



# The Hero

*Jem Matzan*

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## **The Hero** Jem Matzan

The Hero is a work of impressionist speculative fiction set in a desolate, post-feudal civilization. When the charismatic leader of a merchant guard crew is killed in a senseless accident, his designated replacement decides to fulfill a promise to the late Captain by quitting the crew and finding his surviving relatives in a remote village. Instead of a quaint valley settlement, the new Captain finds a decaying town on the verge of collapse, an old landlord who appears to welcome its decline, and a thriving stronghold of highwaymen fresh from murdering what remained of the merchant guard crew. As the valley's mysteries unwind and the tension escalates, the Captain's mental condition begins to deteriorate as almost-forgotten memories begin to connect with horrible realities.

## **The Hero Details**

Date : Published January 25th 2013 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (first published March 1st 2002)

ISBN : 9781482026467

Author : Jem Matzan

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Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Mystery

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## From Reader Review The Hero for online ebook

### Lili says

\*I received this book for free through Goodreads First Read and I am reviewing it after giving it a thorough reading.\*

This book has some great ideas. I have often wanted to read a fantasy (I say that because it is the genre I read the most of) novel where we see more of the protagonist's day to day, mundane, actions. An example would be the protagonist is on a journey and has to survive in a harsh, unfamiliar, climate...we do not just get their thoughts on how miserable it is, we get the details on why it is so miserable. This book certainly had this idea covered. We get to know every detail of 'The Captain's' life, actions, and thoughts. Sadly this was not as enjoyable as I had hoped. I found the pacing less than fantastic and at times had a very hard time convincing myself to slog through. I think the lack of chapters and clear breaking points did not help.

So that was the bad aspect of the book, The Hero is not all bad, in fact it succeeded at one thing very well. While this story is not 'fantastical' and our reluctant hero at times is a giant jerk, he is completely believable. His struggles with balancing morality with revenge, honor and hate, and wariness and trust, are easy to identify with. At times I really loathed our protagonist and thought that he, personally was boring (and let's face it, anyone who gives you that much detail about what he is doing starts to become boring, turns out little bits for the imagination to fill in make a protagonist more interesting)I found his journey fascinating.

There are some things about the plot that I feel don't really make much sense. I feel either the plot should be about the war against the bandits -or- the mystery of the green stones and his connection to them. Mixing them up just left too many things unanswered (mainly with the green stone plot) and made it seem unnecessary.

I also feel that perhaps more detail fleshing out the side characters would have made the story a little more enjoyable. They all felt like window dressing and for the most part bored me.

Overall, I am glad I read The Hero, it was something new and at times fairly interesting!

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### Rosalie Stanton says

A few thoughts – none specifically categorized. Overall, while this isn't a genre I normally read, I enjoyed it. The story was compelling and left unanswered questions, which any story like this, IMO, should do. And since we don't have an unbiased narrator, the nature of having unanswered questions fit well into framework of the narrative.

There is a wide cast of characters, but being that I read this via the Audible edition, even when the specific characters weren't named, it was very easy to follow. Matzan did a very good job developing each voice, giving them specific, definable characteristics.

Regarding the ending thoughts: the lack of defined setting for the story, as well as the lack of name and ethnicity for the Captain was, to me, established immediately as authorial intent, and I likened it to the unnamed protagonist from du Maurier's Rebecca. That said, I somewhat surprised to learn Matzan intended

to the character to be gender neutral, and I feel this is the one thing area where authorial intent didn't translate to audio. At the same time, there is no way to get around this. Either Matzan performs a female voice or a male one. Since the voice he selected for the Captain was male, or at least not audibly defined as ambiguous, I feel the reader/listener skips the part where they can fill in the blank. That part of the character construct I didn't get, but I find it very interesting, and I'd like to think it'd be more obvious were I reading the book traditionally rather than listening to it.

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### **Maria Kiguthi says**

My favorite thing about this book is "The Hero" is just as confused about his motivations as I am about his motivation. Most of the time he tried to base his decisions by what is morally the most correct, but has regrets. That was very easy for me to relate with. I received a copy through Goodreads First Reads.

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### **Angel says**

I got this book through a Goodreads giveaway. I really enjoyed this book. It left some things hanging for me. I don't understand a few things about this book. I just finished it so I have to digest it, I think. I really did like it, even though there were some inconsistency. At one point he says that he has no sword and the next minute he is unsheathing his sword, then he was back to having no sword again. I liked the character very much. He was an honest and good man with values. I guess I have to continue to think about this. I do recommend it. I only gave it 4 stars because I don't get some parts of it. That could just be me though. I really did like the Captain. A good read.

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### **Nancy says**

First let me say that the edition I am reviewing is a trade paperback but with the above cover.

I liked this story very much. Was it a grand epic? No. I just found it to be a good story with strong characterizations and a solid plot.

