



Half-Made Girls

Sam Witt

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A Pitchfork County Novel

Joe Hark's job as the Night Marshal of Pitchfork County seems straightforward enough: Find the monsters, kill the monsters. But Joe is married to one of the most powerful witches in Pitchfork, and spends almost as much time keeping an eye on her as he does dealing with occult crimes and shadowy horrors in the rest of the county. Even his children, a little girl who plays host to a rogue's gallery of strange spirits and a young man with a demonic secret, keep him on his toes. All Joe really wants is a simple life, a bottle of good whiskey, and a break from the horrors of his job.

But nothing in Pitchfork County is ever simple, and the horrors just keep on coming. Someone's hung a mutilated girl on a cross in Pitchfork's most infamous church, dragging Joe into the most challenging case of his career. Joe's investigation into the ritual murder leads him through the dark underbelly of the Ozarks to the doorstep of a twisted cult of meth addicts. As Joe digs deeper into the mystery, he soon finds himself the target of the murderers and must stop them before they can summon their dark god and destroy everything he holds dear.

Half-Made Girls Details

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Author : Sam Witt

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From Reader Review Half-Made Girls for online ebook

Dee Arr says

Looking for a story so full of grit that your insides will feel raw long before you're done? Can't get enough horror from what you've been reading? Sam Witt's "Half-Made Girls" more than fits the bill.

Truth be told, this is not my kind of novel. It wavers between reality and a place so fantastic it is hard to believe. It runs from straight horror that can lift the little hairs on the back of your neck to demonic images of fiendish animals that leave their victims draped in blood. It makes you want to put the book down while at the same time propels you to read just one more chapter.

Sam Witt is the main reason I kept reading. His writing is descriptive, different in a way that hooks you and entices you to continue. The passages read like pictures, powerful images that explode off the pages and promise nightmares for days to come. It is easy to become involved with the characters. Witt fleshes them out nicely, exposing their strengths as well as their underbellies.

Joe is the Night Marshal of Pitchfork County. It is his job to prevent the horrors he encounters from spilling out and inhabiting the sane world. The entire book is nonstop action, as Joe moves from one battle to the next. He is aided by his wife and children, who have powers that border on the demonic and sometimes cause even Joe to ponder as he walks the line between darkness and goodness.

If there was anything that didn't make sense to me, it was the banter between Joe and his wife, Stevie. Our initial view of their marriage indicates a pairing that has splintered, although this is more from Joe trying to protect his family from the evils that want to destroy anything he loves. Once they begin working together, their conversations during and after battles seemed a bit too lighthearted to me. Perhaps this is the way folks talk after squeaking out a victory against evil, but for me, it didn't ring true. Perhaps it is just as well that this only happened a few times over the course of the book.

If you haven't already guessed, this book is heavily seasoned with vulgar language and disturbing images, and is not for the fainthearted. The religious overtones may also cause other readers to close the book. Horror lovers who crave stories that will drag you through the muck and back will probably not be able to get enough of the Night Marshal. As for me, I have Sam Witt's books on my "To Read" list. Now all I have to do is gather enough stamina to carry me through another of his stories.

Sadie Forsythe says

3.5

There is a lot to appreciate about this book. In a market that is so often flooded with Marty Stus, finding an alcoholic asshole as a main character/hero is pleasant change. The man is definitely fighting on the side of good, but he is what you might call a 'blunt tool.' His methods are violent and heavy-handed to say the least.

In fact, it's the accumulated resentment of these same tactics that the book is based on. Poor Joe has to learn the difference between shepherding and policing a community and it's a hard lesson to learn.

Unfortunately, while I really liked the premise of the book and thought the characters were really interesting, I thought the book tended to drag. There is a lot of rambling exposition and just too much gratuitous gore and

violence.

Now, I don't really mind violence or gore; that's not the reason for my complaint. I'm not even bothered by the fact that the victim (intended or collateral) of Joe's wrath was as often a small innocent child as a meth addict or evil god. What bothered me was that it just got so darned repetitive. I got tired of reading variations of the same scene. But also, that single pony-trick didn't allow for very much character development.

