



No Easy Hope

James N. Cook

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My name is Eric Riordan. Once, I was a wealthy man leading a comfortable, easy life. Then my old friend Gabriel told me how the world would end. Gabriel tried to help me. He taught me everything he learned as a Scout Sniper in the Marine Corps. All the hard lessons from years spent in the sand choked battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. I did everything I could to prepare. I thought I was ready.

I was wrong.

When the Outbreak came, it destroyed everything. The dead rose to consume the living, and all that mankind spent so many millennia working to build was laid to waste in a matter of months. The undead spared no one, leaving only ashes and death in their wake.

For those of us still alive, every single day is a struggle. In spite of the danger, and the darkness, I still believe there is a chance that the human race can rebuild. If I can make my way North and enlist Gabriel's help, maybe we can find enough people to start over again. It won't be easy, though. I have to make my way across the ruins of the old world, and along the way my will to live, my humanity, and my very soul will be tested.

I have food, I have a pickup truck, and I have my trusty rifle. Most importantly, I have hope. Hope is a powerful thing, but I will need much more than that if I am to survive the dead.

This is the beginning. This is my story.

No Easy Hope Details

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From Reader Review No Easy Hope for online ebook

Betty says

This book was a bit frustrating. The story concept is solid and actually contributes a slightly different take on the societal response to a zombie apocalypse than most other books in the genre (at least those I've read). It was also a very quick read as it absolutely did not offer any weighty theories the reader might want to take time to digest. Nothing wrong with fairly superficial fiction if that's what you're in the mood for.

But the book has problems, and not minor ones, that would either irritate or offend (or both) any but the most nondiscerning reader. It was still entertaining; thus the three stars.

1. Dialogue: There are actually men who don't speak like drunk frat boys. Those men do not exist in this book. "Bro," "dude," and "babe" are better used in very limited instances, if at all. Sprinkling them liberally into every conversation quickly becomes laughable. Any guy who called me "babe" in every third sentence would rapidly find his ass kicked to the curb. And it's not any less annoying when women call men "babe." At least the women in this book don't spend much of their time talking, not that that's a good thing.

2. Female characters: Apparently the zombie outbreak is going to immediately eliminate all women who are something other than centerfold-caliber, superstar-model, drop-dead gorgeous. I guess that will be convenient for surviving men who don't value any other human attributes when the human happens to be female. But for those readers who happen to be female, it's a bit offensive for every single woman in the book to be available only for cooking, child care, and sex. Even when acknowledged to be a good shot and comfortable with weapons, the women are still relegated to those three roles. My guess is that when you're fighting for survival literally every hour of every day, gender roles go out the window and those who can fight, do fight, regardless of their reproductive organs or their chest measurement. But that is not the case in this post-apocalyptic world.

3. Editing/proofreading: As quick as this book was to read, it should have taken even less time. A good edit would have tightened the plot, probably to the tune of losing 50 pages. It also would have cleaned up the dialogue issue. A good editor would probably have even addressed the shallow development of female characters. And once the editor got through with the manuscript, a proofreader would have had a field day correcting the approximately eleven hundred errors. If there was a single page of the book without a glaring error, I'd be surprised. Hell, I'd be surprised if there was an error-free paragraph.

If you are untroubled by these sorts of problems (or can suck it up and ignore them while you speed read this book), you'll be rewarded with a pretty good story about one developing community of survivors encountered by one of the two primary protagonists (the other appears only at the beginning and end of the book, but was the source of some critical information and carries on to the next book in the series). If those issues will drive you nuts and be a distraction, if not ruin your enjoyment of a book, avoid this book.

I borrowed this book from the Kindle Lending Library so I didn't have any financial investment in No Easy Hope. My tolerance for the book's shortcomings was probably affected by that. But the story was good enough that I will read the second book in the series. This was a first novel. It's possible that some of these problems will resolve as the author matures as a writer.

Jodi says

2.5 stars. Starts out awful, just terrible. I nearly quit at the 20 page mark and was going to write a review to the effect of "if you're a macho, sexist pig who like to read about other macho, sexist pigs then this is the perfect book for you."

I stuck with it and it does get better. Dialogue becomes less ridiculous although the main character has about as much personality as a telephone pole. Stock zombie novel, amateur first book.