Our Hero (no name is ever given, from what I understand this is why the author changed the byline to Anonymous to emphasize this fact) is a reluctant hero. His quest was begun on the behest of another. The Captain, as he is known throughout the book, has to deal with many psychological issues one of which seems to be his underlying suicidal goals.

I liked this character very much. The author draws a clear picture of who the Captain is. We are shown his mental struggles, how they came about and how he needs to deal with them.

The story itself although set in what is assumed is a 'medieval' time, deviates from the classic Tolkenesque fantasy novels. There are no goblins, dwarves, elves, etc. You have normal people trying to make do with the present situation of their lives. You do have a wizard but he doesn't do any spells, he is more of a wise man.

It is this normalcy that I was drawn to. There are no clear cut good guys or bad guys, even our Hero realizes

he has killed many people in his quest and questions the morality of it. This empathy is a strong theme in the novel which makes it more believable. Kudos to the author on this point.

This is a good story written in modern language. Very enjoyable.

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### **Steve Caldwell says**

This is an interesting tale, told from the perspective of a caravan guard who calls it quits after his captain dies in a silly accident, and goes on to deal with the bandits his Captain was quitting the company to go deal with. I thought it started well, with a build up for the main character, and his story and his quest are interesting. Lots of action, engaging characters, and an interesting world help sell the story. Jem Matzan does a great job narrating, really setting each character apart, moving the story right along.

This audiobook was provided by the author, narrator, or publisher at no cost in exchange for an unbiased review courtesy of AudiobookBlast dot com.

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### **Pat says**

Very well-written story of a flawed (or shall we say normal) man who is just trying to honor his best friend and finds himself in the middle of a war. The author breaks many of the conventions of the fantasy genre, which makes the story even more interesting. The end result is a book that will haunt me for a while. I received a complimentary copy of this book in order to review it.

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### **Tamra LeValley says**

Review to be revised!

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### **Deborah says**

This audio book started out a little slow but then the action picked up and became very interesting. The author is also the narrator and did an excellent job on the voices. There is an extra bit after the end where the author explains his process for choosing the voices.

"This audiobook was provided by the author, narrator, or publisher at no cost in exchange for an unbiased review courtesy of AudiobookBlast dot com."

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### **April says**

This was a wonderful story of a character who was so average and flawed that it was easy to connect with

him on an emotional level. He dealt with emotions and concerns that most real people would go through in his position. Worry that he isn't good enough or strong enough to complete the task at hand and survive is just the tip of the iceberg.

Not knowing the "Captain's" name throughout the book—even though I didn't even notice that until it was pointed out at the end of the book—was a wonderful move on the author's part. I felt like it solidified the idea that anyone can become a hero and that heroes can come from the most unexpected circumstances. Additionally, I enjoyed the fact that this book occurred in real time rather than an expected timeline. For example, the events didn't always follow a particular path because obstacles arose that had to be dealt with immediately. I appreciated this because it felt real, just as the main character did.

The lack of chapters.....I am still not sure how I feel about this. On one level, I loved it because it often kept me reading and reading and reading simply because no spot felt like a good spot to take a break. However, I hated it on another level for the exact same reason. Plus, I think chapters are just so expected that it threw my brain for a loop not to have them. Honestly, the only thing that really bothered me about the book was that at one point the hero didn't have a sword, then he suddenly did, and then suddenly he didn't again. It was very confusing when he pulled out a sword just after the discussion about him not having one. I actually went back to re-read things thinking I had missed something.

In the end, I enjoyed the real, honest look at a flawed character who keeps surviving and pushing forward. I also appreciated the fact that some things were left open so that the reader could interpret them in their own way. Additionally, the book didn't really wrap up certain loose ends so you could imagine what you thought happened to certain characters. But my favorite thing about the book was that it provided an excellent look at the gray area between good and bad and how small decisions could make a huge impact. Who was truly good and who was truly bad and why? What if one person made one slightly different choice? I love that the book makes the reader question all of those things in a real way.

\*\*\*\*I received a free copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.\*\*\*

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## **Lindsay says**

This review is written for the original, first edition of the book, published in 2002. I know Mr. Matzan has revamped, refreshed, and republished this story more recently (2013, I believe) and I'm very interested to read that version; I'm curious to know what he saw fit to change. This post by the author gives me an idea of what to expect, and I must say the blurbs for the two editions share only a little similarity.

This story was quite enjoyable from start to finish in spite of a number of small grievances I had with it. There were times when the prose seemed a little underdeveloped, and some of the comedic elements only served to jar me out of the story, but the whole thing was so full of bursting of philosophical gems that I picked it up again and again in spite of my mild annoyance.

It was a wonderful study of the interconnectedness of people, places, intentions, and actions as well. The plot twists were twisty, indeed, and tied every element of the story (and I mean every element) together into one brightly woven narrative that somehow managed to work very well. I did feel that some of the epiphanies, especially towards the end, were rather sudden and could have used a bit more lead-in and prior development, but I was still impressed by the intricacy of the plot.

