



The Knife

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A powerful, dark, and morally provocative debut novel about a U.S. Special Forces unit operating in the Middle East, written by a former soldier—No Easy Day meets Redeployment...

It's hot and getting hotter this summer in Afghanipakiraqistan—the preferred name for the ambiguous stretch of the world where the U.S. Special Forces operate with little outside attention. Team Leader Dutch Shaw is missing his late grandmother. She was the last link he had to civilian life, to any kind of world of innocence.

But there's no time to mourn. After two helicopters in a sister squadron are shot down, Shaw and his team know that they're going to be spun up and sent back in, deep into insurgent territory, where a mysterious new organization called Al Ayeelaa has been attracting high-value targets from across the region. As Shaw and his men fight their way closer to the source, mission by mission, they begin to realize that their way may have been prepared for them in advance, and not by a welcoming host.

The Knife is a debut novel of intense authenticity by a former soldier in a United States Special Operations Command direct-action team. As scenes of horseshoes and horseplay cut to dim Ambien-soaked trips in helicopters and beyond, Ritchell's story takes us deep beneath the testosterone-laced patter into the lonelier, more ambivalent world of military life in the Middle East. The result is a fast-paced journey into darkness; a quintessential novel of the American wars of the twenty-first century.

The Knife Details

Date : Published February 5th 2015 by Blue Rider Press (first published February 1st 2015)

ISBN : 9780399173400

Author : Ross Ritchell

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From Reader Review The Knife for online ebook

Joseph says

I was disappointed at the level of “animal” it made out the soldiers. Some was funny some was disturbing. The book otherwise was OK

Amie's Book Reviews says

THE KNIFE

By: Ross Ritchell

Genre: Fiction, Military Fiction, Action Thriller

Length: 272 pages

Published by: Blue Rider Press, a division of Penguin Group USA

Publication Date: February 2015

Rating: 5 out of 5 Stars ?????

* I received a free paperback ARC of this book through the Goodreads Giveaway program.

Dutch Shaw had been raised by his grandparents since toddlerhood. Shaw's grandfather has been gone for eight years but he still had his grandmother. Unfortunately his last living relative, his beloved grandmother has recently died. She was his sole link to the civilian world; a world not defined by war.

Shaw is the leader of a team of U.S. Special Ops forces. They are deployed to what they refer to as "Afghanipakiraqistan." A U.S. squadron has just lost two helicopters full of soldiers so Shaw's team has been sent to replace them.

A new terror threat has emerged. A group calling themselves al-Ayeelaa have been attacking U.S. forces with alarming regularity and with devastating consequences. It is up to Shaw's team to hunt them down and eliminate this very deadly group of insurgents.

The author of this book, "Ross Ritchell, is a former soldier in a United States Special Operations Command direct action team conducting classified operations in the Middle East." Because of his unique and very real war experience his writing comes across as terrifyingly realistic and incredibly vivid. This former soldier may have had a gift for war, but as readers will inevitably discover, he also has a gift for storytelling.

In typical modern day war thrillers authors tend to focus on one man who single-handedly is able to save the world. In 'The Knife' the author instead focuses on the team. This is much more realistic. Modern day military operations are complex and involve many different people all working together towards a single objective.

This book clearly illustrates how it is that men who have little or nothing in common and who come from different cities and states can become closer than brothers. The bonds these men form are unique and are forged from shared experiences, patriotism and shared objectives that the men would be unable and unwilling to share with their civilian counterparts.

This book brings to life the reality that Special Ops forces have faced in their war on terror. These Special Operations soldiers are considered THE KNIFE of the U.S. Military.

THE KNIFE is a MUST READ for everyone. Not only is it an interesting and thrilling military tale, it is an intriguing look into human nature, both the dark side and the lighter side.

There are incidents that occur in the book that have the distinct ring of authenticity. Incidents that may be portrayed in the media one way are described from the soldier's viewpoint. This may very well change the perspective of how the reader views and reacts to future media reports.

The glossary included at the back of the book will prove interesting and informative for readers who may not necessarily speak "military".

The fact that this is Ross Ritchell's debut novel is surprising due to the novel's depth and it's vivid and realistic characters. Readers will find themselves both riveted and invested in Shaw and his team. Readers will root for them even though they are flawed and all too human. The ability to portray characters as flawed yet still have them come across as unique and compelling takes a talented author. Ross Ritchell has done just that.