This was exasperated by the fact that the community situation that leads to the events of the book has been brewing for 20 or so years and the reader is just told it is what it is. It leaves you feeling like you've missed something important, like maybe a first book.

All in all, though I enjoyed the read. I'd be more than happy to pick up a sequel or another book by Witt

eden Hudson says

Half-Made Girls is darker than black, grittier than creek sand, and as backwoods as your granny witching warts off your finger with little white rocks.

I don't know if I can say how much I love this book. Witt does an incredible job of translating Southern Missouri's beauty and ugliness onto the page, juxtaposing the gorgeous and ghostly mountains, forests, and bogs with its barbwire populace's fall into ruin at the hands of poverty, meth, and eldritch horrors they should never have reached out to.

Somehow Witt managed to balance almost nonstop, dead-sprint action with the personal stakes of the Night Marshal and his family. It was awesome from a technical standpoint and for the pure enjoyment of reading. I was so invested in Joe, Al, Stevie, and Elsa. They felt like real, complex people, twisted by their pasts, but loyal to each other. Stevie is such a badass. Watching her backed into a corner, then fight her way out for her children and her husband even though she knew what would happen was the most exciting part of the story for me. Her and Joe's relationship was so tragic, even gut-wrenching at times. I loved it.

I've already bought the next book, Night-Blooded Boys. I can't wait to spend more time with the Night Marshal's family, and see what sorts of new horrors Pitchfork County will face.

E.D. Martin says

I loved the premise of this book: there's a rural county filled with evil, and one man - the Night Marshall - has to keep it at bay. Everyone seems to play with darkness and the old gods in one way or another, for better or for worse, and then it gets much, much worse. The storyline and setting were pretty unique, which hooked me into the story right with chapter one.

Without giving anything away, I enjoyed the ending of the book and the way the Night Marshall solves Pitchfork County's ancient evil problem. The author set up a sequel very nicely.

That said, the middle slowed me down. There's a lot of gore and violence in this book. It's necessary for the ending to work, but it was hard to read through at times. It made the Night Marshall unlikable to someone like me who prefers problem-solving skills that don't involve blowing someone's head off.

I also felt at times like I'd missed the first book in this series, because a lot of the dark magic and character history was referenced but never explained. Many major plot points relied on this knowledge. If there are other stories out there, the author should link to them so readers can read them first.

The premise of the book was interesting enough to keep me reading, despite the excessive gore. I'm looking forward to reading the next book, as well as any other Pitchfork County stories.

Jenna says

3.5, really, but I rounded up for Amazon.

This is the kind of book I've been wanting for most of my reading life. It's gritty, grimy, supernatural... The hero is not lovable, he's not cut from the charming but jerkish cloth of many anti-heroes. He is a man given a crap job and doing it the best he knows how. The romance is not predictable and it isn't a hinge-point for the plot of the book. There's no smut. It's a wild ride, and it feels BIG.

Like some of the other lower-star reviews (and sometimes you can weigh the value of a book by the thoughtfulness that goes into the lower/average star reviews - this is one of those books), I had the sense that this book was more like the ending of a bigger arc. I got that feeling a lot. As though I ought already know and be comfortable/familiar with the cast of intriguing characters that danced across the pages - I WISHED that it were so. Seeing a series of stories that built up the relationships between the Night Marshal and his wards, which would make the weight of Half-Made Girls all the more convincing.

As an example of what I mean: I'm a crier... Given all the violence, certainly there's death. I can cry at Folger's commercials because of the way they build up a figure in the thing. I didn't cry for some of the folks I probably OUGHT to have shed at least a single tear for in Half-Made Girls. (I did tear up a bit, not over a death, later in the book though - so, it's not like it didn't touch me at all!)