All that being said, I admire the author for deciding to pick up an old project and do it even greater justice. All of the minor flaws I've pointed out are ones that can certainly be improved or fixed by a writer who's willing to grow and change and admit to it. The characters, premise, plot, and vision that make up the story were well-concieved and, if not as solidly built as they could have been, are definitely worth a second go-around.

I'm going to get my hands on a copy of the second publication; the first one was certainly worth a read and I'm highly anticipating the author's second attempt at a story all about the importance of not giving up.

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### **Christa Witfoth says**

The story started out a bit slow, but ended up being a great fantasy story.

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### **Niffer says**

I received this book as a Goodreads first reads giveaway.

I found this book a little hard to get into and there were some glaring inconsistencies (the most obvious being the main character explaining that he did not have a sword and then in the next paragraph he pulled one out), and the fantasy/mystery of the green crystals really kind of detracted from the storyline. But overall it was a solid story and the final battle was well thought out and reasonably realistic.

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### **One-Click says**

Audiobook

Narration - Jem Matzan - Really Good! Jem is the Author/Narrator of this book and he's terrific! So many excellent character voices and I honestly just love his narration voice. Exceptional to listen to!

The story is really an interesting blend of things. As I was looking for shelves to put it on, I thought it could be a bit sci-fi, a bit mystery, a bit paranormal, a bit historical fiction, a bit dystopian or, it could be none of these. A lot of things are left to the imagination without you even realizing it. I didn't feel as if the story was missing anything, but then when I try to encapsulate what I just experienced, I realized that a lot of things were really left open to interpretation.

It's the story of the Captain, or rather a reluctant Captain who is named the replacement after a freak accident kills their guard crew leader. He is charged with burying his precesessor and wants nothing to do with becoming the new Captain. He only wants to notify his family of what happened and return his belongings to them, but that's easier said than done. It turns into quite an adventure - or a mystery - or a dangerous quest...really all of the above.

Really enjoyed it! Loved the narration. Really talented Author and Narrator!

*I received a copy of this audiobook free of charge from audiobookblast in exchange for an unbiased review.*

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## **zjakkeliën says**

I got interested in this book because of this post by the author. I figured, after all these comments he makes about other books, this book must be fantastic! Partly, I wanted to like it, on the other hand my expectations were high. I guess both things influenced my opinion...

I'm not unequivocally positive about this book. I think the author has some nice ideas (see the post mentioned above). And the story was not bad at all. Still, I had some trouble with it. Every time I started reading it, I was surprised that it was not as bad as it had gotten in my mind, yet after reading a while, I started getting fed up with it. So what was the problem? Since I wanted to write something sensible in this review, you can imagine that I gave it some thought. In the end I came to the conclusion that it was two things: 1) the book is too chaotic for me and 2) the lack of chapters.

As to the chaos, the protagonist was constantly walking around, talking to this person, getting attacked by that bandit, or fighting with bears. There seemed to be no line to the story. I think this was probably done on purpose. One of the author's peeves (if I understand his post correctly) seems to be the lack of realism in other books. I imagine his argument would be that there is no real line to life either. And I suppose he would be right about that. On the other hand, this is not life I'm talking about, it's a book. And it so happens that books are better to read if they have a line to them. The result was my getting fed up if I read too much at one time: I could take the chaos in little bits, but not in large chunks. Which leads me to the second point: the lack of chapters.

I found this lack of chapters really annoying. It's not so bad while you're reading, but it is inconvenient when you want to stop reading. Chapters make a good stopping point. Moreover, in an ebook you can easily find where they are, so you know how many pages you still have to go until you reach the end of the chapter. On this you can base your decision whether to keep reading or find an earlier stopping point. In **The hero**, there are no chapters. There were a few breaks, but you didn't know where they were beforehand. So every time I had enough of the chaos, I started looking for a convenient place to stop the story, but I couldn't find one. Because of that I read on too long, got an overdose of chaos, finally stopped at an inappropriate place, became reluctant to pick up the book again, and then was confused by the time I did pick it up, since I hadn't stopped at a natural stopping point.

Apart from this, I didn't think the story was bad. Although I didn't entirely like the way it was told (see above), and there were some little glitches, I do like the idea of it. There is a lot about what it means to be a hero. Unfortunately, there is a thing in the story (I'll put it in a spoiler: (view spoiler)) that causes the main character to have limited depth. On the other hand, for the story he doesn't really need it.

I think **The Hero** was a nice experiment based on a good idea, that had a few glitches. Some of the ideas the author had (see the link to his post above) probably worked well, but I find it difficult to comment on them, since, if they really work well, you don't notice them. Like the fact that there is not much description of how a person looks. I guess there wasn't? But I'm not sure, because the whole idea of this is not to distract from the story, which I suppose it didn't, since I didn't notice it... So hereby my compliments for the things I didn't notice...

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