Readers may find that some of the scenes in this book disturb them. If this were a television show or a movie it would come with the label "Viewer Discretion Advised." But these scenes are important and will force the reader to question what they thought they knew about the war on terror. They may even change the reader's perspective. THE KNIFE allows the reader to see military operations from the point of view of the soldiers with their boots on the ground.

I give this book a rating of 5 out of 5 stars and I look forward to reading more books by this author in the future.

To learn more about this author visit: <https://www.facebook.com/BlueRiderPre...> or <https://www.goodreads.com/author/show...>

For more book reviews visit my blog at <http://amiesbookreviews.wordpress.com>

Twobchelm says

A first hand experience of soldiers and the closeness they share through the many dangers they face. The writing was very descriptive and told the true story of what the men in special services endure.

Rene Denfeld says

This is one of those novels that should have been a hit. Ross Ritchell writes what he knows, and what he knows is the madness of war. But Ritchell goes deeper into the questions of what modern America has made of masculinity. The entire novel sings with authenticity.

Eric Kruger says

This book reads very much like a first novel, but it's fast-paced and compelling. At its best, it reminds a little bit of McCarthy's "Blood Meridian"-- oddly haunting visual description and a very 'hands-off' approach to providing insight into the thoughts and motivations of its characters. Ritchell's spec ops team members are far more likable than Glanton's gang, sometimes to the detriment of the story (Ritchell gets clumsy sometimes in wanting you to like his guys). I can see why people complain about the "grittiness" of this book; quite a bit of time is dedicated to the locker room camaraderie of the characters and all of the cursing and gross-out humor that goes along with it.

But all of that is easy to forgive. On the one hand, I get the sense that these men bear a very strong resemblance to men Ritchell knew (and probably mourned) during his own Special Operations experience. The title of the book is shown to be a metaphor for what these teams are-- a human weapon drawn out to strike quickly. They are necessary, but never in a position to question the morality, strategy, or even sense of their missions. Their unique position: to be nothing but a weapon, but also to be human, is drawn starkly and unapologetically. I wonder about Ritchell as writer. I thought of Harper Lee when I was finished with this one. Lee never wrote again after "To Kill a Mockingbird." She really wasn't a great writer so much as she had a story to tell, and it resonated with a lot of people. I know Ritchell is writing again, but I wonder if he told his story with this one. Either way, I'm very glad I read it.

Mary Lowry says

I wish there were more than five stars! Riveting novel about special ops by former Army Ranger. I agree with the Chicago Tribune that his is a "literary masterpiece."

Matthew Jackson says

Beginning with one of the most critical aspects of any book - the writing here simply is not very good. Ritchell is not particularly creative with either language or descriptions, and this average (at best) writing always keeps the reader a step back from the story, making it more difficult to 'temporarily suspend disbelief' and live the story with the characters. The construction of the book also lacks - the first chapter was 100 pages, which then leads into a 10 page second chapter. An awkwardly put together book. There were also errors in spelling and editing, at least in the ARC.

As far as the story goes, it (along with the style) felt forced and unnatural. To me, as reader and critic and skeptic, it felt far too much like a mediocre attempt to capitalize on the current popularity of Middle East fighting/war stories. With the background of the author (former Ranger with an MFA in creative writing), some of the glaring issues with the story were surprising to me - for instance, the terrorist group featured in

the story won't claim responsibility for any of their attacks, which, for the specific type of group detailed, is simply not realistic. These types of lapses (one of my single biggest frustrations was the terribly inconsistent use of military vernacular - language isn't consistent in the book, and not even consistent for individual characters) makes the book that much harder to enjoy.

The characters are flat and uninteresting. For a 'war' story to work, the reader has to care about the people, otherwise the potential buildup of anticipation and emotion falls flat. We learn about the men in this team, but we never get to know them.

With all of that said, looking just at the plot of what happens, that part of the book was interesting (believe it or not). The end was the best part of the book by far. The Knife ended like all war books should end, from the final events to the character's thoughts about their lives and role in the world. The final acknowledgements are also worth the moment it takes to read the single page.

All in all, I felt like this book was not well done, and it didn't work for me on any level.

