



## Back In Black

*John G. Hartness*

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In the second volume of The Black Knight Chronicles, vampire detectives Jimmy Black and Greg Knightwood investigate a series of assaults plaguing the alleys of Charlotte. Along the way they battle trolls, bigotry, fairies, dragons and small minds on the way to a knock-down battle royal inside a steel cage. The boys find themselves fighting evil in alleys, trolls in bars, dragons in FairyLand, and trying to scrub the sparkle off after a battle with vicious Fae in the hall of the Fairy Queen.

Yeah, really. All that and vampires, too.

This non-sparkly snarky vampire series has drawn favorable comparison to the works of Joss Whedon, Kevin Smith and Jim Butcher's Dresden Files.

Praise for Volume 1:

"The book was entertaining and laugh-out-loud funny from the first chapter where we're introduced to Jimmy in the clutches of a vampire hunter, until the end when the case is solved and Jimmy gets the girl. Sort of. " - L.C. Evans

"Hard Day's Knight Vol 1 written by John Hartness is a surprisingly refreshing take on the sudden interest in all things fang and blood sucking related. " - Syria Says

"But overall, this book was a fun, funny read. I could see it turned into a television series. It reminded me of a kind of Buffy the Vampire Slayer for men." - Julie Christensen.

This Special Edition ebook includes a preview of Dead Dwarves Don't Dance by Derek J. Canyon!

Also includes a preview of The Chosen by John G. Hartness

## **Back In Black Details**

Date : Published February 18th 2011

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Author : John G. Hartness

Format : Kindle Edition 210 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Paranormal, Vampires, Mystery

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## From Reader Review Back In Black for online ebook

### Dave Ricchiazzi says

This second entry into the series is more of the same. If you really liked the first one, you'll really like this. If you were lukewarm on this first one, the same feeling will likely result from this. I was lukewarm. The writing doesn't distract, but it's not superb either. The main character (Black) is again the least developed and interesting character in the series because the author eschews any growth to keep him cracking wise at every turn. Is it such a crime to have a main character know when to shut the fuck up? There are other ways to spark conflict or create tension rather than just everyone getting annoyed at the stupid stuff that comes out of Black's mouth. That's me probably expecting too much out of this though.

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### carol. says

From the blog at <https://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2015/...>

There are times when a making a healthy, fresh meal seems like too much work, times when munching on white cheddar popcorn and enjoying a drink seems like an acceptable substitute for a meal. It isn't in the long run, of course, but as an occasional treat it works. The Black Knight Chronicles are the popcorn in the UF world. To me, Hartness managed the tricky feat of creating the tension a mystery requires without negating the seriousness of the situation for the victims.

Best friends James Black and Greg Knightwood IV are vampires making their living (so to speak) as private investigators. There's been a series of seeming hate crimes in North Carolina where six gay men have been found badly beaten. Details surrounding the scenes lead Detective Sabrina to suspect a supernatural angle, so she enlists the duo to help. We meet them on the way to Lilith's (yes, that one) supernatural strip club, but this is about as far away from True Blood's Fangtasia as one can get. I read the first two chapters with raised eyebrow, but I was committed when the chapter ended with this giggle-worthy toss-off:

*"I slid into the backseat and lay down as best I could. Greg had a towel behind his seat, because he's a hoopy frood that way, so I tried to put the bloodiest parts of me on the towel to save the upholstery."*

Characterization is decent, especially given humorous overtones. Greg and James have been buddies for most of their lives, along with Mike the priest, and their banter has the fond familiarity of classic bro-mance. I also appreciated that James is aware he's the muscle of the group and doesn't resent the others for their direction or help. James admires Greg even as he mocks him, and the respect—for the most part—for Greg's ethical code helps elevate the story's tone at the same time it goes for laughs:

*"Sometimes my partner is really perceptive, something that's easy to overlook when he wraps himself in black spandex, which happens more often than it should."*

The storyline takes an unusual turn with the crime. Per the genre norm, Detective Sabrina becomes personally involved when one of the victims is her cousin. A backstory is revealed that makes the connection even more personal. However, a major plot twist develops that takes the story in initially pun-ishing directions when another supernatural group becomes involved. At first, I rolled my eyes. I had scanned a review or two before reading, but had forgotten that detail, noting only that I may not appreciate the direction

it took. It turned out, once the pun-ish idiocy (pardon me) was left behind, it became a reasonably interesting story. There's a bit of fantasy world-building that seems a little bit oddly juxtaposed but works, as well as a modern action sequence to ramp up the tension. It's possible that there's a little too much of kitchen sink in the story, but what do you expect from popcorn?