Overall, engaging and well-written story. Sometimes the gore or the violence bordered on "too much" (not in the sense that I got grossed out or uncomfortable, but that I actually got a bit bored reading through it), but it never quite crossed the line into gratuity, given the flavor and texture of the overall text.

I would love to see more about Pitchfork County, but wowzers - how do you go UP from battling a god? It's a tall order, but one I sincerely hope Mr. Witt is up to filling.

Paulette says

This book is similar to Something from the Nightside, Monster Hunter International, Sandman Slim, or Street Magic. If you like the above books, please feel free to ignore this review and go right out and get this book, because you will like Half-Made Girls as well.

Otherwise...

Why did I give this book only one star? I reserve one star for books that I simply can't bring myself to finish. I rarely, and I mean really rarely, DNF (did not finish) a book. I think I've done it 4 times in all the time I've been on Goodreads, and it was because I found myself thinking "ooh, I'm going to go read" but then remembering what book I was reading and mentally wandering off, wondering if I had any moves left in my online games or if there was any cleaning to be done.

I don't mind violence, as long as it makes sense in the plot. I'm pretty sure that in this book, the plot exists

only to further the violence.

This book has the privilege of being only the fifth book I've DNFed on Goodreads. And that is why I only gave it one star.

Kristi Hudecek-Ashwill says

I guess when I step outside the box, I do it big. This book is not something I would normally read but overall, I liked it. There were a lot of "bang-bang-shoot-em-up" scenes in it and lots of blood, guts and gore where I had to set the book aside for awhile but I wanted to finish it.

The story is pretty easy to follow yet tough to read due to all the violence but there is a good, strong plot, great characters and some excellent writing. Everything just fit and worked well together.

Joe is the Night Marshal who has supernatural powers bestowed upon him by the Long Man. The Long Man is supposed to be the good guy but I never really did like him. He had an underlying sinister quality that made him untrustworthy yet Joe answered to this guy. He answered to him and did his bidding which usually meant that he had to kill people who'd chosen the Left-Hand Path or the side of evil. Joe did it without question because he figured it was his destiny since his own father had been the previous Night Marshal.

Joe is married to Stevie and they have two kids. Alasdair (Al), his son is a shifter and his daughter, Elsa is some sort of spirit monger. Stevie is a witch but has been forbidden to practice witchcraft by Joe. She knows if she does practice it, Joe will kill her because for him, everything is black and white. You're either righteous or you're not and if you're not, he will kill you. That's what the Night Marshal does.

The half-made girls are a mix of human and demon, the latter being the most prevalent. They were once normal girls that got switched over by the darkness and now are evil themselves. They are servants of whatever the dark force is that's trying to make its way to the earth via Pitchfork County. The county is inundated with meth addicts and this force uses them, these half-made girls, bats and whoever and whatever else is handy to feed itself until it has enough power to make it over.

I don't want to go into a lot of detail because I don't want to put any spoilers in this review. That being said, a lot happens in this book. It has some surprises and considering how things were going, I wasn't sure just how it was going to end. I found myself disappointed in Joe and then a few pages later, I was cheering for him. The story is a roller coaster and when you start reading it, you're in for a heck of a ride. Just hang on.

I'm of the mindset that this is probably a book geared toward guys but I do have a tendency to step out of my comfort zone and read something totally different and this was it. This scared me more than once. Okay, I'll go back to reading romances for a little while now.

Montzalee Wittmann says

Half-Made Girls (Pitchfork County #1) by Sam Witt is not what I expected. By the cover I thought this book would be about a kick ass gal, strong female lead, paranormal, etc..... NOT! This is a horror book about a Night Marshal, a marshal that fights the supernatural bad guys. He is married to a witch and they have two very unusual kids that have strange 'gifts'. They help him. They creep me the f#@k out! The half-made girls

are the poor girls they are finding that have been butchered and by magic they are alive and evil. Yep, sleep with your lights on with this book folks. It is one of those kind of books. It is good at it too! If the good guys don't scare the shit out of you the bad guys will. Wonderful book! I had to get the next one!

