrophe is also missed out of "four months' travel" (you wouldn't say "one month travel" but "one month's travel").

Then there's the almost completely consistent use of "affect" where it should be "effect" (both the verb and noun versions). There's also "poured" for "pored" in one place. "Laying" for "lying" may just be part of the voice of the first-person narrator, though I suspect it's another error by the author.

A number of sentences also change grammatical direction or tense partway through, there are missing minor words like "of" occasionally, and there are several dangling participles ("A professional dancer, I had first set eyes on Tarsha..." - where Tarsha, not the speaker, is the dancer).

It's not like there's an error on every page. I marked about 40 (some of them the same ones repeated), and this is a long book. With very rare exceptions, commas are in the right place, too. But there are enough errors that I found them annoying and distracting from the story.

The story itself is a classic piece of sword-and-sorcery, in which a rogue, accompanied reluctantly by a fighter, goes on a quest to steal an object desired by a wizard. There's the old "I've poisoned you and you have to come back to me for the antidote" trope. The hero collects an accidental, troubling, but highly useful superpower seemingly at random in the course of the adventure.

Does it rise above the tropes? It does, though not all that high at times, and there are a couple of tropes that troubled me more, the ones around the female characters. We have three: The selfish and mercenary seducer/whore/betrayer; the Woman in a Refrigerator, who exists only as a male character's motivation; and the mute (the male protagonist observes that at least she doesn't chatter like other women) who is always crying, devoted to the protagonist for no obvious reason, and annoyingly dependent, though she is surprisingly, and indeed unexplainedly, competent with a crossbow at a couple of moments when that's useful. I'm aware that the author is herself a woman, but these are not promising female characters, to me. In fact, they're a worry. This lost an otherwise enjoyable book its fourth star from me.

The protagonist/narrator is a rogue, and so we expect him not to necessarily be a nice guy (though he tries not to kill people if he can help it). His desire not to become emotionally entangled is understandable, and he protests too much of not caring, so we suspect that he cares more than he lets on... though sometimes it does actually seem like he doesn't care, that the act isn't an act, and at those moments he isn't a very likeable character and I, in turn, don't care quite as much what happens to him.

What does happen to him involves a lot of pain and suffering, as is, again, usual for this type of character in this type of book. When that happens to Locke Lamora, or even Eli Monpress, it means something. Here, it's just another trope.

Leah Speller says

What an adventure!! From the very beginning to the very end! I loved the main character, Crow. He had a way about him that matched his monicker. Because of this, I fell in love with this character immediately. His actions, the way he thought about his next move and what he thought about those chasing him made me laugh. Because of this, I was caught in the story hook, line, and sinker. I could not wait to find out what was going to happen and how he was going to get his big payback.

Robin has told this story so well. It makes me feel like I opened the door was grabbed by the neck to sit down in the most luxurious chair before a fire to sit as long as I wanted. Needless to say, I think I sat on the edge of the seat more than curled up in it because the adventure was so stunning. The descriptions so real I

felt every part of it. As much as I would like to tell you I won't because it is your adventure waiting to read not to read it here. This is just to let you know it was a good book and worth your time.

Technically I will say there were a couple of sentences that were a bit weird structurally but I can't remember where they were. There wasn't that many, though you might want to go through to see about fixing them.

I loved all the characters and how each had a part of the story line that weaved into one great story totally worth reading. This will be one that I will return to again and again. Though I will say it was left with an opening...will there be more with Crow and Tanis?

I was provided with a complimentary copy of this book, through Reading Deals, so I could give an honest review.

Jan farnworth says

As the Crow Flies is a solid, entertaining epic fantasy. It hits all the right notes at exactly the right time. I can easily recommend this book to anyone who likes fantasy mixed with comedy, tragedy, magic, dangerous heists and, yes, a dragon. The first-person feel of this book totally fits and is exactly what you need when you want a fun, light read.

The whole time you are turning the pages just to see what blundering accident or adventure will befall Tanris, Crow, Girl and Not an Egg. You are left at the end of the book hoping that Robin will continue the story and answer a few of the questions, which is exactly the way I like it, because then I can look forward to more adventures -- at least I hope more adventures.

A.E. Marling says

If you love thieves, dragons, and thieves stealing dragons, then you may love As the Crow Flies. The story reminds me of Dresden Files by Jim Butcher in the sense that it's first-person fantasy, but author Robin Lythgoe takes us to another world where the master thief, Crow, is coerced to work alongside the law-man who has dogged him for years. Together they must steal a dragon egg for a wizard or see their loved ones perish. For Crow, "loved ones" of course refers primarily to himself.