I frequently have anticipatory nervousness when I run into a book that tries to combine humor with sensitive issues. Gay-bashing and shaming is a very real issue, and I was on the alert for signs the author was going to be dismissive. I ended up enjoying this one. There's a few preachy points but not overly intrusive, and it seemed Harkness was generally able to be respectful while maintaining a fun tone. I'd certainly welcome other insights and experiences if anyone want to share thoughts.

Three and a half giggles.

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### **Jennifer Rainey says**

The Black Knight boys are back! I'm not sure why it took me so long to pick up the second book in John G. Hartness's series, but I'm definitely glad I finally got around to reading it. It was great to be reunited with the characters from the first book.

This book picks up where Hard Day's Knight left off and has all the wit and off-the-wall humor of the first installment in the series. This time around, Jimmy and Greg are up against trolls and malicious fairies as they investigate a series of attacks in Charlotte. The case even takes them to Fairy Land where our vampire heroes end up—perish the thought!—sparkling.

While the book loses a bit of its direction in the middle, it picks back up again fairly quickly and brings it all home for a great final battle. It's quick moving and entertaining, and there are some absolutely fantastic one-liners thrown in there as well. If you've read Hard Day's Knight, definitely give Back in Black a go, and if you haven't read Hard Day's Knight, what's wrong with you? Pick it up now!

Now I just need to see about getting my paws on the next book...

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### **Jim says**

I have read two of the books in this series now and have enjoyed both of them. It's not Pride and Prejudice, but it is entertaining. Vampire detectives working with a human police detective to solve crimes in North Carolina....oh and their best friend is a priest.

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### **JK says**

Well, this one was just as great as the first book. A few too many 'dudes' and 'bros' for my liking, but I won't let a thing like that bother me enough to like this book less.

This series so far, even if it's just two books, is a good example of how to mix action, humor, and romance.

None overwhelms the other and it makes for the perfect combination. The action is pretty good and keeps me entertained. I don't find myself just mindlessly reading those parts. The romance is actually one that develops instead of being a sexfest that counts as romance these days. Thank goodness for this too. I can't express how happy I am that there hasn't been sex in these books. Seriously, I can't. That's a digression I should probably stay away from though. The comedy is nice too. It's mostly just quips between the characters, but it comes across as genuine. I could very much see these characters behaving the way they do around one another. Makes for fun times. =]

Onto the characters, they're very much the same as the first time around, but we do learn a bit more about them. Just a little bit, but it's enough to be believable. No sudden and drastic changes, just the slow getting to know them like you would a real person. Then there's the new characters that were introduced... who I really adore. Tivernius [I think I spelled that wrong] is just plain awesome. I definitely hope he'll be around in later stories. I'm enjoying Stephen, Milandra, and Otto as well. They're all pretty unique and I would love to see more of them. (view spoiler) I like that the cast is slowly growing and hope it keeps this way - so long as these characters aren't ditched forever. There's nothing worse than awesome characters with a lot of potential being thrown out after being used in one book.

We get to learn a bit more about the world in this one as well. A little more about what exists and the nature of vampires. I'm really enjoying these tidbits.

Hrm. What else? I guess I should list a few negatives so I don't just sound like a raving fan.

Like I said before, there are a few too many 'bros' and 'dudes.' I mostly just tuned those out after a while. I don't mind them being used, but the frequency of use could be lessened. There were also a couple continuity slip ups, but they were just on little silly things rather than with the story or characters. They didn't affect anything in the grand scheme of things, but you may notice them. I think that's about it too.

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Also, if you do read this, read the Author's Notes. John Hartness is a really awesome guy. The respect I have for him shot through the roof after reading the notes from this one. People should read his books just to be supporting such an honest and good person.

### **J. S. Turner says**

Book 2 of The Black Knight Chronicles was an enjoyable read. I will admit, the first couple of chapters had me wondering if I wanted to really sit through a morality play. But read on I did and I am glad. For Back in Black is not a morality play, nor does it hit you over the head regarding homosexuality. Just a few homosexual characters happen to be involved. In fact, Hartness' play on the terms fairy and fae is pretty damn clever if you ask me.

Jimmy does blab a bit too much for me, but there were less "bro's" this time around which was good. And

perhaps Jimmy fights just a bit too well for such a young vamp, but he is the lead dog. Overall I am looking forward to Book 3. When that happens, the author has done their job. Anyone else hoping for a Lilith cover, or is it just me?