Dan Schwent says

Joe Hark is the Night Marshal of Pitchfork County, a rural area of Missouri plagued by meth and monsters. When someone crucifies a mutilated girl in a church, Joe finds himself balls deep in a mess involving drugs, demonic forces, and dark gods.

Sam Witt wrote *The Astromundi Cluster*, a *Spelljammer* supplement I should get around to writing a review for one of these days. On a whim, I wanted to see what else he wrote and this popped up, for free no less. I've long thought rural fantasy had untapped potential as a genre and I was right in this case.

The lazy way to describe *Half-Made Girls* is *The Dresden Files* meets *Winter's Bone*. There's a lot more grit and a lot more gore than the *Dresden* files and I don't get the feeling the Night Marshall is working with a safety net like I do with *Harry Dresden*. The Night Marshall isn't an overly glib white knight, either. He's the guy that gets his hands dirty and does what needs to be done when someone walks the Left Hand Path of dark sorcery.

Set in Pitchfork County, Missouri, a dirt poor place where being a meth dealer is one of the only forms of employment, *Half-Made Girls* is a tale of dark forces that threaten to consume the earth and the one man that can stop them, the Night Marshall, Joe Hark. Now if he could just put aside his alcohol problem and the curse that has forced a wedge between his family and himself...

Joe Hark is more Roland the Gunslinger than *Harry Dresden*, a hard man that's been to hell and back a dozen times. When meth head cultist stir up some serious shit, The Night Marshall is forced to do some things he doesn't want to do and question his beliefs and methods in order to set things right. Heavy shit.

As befits the situation, the violence is stark and brutal and no one is making half-assed quips or tired *Star Wars* references. Even though I knew it was the first book in a series, I felt like all bets were off and I could be reading about a new Night Marshall in the second book.

There's a real sense of place to the book. Sam Witt paints a vivid picture of life in the Ozarks. When he's not painting it in blood and gore, anyway.

Sam Witt is also a much better writer than I thought he'd be. He knows how to write suspense and the dialogue is spot on. Also, he writes things like this: It looked like a bathroom at *Hogwarts* after a week long meth binge.

Half-Made Girls is a gripping, sometimes gut-wrenching read, so much more than the urban fantasy fluff I was afraid it was going to be. It actually has more in common with *Brian Keene's Ghost Walk*. Four out of five stars.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

REVIEW: HALF-MADE GIRLS by Sam Witt

(A Pitchfork County Novel)

From the very first pages, HALF-MADE GIRLS grabbed its spot in the pantheon of my all-time favorite books. Like the Appalachian magic of Manly Wade Wellman, and the Alvin Maker Tales of Orson Scott Card, HALF-MADE GIRLS and its background locale of a horribly cursed county where darkness and evil magicks rule, is simultaneously fascinating, compelling, intriguing, and totally terrifying. Night Marshal Joe Hark cleans up the dirty deeds and sorcerous overflows of Pitchfork County, a position he inherited from his late father. His son harbors a demonic secret; his daughter is ridden by the dead the way vodou worshippers are ridden by the Loa.

Pitchfork County: no one wants to live there, but what a great place to read about. I'll be distraught if this doesn't expand into a very long series.

T. K. Elliott (Tiffany) says

Characters

Joe Hark is definitely a flawed hero, maybe even an anti-hero. He's a violent alcoholic who shoots first and doesn't bother to ask questions because he thinks he already knows the answers. Or he doesn't care. But according to his lights, he's doing the best he can to keep the darkness out of Pitchfork County - the job his father died doing.

Stevie Hark is as complex a character as Joe; her dark heritage is almost as big a barrier between herself and her husband as the curse her mother laid.

Interestingly, Joe and Stevie's children - thirteen-year-old Alasdair and eight-year-old Elsa aren't just the ciphers or cute comic relief that children often are in books. They have their own darkness and their own power, and take an active part in the story as something other than hostages to fortune.