Crow and the lawman must weather first each other, second a trek through dangerous lands and a haunted caves and into a temple guarded by blade, sorcery, and an upset dragon broodmother. The banter between the two enemies on their quest kept me smiling throughout the chapters. As we might expect, both men must grow to depend on each other, and Crow grows into a better (and more magical) person, despite his best efforts to stay a self-serving thief.

And let's not forget the thief part. I love a good cloak and purse-cutting dagger, and Crow delivers. He's armed with a silver tongue, sleeping dust, feet that'd make a cat feel ungainly, a razor mind, and a diploma for best-in-class at the school of fine thieving and infiltration (awarded by me). I've read about approximately a billion thieves and even played the vintage first-person-looter games Thief, but Crow still impressed me as a sterling example of skulduggery.

Kerry Alexander-Hall says

This tale commences with the protagonist, 'The Crow' narrating his own story as he sees it, with a supercilious attitude to his life and his situation. The fast paced action springs to life as Crow tries to escape from his latest bout of thievery. Not the smartest person to steal from, a notorious Wizard that is masquerading as the mysterious Baron Duzayan. But, the things men do for love, you see, they must show their metal and build bridges, thinking this is how to win loves heart. In this case it lands the Crow in a compromising and deadly position whereby he must work for this Baron and take on a perilous journey with his nemesis Tanris. A strict no nonsense military man that is also tangled in this sticky web. Tanris has been trying for years to capture the elusive crow. He is the only blemish on his near perfect military record and will do anything to wipe this slate clean.

The journey is full of surprises and entanglements which leads to the introduction of many support characters. These consist of sorcerers, ancient ghosts from the past, the wise but foolish sidekicks, the young innocent, the hypocrite, the religious fanatics, the followers, the common enemy and the cannon fodder. This enables scenes with the usual magic, mayhem, mythical creature's, unanswered questions and fears, displays of vulnerabilities, weaknesses and strengths of character. There are demonstrations of purity of goodness and the other end of the spectrum of humanity. Great action sequences secrete themselves throughout the story, where usually the hero ends up the worse for wear.

There is the main plot that of the crow and Tanris journey, but woven into this is the subplot of the Baron Duzayan's mystery. The story line has a familiar tone to it, orphan boy raised on the streets, a loveable rogue, takes on a task over his head, chased by the hard line military man, but this is where it stops. The plot then diverts to uniqueness and originality in thought, it is both refreshing and stimulating to the mind. The puzzles are intriguing as the reader is fed bread crumbs throughout, keeping you turning the pages in anticipation and wonder. Believability, well, that is a fine line, escapism in purpose and intent? This reader reserves judgement on this, after all it is fantasy.

There is equal balance between plots and the plethora of characters where they are infused into a world that is rich and inviting for the reader to explore. The introduction of the self narrating was handled expertly and then seamlessly throughout the story it transfers from narrative to descriptive to conversational writing styles in no particular order. The expert word building and sentence structure allowed for the styles to blend so well, there are enough voice, tone and delivery differences within each of the characters to allow for delineation.

The main characters Crow and his inner circle/team would grow over the journey into well rounded three dimensional characters. However the protagonist is a contradiction to this thought. Although, yes he matured, learnt some harsh lessons, started growing a conscience, found friendship and perhaps love, there was his one trait that remained static, that of relieving everyone of their possessions if it suited his needs. This innate need of this drove this reader to distraction at times.

The intellectual, emotional and aesthetic qualities of the writers' style allowed for great flow and rhythm for this story, where time rich bantering between the main characters, infused humour and wit with some laugh out loud moments. This reader loved the simplicity of the support characters names, i.e. Girl, Cat and Not an egg. The last one still has this reader shaking her head in disbelief, and as Tanris discussed, it is embarrassing for a baby male dragon to be known as Egg! The characters all maintained their likeability

especially as friendships grew, first out of necessity, then from respect and finally from compassion, warmth and love. The journey within this book showed human failure with social and moral issues, at times mirroring today's plights.

It was easy to be drawn in and feel part of the story not just an observer. Well written, very enjoyable and waiting for the next adventure of the crow and his trusty sidekicks.

Kristie Kiessling says

An excellent, epic read! Lythgoe's world building excites. Her attention to detail is spot on. This tale is full of magic and mythical creatures sure to intrigue and delight. There is just enough mystery to engage the audience and keep pages turning until the satisfying end. The action is fast-paced, the characters believable to a wonderful degree.

Crow is so arrogant and sometimes annoying! I didn't like him at first, but I was captured by the story and his supporting, well rounded cohorts (especially Tanris). Once their journey was underway, I was hooked, eager to see how men at such odds, at the opposite ends of the law - and occasionally at one another's throats - could work together to a common end.