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## Katy says

**Book Info:** Genre: Urban Fantasy

Reading Level: Adult

Recommended for: fans of Urban Fantasy looking for something lighthearted

Trigger Warnings: violence, killing, homophobia

**My Thoughts:** Another great story in this fun UF series, in which we meet some new creatures (fairies, trolls, dragons) and find out how to make vampires sparkle (fairy blood, who'da thunk it?). I was a bit perturbed to already find a continuity error, in that the first book specifically stated they *were* able to see themselves in the mirror, while in this one they cannot, but overall the editing was better. Not perfect, but better.

Fans of more lighthearted UF should enjoy this series, which I am enjoying reading a great deal.

**Series Information:** *Back in Black* is the second book in the Black Knight Chronicles.

Book 1: *Hard Day's Knight*, review linked here where formatting allowed

Novella 1: *Movie Knight*

Book 3: *Knight Moves*

Novella 2: *Black Magic Woman*

There is also a book of short stories called *Knight (un)Life* - Black Knight Shorts Vol. 1, which I do not currently have. He has a number of other books, including his Bubba Monster Hunter books, a number of which I currently have as well.

**Disclosure:** I bought this book for myself (yes, I paid cash MONEY for this one). Later I saw it on NetGalley and added it there, since I planned to read it anyway. All opinions are my own.

**Synopsis:** In the second volume of The Black Knight Chronicles, vampire detectives Jimmy Black and Greg Knightwood investigate a series of assaults plaguing the alleys of Charlotte. Along the way they battle trolls, bigotry, fairies, dragons and small minds on the way to a knock-down battle royal inside a steel cage. The boys find themselves fighting evil in alleys, trolls in bars, dragons in FairyLand, and trying to scrub the sparkle off after a battle with vicious Fae in the hall of the Fairy Queen.

Yeah, really. All that and vampires, too.

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## Allison says

The boys are back and kicking ass. I've only got 2 more books in this series and I've already started volume 3. I do enjoy finding a new series and being able to read through the entire thing, but still, I have at least 4 continuation volumes to some other series, so what's a girl to do? LOL

These books are a lot of fun, and have actually gotten a giggle or two out of them, so I'll keep going.

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### **Jan says**

Another winner. The hero and his sidekick are vampire working with human detective Sabrina of the Charlotte PD whose cousin has been horribly injured by an unknown supernatural creature. Bad movie quotes and lots of snarks pepper this violence filled yet fun fast moving tale populated by trolls, changelings, and even a dragon as they track a menace in their city. A truly engaging book with a glitch or two, but still a fun read.

Nick J. Russo does a great job as narrator!

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### **Fangs for the Fantasy says**

James and Greg have been called in by Sabrina for another case – gay men across the city are being brutally beaten and left for dead. One of them Sabrina's own cousin and something supernatural is implicated.

But as they investigate, the story opens up a whole new development – they're not dealing with men being attacked. They're dealing with fairies (yeah, I've tried re-writing that about a dozen times and there's absolutely no way to say it without making the implications glaring) and it's an investigation that takes them to the realm of faerie itself.

Where they learn just how little they know not only about fairylnd (and the dragon, fae and other beings within) but also about what it truly means to be a vampire. They have a lot more to learn

And they have trolls to fight – with swords, illegal gambling rings to break up and an angry Lilith to placate.

This is rapidly shaping up to be one of those series I gleefully like even though I can't 100% say why. It's not complex or deep- or full of nuance, but it's fun fun fun. Did I mention fun? Because it's fun. It has a lot of humour and a lot of irreverence and no-one takes themselves too seriously even when handling very serious matters. The characters bounce off each other extremely well, have some very good friendships that feels believable and they live.

I think that's part of what makes this series so fun for me is that James and Greg, in their geekiness, with their hobbies, with their often fumbling ineptitude and general flailing around as vampires feel like real people. Flawed, natural people. And, like in the first book, they're also a wonderful example of vampires that aren't MUHAHAHA evil or moping, angsting and hating themselves. They're not even the borderline-evil-oh-so-dangerous-but-oh-so-sexy vampire on the path to redemption. They can be sad – and Greg even has realistic, difficult struggles with his hunger and a major set back on having to feed from a human is a really good, well done example of that. But that's it, they're sad and troubled – they're not being epicly tortured or screaming poetry at the moon.