Setting

I loved Pitchfork County. I wouldn't want to live there, mind you. I wouldn't even want to visit. But as a setting for a dark urban fantasy/horror novel, it works *really well*. It's a place of grinding poverty, drug addiction, despair, and black magic, and it suits the storyline perfectly.

Plot

To be honest, this was the weakest aspect of the story - Joe does a lot of driving around shooting people, but not a great deal of thinking. This means that the plot isn't as complex as it might be. However, the setting and characters are more than solid enough to make this a minor quibble rather than a dealbreaker.

Summary

The *Pitchfork County* been compared with the *Dresden Files* and while it's closer to Dresden than some other series, if you're expecting humour and pop-culture references, go elsewhere. This is dark, gritty, and violent in a way that the *Dresden Files* books just aren't. It's closer to Stephen Blackmore's Eric Carter books.

This was a very solid four-star book for me - it didn't quite have the zing that would have made it five stars, but I'll definitely be reading more of Sam Witt's work.

Natasa says

I'm so happy I found something like this book to read, my new favorite author that I'll keep an eye on for sure.

A great freebie and a freebie from the author, second book in the series, a novella actually, thanks Mr Witt!

Seth Tucker says

If Justified starred Harry Dresden. The main character in this book is the Night Marshal, a lawman charged with taking care of the things that choose the left-hand path. He has various supernatural means to protect himself and fight the monsters in Pitchfork County, but with this new case, things are starting to change. A fun read that keeps you turning the pages, Half-Made Girls was our first glimpse into the meth-filled county, and its memorable inhabitants. Sam Witt has created memorable and likable characters, while also building a county that feels real with its own history. Hints of the county's past and the various "religious" groups within it helped to add to the realism of this world rather than bog it down in exposition. Mr. Witt knows how to write one fine yarn.

Paul says

Good gore-fest

If king had went all out inventing Roland he may have been Joe the night marshal.

The night marshal has a very black and white view of good and evil in pitchfork county and takes his duties to protect the citizenry of the county very seriously indeed, even if a share of them are meth heads.

Witt spares no expense in graphic details and really paints a dark and gruesome scene although his characterization could have been deeper Joe and his family had enough dimensions to retain my interest. This novel was entertaining enough as a mash-up of splatterpunk and spaghetti western I wish some of the horror was left to the imagination as there could have been more ingrained dread and suspense IMO. All in all worth the read and I will continue the series but not Strongly recommend it.

writegeist says

I received a free readers copy through Story Cartel for my review.

It's a neat concept: a sheriff who deals with the more mundane issues of life and then there is a night marshall who deals with the supernatural. Very Lukyanenko-esque with a western twist. But here's the rub: in Half-Made Girls, the first in a series dealing with the Night Marshall of Pitchfork County (cool name, I think), I don't see why anyone would want to save this place. Clearly, the current Night Marshall, Joe (who appears to have inherited the position) doesn't see a reason either. "Joe hated Pitchfork County." And I do get that it's part of his character arc. Joe is a mess and has to find redemption in the midst of hell breaking loose. So, the concept has potential.

However, the novel just doesn't work for me, and I realize I might not be the target demographic, so keep that in mind for the review. Action is made up of a lot of blowing people away, a lot of visceral descriptions of heads being blown apart and bodies torn asunder, human and other creatures. Meth is the drug du jour, cultists seem to outnumber normal folk, but I think I'd rather spend my time in Night Vale where there's weird stuff galore, but there are still some breaks in the carnage.

Joe spends a lot of time by himself, which is never a good idea if you want to avoid tons of exposition and memories; not much sub-text. It's okay for readers to not get everything right away and to make them work, especially if this is a series. My questions were being answered even before I had a chance to come up with them.

Mr. Witt has definite talent. His sentences flow; his action scenes are concrete and graphic. But the story just isn't there yet. And I'm not sure I really like Joe enough to follow him to the next book. He's not a very nice person even though I understand there are reasons behind that; I've already been told what they are.