Doc says

From the first sentence I knew what to expect from this book; a shallow tale written by an author who is obsessed with guns, yet has probably never used one. His weaponry commentary is above and beyond unnecessary. The pages in this book that don't mention a gun are few and far between. And firearms aren't simply mentioned; the main protagonist can identify any and every type/manufacturer/chambering/and custom mods on a weapons platform at first glance, and will comment on such information at length. He tends to use this form of description EVERY TIME! He can't simply say "So-and-so was holding their rifle as they approached." No, its; "So-and-so was holding their Type S Steyer AUG, fully loaded with 7.62x54 Green tips, with another spare 8 mags across his belt and vest, reflexive sights, a fore-grip and full-digital-cammo paint, as they approached." Once or twice these kinds of descriptions make sense, and may even lend to the story, but not shoving them in at every opportunity. And, what is worse, most of them are dead wrong! From the sounds, sensations, capabilities and down to basic terminology it feels like Cook is an outsider-looking-in on gun culture.

When you take a step back from the weaponry, looking at the rest of the story, there isn't much else to see. VERY 1 dimensional characters who's personalities are more thin than Top Ramen broth made with too much water. The male characters get a few traits to chose from; manly/smart guard, manly/smart hunter, manly/smart leader, manly/smart doctor, etc... And the females have their own tight niche of personalities to be shoehorned into as well; sex-toy, victim, cook, housekeeping, mommy, wife and/or girlfriend (No exceptions, that is literally the entire spectrum of female characters in this book. He is almost as bad as Bradburry).

There is also no sense of suspense, as the story is told entirely from memories. Every threatening situation the protagonist finds himself in is completely neutered because we already know he survives. Even though he did so relying on terms of success even the most mentally unstable and inexperienced military commander would balk at. Judging that you could shoot your way out of a horde of over 700 zombies because you have 800 rounds of ammunition is NOT a wise choice any sane human would make. In this book, however, it is a safe choice because everybody is a crack-shot and marksman regardless of their former profession.

So; if you enjoy a story about a lucky millionaire with hot, vapid girlfriends who has access to military-grade hardware, never misses a shot, can drive through hordes of undead without getting hurt or damaging his vehicle, always finds gigantic stashes of food/weapons(military grade)/porn/booze, then this book sounds like it is right up your alley.

Robert Fabregas says

1. What did you like about the book and what could of been better?

I loved this book for every part of it. Everything was described in a very real and understandable way, bringing the reader to believe the world was real. The only thing I think could of been done better was that it moved too slow around the middle of the story, and that it ended kind of abruptly. While I understand suspense is a great way to get people to buy the next book, I think it could of been eased into it a bit more.

2. What kind of diction/syntax/style did the author use in the book?

The author took a realistic view to describing this world, not leaving any detail out but putting them in a formal way. This is shown when the book throws in the manual given to the main character by Gabe. The only problem I had with the detail is that it was a little too much and seemed to over glorify the violence.

3. What is the books overall message or moral dilemma?

The moral of the book is to never give up hope, no matter how bad things can be their is always a way to survive. This is shown when the main character begins his journey to Gabes house. He doesn't know anything about this new world and is nearly killed a few times in the process of getting close to his goal, but he dose survive and make it.

Lynne says

As far as Zombie books go, it's decent for it's price on Kindle. The story has less edge-of-your-seat drama than the other books in the genre I've read. If you are looking for a less anxiety-filled zombie apocalypse story, this would probably fit the bill. The author also set up our main character too well for the events that unfold, which is why I didn't give it more stars. But it is quick and somewhat entertaining. Not worth \$10 so I'm glad it is priced under \$4. :-)

Daniel says

I can not, in good conscience recommend this book to anyone above the age of 15. The fact that its average rating is almost a 4 is both surprising and casts a serious shadow of doubt over my own sentiments. Regardless, I'll offer my rationale for such a poor rating. No disrespect intended to either the author or the fans of this book, which there appear to be many. Since I'm new to offering my thoughts on books, I'm uncertain as to whether these types of disclaimers are necessary, and frankly find myself wondering why anyone would care what I think. Nonetheless.

On the positive side, great idea for a post-apocalyptic zombie story. Since this is a well tread storyline, any twists or originality is always welcomed.