As for the bad guy, he proves time and again that he is no cheap villain. He is absolutely the wrong man to steal from!

As the Crow Flies serves up action and adventure, wit and wizardry. I would love to see a sequel, but whatever she writes about, I can't wait for Lythgoe's next book. I hope it will be soon!

C.M. Lance says

An excellent book. Fans of Jonathon Stroud's Bartemeus or Lois McMaster Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan will love Crow. He's a witty, confident, competent scoundrel. His companions, although unwanted by Crow-he works alone, add an extra texture to the story.

Patricia Reding says

AS THE CROW FLIES tells the tale of Crow, a witty, sarcastic thief who steals your heart from the earliest pages. Truly, there are so many things to love about *As the Crow Flies*, that it is hard to know where to begin.

The author's characters are neatly drawn and are given quirks and manners of speech that are unique and consistent. The reader will never forget that Crow is a thief, for if not his first, then his last thought in nearly every situation in which he finds himself, will be Crow's consideration of what he can do to "re-arrange" the goods of others. Likewise, Tanris, a man who for years had pursued Crow to bring Crow to justice, but who is now Crow's partner in a quest, is always the consummate law-and-order man. We get glimpses into his

personal life from time to time that make him more real and more loveable as events unfold.

I note that *As the Crow Flies* is told in first-person. I must say that I've rarely read a story told from a single character's perspective that didn't leave me aware of that fact all the while—but Robin made it seem effortless and it was, throughout, seamless, consistent and fun!

One of the things I liked best about *As the Crow Flies*, was the author's wit. Robin is quick! From the opening scene when Crow refers to the wife of the target of his intended theft in the same manner in which does her husband ("Your turn, Darling," Crow says as he prepares to tie her up) to the last when Crow realizes that his scathing look at Tanris did not turn Tanris to ashes ("but rather produced a curious noise I realized was laughter"), the author kept me laughing.

All that said—here is my favorite thing about *As the Crow Flies*: it has to do with voice. Have you ever heard an old movie running on your television in the background and you suddenly said, "I know who that is! That's. . .that's. . .that's. . .," and you search your memory for where it is you had heard the voice before. Or, it happened to me when I took my son to NYC some years ago. We picked up last minute tickets for *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* with John Lithgow, and Leo Norbert Butz (and laughed until we were sick)! When the female lead first entered the stage and spoke, my head jerked up! The voice was so distinct. There was no mistaking who she was or where I had heard that voice before. "That's Sherie Rene Scott!" I gasped to my son. "I didn't know she was going to be in this! I saw her as Princess Amneris in *Aida*! She's fabulous!" Well, I tell this story because voices often seem to blend in with others—but once in awhile one comes along that has a unique resonance, a startling clarity, a rhythmic musicality—or something—that makes it stand out from amongst the crowd. It is a rare thing—but now and again, an author will come along with a voice that you think you will never mistake for another. This is what Lythgoe has—voice. It comes from a choice of playful words and phrases, like "the steady rising of the sun was making my hiding place less and less 'hidey' by the moment," or "eyeballs and elixers and other wizardly knickknacks," or "careful, Crow, you fly a very fine line," or "victims of recent precipitation," or "there were personal belongings amongst the crowd to rearrange." The voice is also heard in Crow's way of naming things (Horse? Girl? Not-an-Egg?). Finally, there is unique voice in the character's internal thoughts, such as in "at least we could enjoy spring on the return trip—flowers budding, birds singing, poison creeping inexorably through one's system, and all of that," or "ending my life as a snack did not come high on my list of glorious ways to die" or when referring to his new hat that had already managed to become mangled, Crow notes that "only a few short minutes in my possession and already it was achieving character." Yes, Robin has voice—a voice I want to hear sing again.

Finally, I must say that I've read a fair number of indie-published works of late. This work stands out as one that any major publisher worth its salt ought to know what to do with—publish it and promote it.

Well done, Robin! Very, very well done, indeed!

(For more about Robin and my interview of her, see: <http://www.oathtaker.com/2/post/2013/....>)

Leeland Artra says

A twisted tail of a master thief's "retirement." Wizard, Guard, Cat, Horse, Girl, and Fun (for the reader) poor Crow. I love playing hyper intelligent thieves in video games and role playing games. And Crow, the novels 'hero' is just such a character, at the pinnacle of his career. Just as he is ready to retire into a life of luxury

well earned everything goes sideways. Wizards, ghosts, arch-rival detective/guard/soldier, cats, horses, rain, and horribly annoying events spin out of his control. The end is just as surprising a twist of fate as the events Crow is tossed into by the very gods that must love him.
