



Knight of Swords

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Winter 1944: northern Italy is a battlefield, with Communist partisans locked in vicious conflict with the forces of Mussolini's fascist Republic of Salò. Brookes, a wounded fugitive, finds shelter in an isolated and decaying castle in the mountains, home to a reclusive nobleman and his family. But as he recovers his strength, he discovers that the inhabitants of the castle are not quite what they seem; he also realizes that they have no intention of letting him leave.

Snowed in through the long winter, Brookes, the Barone, and his family are drawn into a complex game of power and seduction. And as the violent demands of the warring world outside the castle become ever more insistent, they face a final choice: a decision that will determine the living from the dead.

Knight of Swords is a gripping tale of identity and illusion, of games played for the highest stakes amid the devastation of war. At the heart of its enthralling mystery lies a timeless story: one of loyalty and betrayal, humanity and conflict, and the redemptive power of love.

Knight of Swords Details

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Author : Ian Breckon

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Nora says

The most surprising thing about the most surprising bit was that I found it to be the least surprising.

Lisa says

One of those books that has so many twists and turns you don't know what is real, who is real or what may happen next. Happening during the beginning of WWII.

Gabriel says

It was alright, didn't really blow me away. Read it all in one sitting, very quick, easy read, 2 or 3 stars

Melissa says

This was a decent book. A quick read, so I can't say too much bad about it. The twists were interesting. Although I feel like they were pretty obvious. I wasn't expecting a mystery, so I didn't know to be paying attention. But, once the family's history was discovered I thought to myself, "Duh!" I felt like there could have been more wrap-up with the main character. That'd be my only real complaint--I feel like the story just sort of ended.

Alicja says

rating: 3/5

A man is found wounded in the woods by a family hiding out in a castle in World War II torn Italy. Both the family and the man have a mysterious past, neither one wishes to share.

I don't typically read mysteries but overall the story seemed to move slowly and didn't have that suspenseful feeling that I expected. Frankly, at times I was bored. I figured out most of the family's secrets but was pleasantly surprised when I found out the wounded man's secrets which led to an awesome and completely brilliant ending. Unfortunately, the earlier 250 pages weren't as impressive.

Sarah says

As I've said before, mystery is not my genre as a rule. I'll read it from time to time, but it's rarely the section I seek out in the library/bookstore. That being said, the premise of this book - isolated/trapped people in an Italian castle during WWII - was interesting, so I grabbed it. Therefore, please take anything in this review with a grain of salt. If you are a mystery buff, you might feel very differently.

The first chapter or so was not ultra-engaging, but once the protagonist Brookes finds himself in the castle, things get interesting...for a while. After a while, there is a "game" being played and referenced, but it doesn't make any sense. Characters act with little to no logic - at least from my perspective. By the time the story approached the climax, I was grateful because it meant that the book was nearing its end.

There are a couple mysteries throughout this book: Who are the Barone and his family and why are they staying in this castle, so far from civilization? What really happened in Brooke's past? What are the strange lights on the other side of the valley and what does it have to do with contemporary Italian politics?

None of these mysteries are particularly grab-and-won't-let-go, but neither are they dull. I figured out the Barone's mystery about 50 pages into the book, and wasn't truly surprised with his "reveal". Brookes caught me off-guard, but the reveal didn't enrich the reading experience for me, either.

The final chapter, which reads like an epilogue more than another chapter, gave some finality to the storyline...I suppose.

I guess this book was just Okay. It wasn't truly satisfying in any meaningful way, but it wasn't a huge let-down, either.

Jane says

Seemed like a sort-of gothic at first--the mysterious castle and its equally strange inhabitants, but the novel really turned out to be a kind of espionage/mystery. Brookes was not quite what he seemed at first, nor was the family who occupied the castle and who took him in.

Set in Italy during the waning years of WWII and of fascism, a wounded partisan, the English Captain Brookes, is discovered in the woods, brought to the castle and treated for his wounds. He is told by his host, the Baron, never to show himself at the windows and that he can never leave the castle. What is the meaning of the light in one particular house in the village and the baron's family having to signal back each evening? The baron and family do not trust Brookes, nor he them. As the novel progresses, nothing is as it appears on the surface. This novel was very creepy, not horror, but atmospheric. We see the themes of trust [or mistrust]; loyalty; love; betrayal played out. I enjoyed the discussion of the tarot cards, especially of the Knight of Swords Reversed, which is also the title of the hardcover version of the book. The author set up the story well, then it did sag for a bit, the last third being really exciting and not what I thought it would be. It really was a page-turner. I didn't find much closure on Capt. Brookes's final fate; the novel fell down there.

Jo says

A wounded soldier wakes to find himself in an Italian castle with a Baron and his family. Is he their guest...or their prisoner? Some nice tension as the mystery unfolds and an ending that I did not see coming. This was better than I expected it to be.