On the less positive side, I found Mr Cook's use of language elementary. Although I'm no expert in spelling, grammar or how to structure sentences to maintain a consistent and cohesive voice or narrative, I was not surprised to learn this was Mr. Cook's first book. These types of oversights, although forgivable, after the fifth or six "typo" I found myself with seriously wavering confidence in the rest of this product. Unfortunately, I was not wrong.

Character development lacked any type of sophistication and frankly was immature to the point of not one, but two raised eyebrows and a serious question as to whether or not this book was edited by a professional. Again, no disrespect intended, but I could not for the life of me understand how two grown men call each

other "bro" and "dude" every other sentence. If this were a young adult novel, and the two main characters were 20 years old and buddies on the run during their first year of college....maybe, but dude, overkill on trying to connect with a demographic. Which leads me to my final and perhaps most serious critique.

Again, my problem is with the use of language. Quite honestly, I was offended and embarrassed several times at the portrayal of women. I found this an unnecessary aspect of what I think was an attempt to further develop the main character. In the end, I found the sexist views that objectified women as "part objects" rather than human beings a complete and utter turn off, which speaks more to the author's worldview than any type of sophisticated attempt at character development - in my opinion.

Ultimately, this book appeared to me (a non professional book critic - all disclaimers apply) like it was written, edited, and enjoyed by those who do not read a great deal...or lack the capacity for reflection, respect for women, or intelligent use of language to articulate one's thoughts. If you think that's too harsh, I welcome your feedback, but I'm open to disagreement on any level.

T.W. Brown says

So, we have met Gabe and Eric up to this point and we get some more of the backstory on these two as their friendship solidifies. Also, we learn about some of Gabe's dirty little secrets. Then, at about 12% into the book, the zombie event resumes its center stage role. This is another book that does a great job of giving a plausible cause. Of course, on the down side, it does use the US Government (CDC to be even more specific) as the culprit. But that is really my only story-related critique at this point. What sets these guys apart is that we are being introduced to a pair of guys who already had some stuff in place for an apocalypse style event. Now we get to see if it was enough.

So, the bad stuff is in full swing now. One of the things that makes this book fun is that, there really are some people out there who are preparing for this stuff. There is even a series about it on Nat Geo or Discovery. And even if they are not actually preparing for "zombies" per se, they are preparing for some type of "Armageddon Event". You can call them crazy, but you will be knocking on the door of their compound IF such an event does take place.

One thing that I enjoy in a good zombie story is the various takes on humanity as a whole. Cook gives us the best and the worst. There are some rather harrowing scenes, and not all of them involve the undead. A real strength in this story is the action. It is well written and flows. Not everything goes in the favor of the central protagonist, but Eric and Gabe do have more success than failure. Also, this story does an excellent job of closing--yes, you are certain that there is more adventure in store, but no cliffhangers.

All in all, this is a great book and if you love the dead and have not read it yet, you should. It is on the top shelf.

Now for my critiques, because nobody is perfect: EDITING. This is too good of a book to have some of the editing gaffs that it does. Also, I am not necessarily a fan of the "action hero" type. Eric and Gabe are certifiable cad asses. It makes it easier for them to pull off what they do and not have you scratching your head, but still...just a personal preference.

That said...this is a **MUST READ** for zombie fans. Click on the link above if you want it **RIGHT NOW!!!**

John Podlaski says

I have been loading up my Kindle with "free" books that appear interesting, then find it difficult to choose which one to read next. The other day, I had just finished a murder mystery and came upon "No Easy Hope" on one of the websites advertising free Kindle books. It just so happened that I didn't have any other zombie books lined up so I downloaded it and began reading. As many of the other reviews state, it does start out slow with much discussion about weaponry and other reasons for being prepared for the end of life, as we know it.

Readers soon discover that the protagonist's best friend, Gabriel, is familiar with secret government experiments and had participated in many of them during that earlier career. As a result, he is confident that the world will end, but he it's only a question of when. So he takes Eric under his wing and they spend a couple of years preparing for this predicted apocalypse. Meanwhile, this information can not be leaked to the press for fear of instant death by these secret groups and both are sworn to secrecy.

When the Phage begins, both are ready, their secret bunkers and supplies are many miles apart. After a few months, Eric is tired of being alone and leaves the safety of his domain to seek out other survivors, supplies and to find Gabriel. His trek is risky and filled with periods of terror as he comes upon hordes of walking dead.