1.5 star

<http://www.matthewejackson.com/book-r...>

George Lichman says

A knife is a tool: it cuts things. Like all tools, it can be used for good and bad. Sometimes, bad things can happen when it's being used for good. The nature of a tool.

The knife that is the tool being used in *The Knife*, the debut novel by Ross Ritchell, is a five man special operation force in Afghanistan. They are a precision team that makes surgical strikes, cutting away at the enemy. The team is led by Shaw, on his tenth deployment, and includes Massey, Hagan, Delonna, and Cooke. They're are likable young men that, except for being drawn together by war, would probably never have become friends, never even met.

The novel is an account of the team and their work. Told in the third person, the prose is both poetic at times: Besides someone having an interesting mustache or getting whacked in their underwear, the kills weren't worth much of a second thought. Holding a weapon? Two in the chest. Strapped with a vest? Two in the head. If he'd wait a second longer it'd be him on the floor leaving into the ground, or one of his buddies.

Maybe a building full of people. It was work. Living over life, way of the knife.

and remarkably objective and unemotional at others:

They got all four of the Pups...Lion1 was upstairs in bed with is wife, an AK loaded and lying between them. He got two shots off on Ohio before Mike killed him, and then the wife picked up the rifle and Mike had to put two through her middle. It happened fast."

The cadence is slow and dark, whether telling about one of their operations, their constant training, or Hagan's sexual proclivity. It is not bogged down with explanations for the military slang and acronyms throughout the book. (A glossary at the end will help ease confusion if necessary.)

There is depth and development of characters, but it seems to come from dialogue:

"Sky's pretty," Hagan Said. He spat over the lip of the roof. "Too bad the rest of the county is such shit." It's not shit, Hog," Massey said. "Dumbass cell leaders and pricks just crap all over it and then we come over and piss on it some more and then everyone wonders why it's such a shit country. It's not...It's a place full of people that wipe their assess with the land for God, oil, or country--whatever the fuck--and wonder why it

stinks so bad. The land is beautiful. We're shit." He shook his head. "I'd want to be buried in a country this beautiful."

That the story is told objectively does not mean that readers will not feel emotion, they will, very powerful ones that are certain to include laughter, tears, love, disgust, and everything else that one might expect when spending time in a war zone with five soldiers. But the emotions will be a reaction, raw and powerful, originating from within the reader, not prescribed by the author.

Many war novels are abstract, filled with symbolism to be interpreted by every reader, by inner narratives that share the struggles of combat and reactions to it. That *The Knife* is so simply told is what makes it more powerful and is what sets it apart from many of the others.

If it's true that authors write what they know, then Mr. Ritchell knows more about war, death, and killing than any man should. Thank you for sharing it.

Minty McBunny says

All exposition, no plot. Not my bag.

I'm married to an ex-SpecOps guy, so I have as good a grasp as anyone who hasn't been there on what middle eastern combat was like. I feel that often these books portray it in almost a voyeuristic way, particularly the camaraderie and male friendship under pressure. I am sure writing novels like these is cathartic for ex-military members but to me the experience of reading about it doesn't feel right save in a few exceptional books. It's not glamorized exactly, but it just feels a little too idealized.

I only picked this up because it seemed to promise a plot, some tension and mystery. But over halfway through the book when almost nothing had happened but I'd learned more than I cared to about each squadron members' personality, laid out in loving detail over 120 pages, I gave up.

Melinda says

A compelling view into relationships during wartime. The emotional bond shared between Special Ops team. Intimate side of this elite group explored in both professional and personal avenues. The ramifications their position causes, the aftermath, the risk, questions of morality visited, innermost feelings presented in a raw and gritty fashion. They are their brothers keeper. Unforgettable read.

Asteropê says

I received a copy of this book from Penguin's First-to-Read program in exchange for an honest review.

This isn't the usual sort of book that I read, but I decided to take a risk and give it a try. I usually encounter the world of special forces in the form of romantic suspense (or action/thrillers), where the heroes are sexy, kick-ass and the job is more glamorous than not. This book was the total opposite of what I am used to, with its gritty, more realistic tone. The men of this book wouldn't be seen in the pages of a romance novel, with their slew of vices and often, less than attractive behavior, but that doesn't mean they're not heroes just the same. While I know this is fiction, I sensed the realism of the story and characters and so I decided to take it

all in and see where the story led me. As the story progressed, I found things rather compelling and it kept me reading. Some characters I liked more than others, but even the few that annoyed me (such as Hagan), I understood to had a role and served a purpose in the group and story. The book stays true to life, from the end to the beginning. For people that want to read a more realistic depiction of war and special forces, this would be a great book. I would say though to be prepared for a more gritty, crude (at times) and often darker tone, but then again, that's often what war is...it's not pretty and I think this book shows that well.

andrew orillion says

Tom Clancy meets Ernest Hemmingway. This was a really good book that said a lot by saying very little.