That realism also follows in their work as detectives and with Sabrina. We actually have a cop who DOESN'T carry a set of lock picks and considers breaking an entering to be an actual crime that law enforcement should avoid! This makes her almost unique in detective fiction. There's a lot of nitty gritty and unpleasantness unglossed over – like the fact if you die your pet cat will probably eat your face.

The world building has greatly expanded in this book and here I think there is a problem – and this is a problem that bleeds over into the story. This is the second book in the series and so far we have been treated to demons, immortal succubi, fallen angels, vampires, witches, fae of various kinds, demons and now entire faerie realms. I'm left feeling this is too much – this series is too young and not established enough to not just HAVE all these different creatures, but have stories that integrally include them. I think we could have used a book or even 2 of more mundane topics and more gradual introduction.

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### **Cat says**

So, the second book in the Black Knight Chronicles dives right in with another mystery; this time involving faeries and trolls! yikes! I was happy to see Sabrina Law [police detective] was back - she's got spunk, and I like her. Hartness's story evolves and we begin to see parallels in this universe, and I can recognize my own biases and how they might prevent me from really learning from those different from me. [Nah, I'm perfect. No biases here. But I love the lesson anyways!]

Once again Black and Knightwood "get their man" in a fast-paced, laugh-out-loud funny way.

While you don't have to read the chronicles in order (there's enough info to start with book two and not be lost), why miss out on all the fun? Read "Hard Days Knight" first. Back in Black is definitely, another good read!

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### **Mel Windham says**

John Hartness is another North Carolina writer, whom I met a few years ago at a writer's conference, and let me tell you--he is a hilarious writer.

"Back in Black" is book #2 in his "Black Knight Chronicles" featuring the two kind-of-vegetarian vampire detectives, Jimmy Black and Greg Knightwood. While trying to hide their true identities, this couple tries to solve mysteries at night, often running into crazy supernatural adventures.

I bought one of the original editions from when the author self-published this series. Thus I had to wade through a few typos and a couple of instances of awkward writing. I'll just assume these got fixed in the currently available edition and move on.

This book contains the same humor that existed in the first one. The story is interesting and engaging. The ending is satisfying. We get to learn more about Hartness's world of vampires. I particularly loved how both Jimmy and Greg struggled to be "vegetarian" as much as possible. The fight scenes are hilarious. The whole world is just plain imaginative and different.

I found myself distracted by only one weakness in the plot. The case our vampire friends pursue is a series of brutal beatings of gay males. Several times in the book, the plot freezes as one (or two, or more) of the main characters delivers a soliloquy about how we should accept gay people and allow gay marriage. This is good for the author--letting us know what side he's on, even though he's from conservative North Carolina. But I

found the delivery to be flat, derivative, and preaching to the choir. It basically stopped the flow of the plot while not really adding anything.

In my opinion, Hartness missed a golden opportunity to have at least one of his main characters originally opposed to gay marriage, but then by the end of the book coming to learn that gay people are alright after all ... such as in the movie Philadelphia. Such a sub-plotline would have had more convincing power to readers who happen to be more conservatively oriented.

Despite the one minor flaw, I highly recommend the first two books in this series. They're funny with rich characters in a rich environment. And dag nab it ... now I'm going to have to get the next book in the series.

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### **Ami says**

#### **2.5 stars**

Unfortunately, this one is a let down compared to the first book. I don't find it funny; in fact, I find Jimmy to be downright annoying this time around. His supposedly funny sarcasm feels old -- and I don't chuckle even once.

On top of that, I find the subplot about Jimmy, Greg, and Sabrina going to Fairyland and have a role in matchmaking the Fairy Queen and a Dragon Lord as distracting and waaaay over the top. I mean, the story starts with case of gay bashing -- and one of the victims is Sabrina's cousin. So I don't appreciate the detour of their adventure in Fairyland, which feels drags on too long. The real reason of the bashing is also too silly for my taste ((view spoiler)).

The climax fighting is okay -- and I appreciate the Author's note of bringing the social issue regarding acceptance to gay people and LGBT community. But for me personally, as a story, it's not as enjoyable as the first one.

I guess I have to postpone buying the third book then.

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### **Angela says**

Cool expansion of the paranormal pantheon that we've seen so far. As before there's plenty of humor and a great friendship between Jimmy and Greg. I really like Greg! He's such a nerd--who ever heard of a fat, nerd vampire?!

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### **Angie ? says**

I enjoyed the 2nd installment more than the first. Still love the quirky vampires....who sparkle now, even though that myth was busted in the 1st book! (you will have to read to find out why....) :-)

Entertaining, laugh at loud funny at times and snarky!