He soon comes upon a single, live human - the first he's seen in days, trapped on the top of a small town Burger King. Because of his friends' secret experiences, Eric is privy to methods of distracting and killing the walking dead and then rescuing the lone stranger. Unknown to him, that person on the roof has secrets of his own.

Going forward, Eric learns that every living survivor does not want to be rescued and that living people that he comes upon might not be a "friend". No Easy Hope is also a story about trust, friendship, dedication, love and a hopeful future, and then having to fight and kill those who want to take it all away from you.

The only reason I am not giving this five stars is because of the author's lack of editing. There are places that I had to stop and regroup because something didn't make sense. I did enjoy the story immensely and plan to purchase and begin reading the next book in the series - hoping it is just as good. Highly recommended for those who want to read a zombie story with a different twist. Great job!

John Podlaski, author
Cherries - A Vietnam War Novel

Rhys Chamberlain says

No Easy Hope by James Cook was a pretty good read. Set in North Carolina (which I was excited about as I lived in the state for a while), it follows Eric Riordon a man wrapped up in the quickly decaying World during a zombie outbreak. I liked how it described in-depth how the outbreak occurred and how it spread. I liked his description of the infected and their attributes and movements. Cook created characters which had personality and were believable. The plot kept me reading along at a reasonable pace and in patches, I

couldn't put it down.

However, there were patches where I felt the story was static and went nowhere fast. I really wanted his journey through the State to continue. I absolutely couldn't relate to the in-depth description of guns and weapons which occurred regularly. I ended up skim reading these pieces. I also felt Eric had an almost unbelievable infatuation with his friend Gabriel. It was weird in parts. There was a lot of macho stuff when these characters were together and when Eric was talking about him.

In all, I enjoyed the read and it deserves the four stars I have given it.

Martha says

This is a solid EOTW, biochemical (zombie) story with a strong lead character and good action. My rating 4.25.

Eric is a wealthy man, not a military man. He and Gabriel, Gabe, became friends during the sale of land between them. Sometime later, Gabe warns Eric to prepare for a chaotic collapse of the world. Gabe is a former Marine and former mercenary who has reason to know of biological secrets that could endanger society.

Eric had the money to prepare a bunker and stock it with food and weapons. He thought he was ready – but who can really prepare for the bloody rising of the dead? After staying alone in his own bunker for a time, Eric sets to meet up with Gabe who is hunkered down in a cabin in the mountains.

Along the way Eric faces danger and rescues a young man from an attack of the undead and returns with him to a compound of survivors. Some of the survivors are thankful but some are resentful and untrusting. Eric remains and proves his good intent as he helps the group clearing local communities of infected so they can gather more supplies. Sadly, the undead are not the only enemy that the survivors must face. There are rival survivor groups who are lawless and brutal.

I really liked Eric's strong, well developed character. The survivor group he works with is well developed also. Mr. Cook does a good job of creating an engaging story with a good balance of human elements and action. There is gore and bad language but it is not the focus of the story but rather part of the situation.

There are also grammatical errors which might be attributable to the nature of the characters... otherwise it is just inadequate editing. I let them slide. There are a few slower segments but for the most part the story pacing moves along well. I did not realize that this series is already up to 8 books. I will likely continue to read at some point, although not immediately. I recommend this to readers who like well written, catastrophic, end of the world (EOTW), scenarios.

Audio Notes: Guy Williams does a good job with the narration. I found it is easy to listen and follow the characters. There did not seem excessive emotion but adequate to convey the scenes of the story. The narration added to my enjoyment of the story.

Jay says

This was my second zombie apocalypse genre book I've read. This one was a lot better than Mountain Man. It wasn't as vulgar and more descriptive. You can tell it was written by a pro-gun conservative...which isn't a bad thing at all. The story was great. Minus the zombie hoard, it made me want to go check out the mountains in North Carolina. I wouldn't recommend this book to minors though since it does have adult situations in it. The biggest fault of this book was it badly needed an editor. There were grammar mistakes on every page. I would've given it a 5 star rating if the grammar was better. But the story and characters made up for it. I can't wait to read the next one.