Hope says

Probably would be only a 50-page book if all of the references to genitals and going potty in a war zone were removed. So right away this is not for everybody. However, the crassness of the toilet humor juxtaposed with the novel's many beautiful metaphors and similes mirrors the ugliness inherent in fighting a war in a country whose physical beauty is being spoiled by conflict. There is profundity in the escapist joy of the men at their fraternity-level pranks as well as in some of their quiet, self-reflective moments. I think of this book as similar to a tough-guy brother who says something more honest, more vulnerable than he meant to during a night stargazing with you then swiftly resurrects his personal walls by punching you in the arm and calling you names. Ultimately, I delighted in being let in by the rough men who of US Special Operations who populated this slim novel.

Cal P. says

After I finished this book, I was left flipping back through it, turning the pages in my hands and rereading, reliving the pieces that brought me to the ending, which managed to surprise me, despite my every attempt to nail down the ultimate conclusion. There are so many little great moments, slivers that showcase poignant juxtapositions of brutality and humanity, indifference and brotherhood, humor and heartbreak. Together, they tell a story that is both hauntingly distant and intensely personal.

The comparison has been made before, but it was strikingly similar to "The Things They Carried," which remains one of my favorite novels. The prose is simple and effective, illustrating the bleakness and beauty of their surroundings, cutting to the core of every interaction with minimalistic but incredibly believable dialogue. Each of the five characters on the team is distinct and well developed. I can't understand how some people believe there's poor character development. They all have their little idiosyncrasies, odd bits that contrast with their profession and ultimately make them more endearing. Even the least-heard-from character, Cooke, has a few stand-out moments that aptly color an entire personality in a collective few paragraphs.

The pace moves swiftly, and though some action is skipped over and told in retrospect, I think it helps the novel overall. It isn't about who shoots whom, or which buildings explode and which don't. It's about what happens between the violence, the anticipation and the comedown, the moral quandaries they face together, the 5:00 AM musings as their boots strike the tarmac and the friendly trash talk as they stay sharp on the

range.

The book shines in its detail and its authenticity. There are a lot of undefined abbreviations, but the glossary in the book clarifies them all, and the lack of on-page explanation actually improves the readability of the text. Early on, there would be 5-6 explanations on a single page, which would bring the pace to a grinding halt were every term poured over. The early bits are fascinating, finding out how teams operate, delving into a world of grease, chaw, and lead headfirst as you're immersed in their day-to-day lives, from the harsh to the mundane to the disgustingly hilarious (thanks, Hagan).

Everything is understated here. Nothing is oversold, and some of the most intense parts feel detached and mechanical, only for the emotion to surface in the aftermath. It's a hard balance to strike, but it was absolutely nailed. Everything means something. It's one of the best books I've read in years. And at the end of it all, you're left with a hollow feeling that defies words and leaves you sitting in silence, thumbing back through the pages.

Raven Haired Girl says

A riveting and compelling read from the beginning.

The Knife examines the linkages of persons in a wartime setting. You are your brothers keeper as we experience in an intimate manner through a Special Operations team. An intimate portrayal of the lives, thoughts and fears of this elite group. The moral issues they wrestle with, the second guessing, regret and confidence in their actions, nightmares haunt them, memories sting. Yes, war is depicted in a brutal ugly fashion, however, the apex is the emotional bond these men share with one another, more than brotherhood, these men are family in the deepest sense. Their survival virtually in the others hands, their demise embedded in minds and hearts. A halting affecting glimpse into the heated toll required of these heroes, it is beautiful and horrifying, raw, presented with more realism than fiction. The emotion tangible, the reader will be lost in thought, the question of 'murder' floats in the air as both servicemen and civilian seek an answer. Memorable story in all its crude, gritty glory.

Find this and other reviews at <http://ravenhairedgirl.com>