Rosemary says

When I first came across this book, I read the reviews first, of course, and I distinctly remember one of the reviewers saying that it was 'a man's book' full of manly descriptions involving weapons etc. I am not a man, I am also not a weapons expert nor do I know anything about military terms and manoeuvres, but I though why not, it looks interesting, and downloaded it. One of my better decisions – it was a page turner and I could not put it down.

It was extremely lucky for Eric that he was a very wealthy man and that he could prepare for the worst, before it happened. His survival setup was every man's dream –or every man or woman who wakes up to an apocalypse type scenario's dream safe haven. Lots of cool gear and gadgets, and everything else you would need to survive – except enough food, and that is what eventually forces Eric to leave and try and join up with his friend Gabe.

This book deals with his journey and what he encounters along the way.

It is a great read with really great characters – and I did not hesitate to download This Shattered Land

Benjaminivor says

This book was a hilarious joke that demanded public readings for all my friends. I have never read a more ridiculous collection of bromance cliches strung together between endless armament and supply lists passed off as fiction. Don't get me wrong, I like all the ingredients, but they have to be mixed together in correct proportions with some editing or it's never going to be palatable. I can't believe this guy couldn't find a friend or any woman on the planet to read this and say, "whoa! Hold on, this kinda sucks man! Lets come up with one remotely interesting point to make or original idea to offer given you are writing this whole book and all..." In this case, I couldn't believe I was reading this crap from page 1 through total loss of self respect. This book was the lifetime movie equivalent of a very very lame dude's zombie wet dream- minus any characters or dialogue.

Seawood says

An example of pure awfulness. GUNS! MEN! Er...plot? Any understanding of science whatsoever?

Believable characters? Women who do more than cooking and fucking? All the men got firearms before the little ladies did, despite several of the women being ex-military or otherwise "excellent shots". And all the way through there was this irritant, persistent mosquito whine subtext of "no homo...really, honestly, I'm not gay! Or homophobic! See, I have a gay character! In the military!" Yeah, a gay character that was a paper thin stereotype and to which your main character reacted with revulsion. Uh-huh. Really attractive. There was no reason for that character, it added nothing to the plot and just made me cringe at how badly it was handled. By 40% I was reading just to see how much more terrible it was going to get as I couldn't quite credit it (and because I have a 200 book challenge to stay ahead of). Pages and pages of descriptions of guns - you could have cut half the novel and had the bones of a much more interesting story (do bear in mind I'm British, so gun culture is foreign to me at best and falls into screamingly obsessive in this case). The final two chapters are rushed because of all the time wasted on the firearms. It was soooo gripping /sarcasm I fell asleep at 94%.

Plus, there were the usual Kindle riddled-with-typo and elementary grammar mistakes every three pages. It seriously needed an editor. There's the germ of a story there - a basic hero's journey through a biological weapons gone rogue motif. But the bloody bacteriophage, seriously, have you any clue how these things work? Clue's in the name. BACTERIOphage. Not HUMANphage. 30s of Googling would tell you that phages don't infect human cells. So right from the outset the "science" is gratingly wrong and that sets the stage for the whole awful mess.

Did I forget to mention the zombies? That's because they were nothing more than shambling targets that weren't even scary - just a reason for lots of guns and manly manness. It gets one star for the obvious depth of research on guns and emergency shelters, the latter of which I did actually find interesting, but perhaps the author should have stuck to writing a disaster prep manual.

Avoid. I wasted my time so you don't have to. I'm nice like that. ;-)

Brian Switzer says

"Dude- great concept!" "Terrible execution Bro."

No Easy Hope really frustrated me. Cook had a terrific idea- a guy trying to make it a couple of hundred miles to his buddy after the zombie apocalypse, fighting zombie hordes and encountering myriad troubles along the way. There is so much that could have been done with that.

Unfortunately what he did was produce a book that seems to have been written by a 15 year old virgin gun nut.

I looked past the contrived beginning where our Hero just happened to meet and befriend the one guy in the country that knew the apocalypse was coming, best knew how to prepare for it and had a 90 page manual on how to fight the zombies once it's occurred. And our Hero just happens to be a multi- millionaire so no expense is spared in creating a shelter and gearing up for the coming war. Hell, it's a zombie book- you have to start it somewhere.

But good Lord. Every guy is a dude or a bro. (These are men in their 30's.). Endless paragraphs about

weaponry. No one ever picks up a rifle. It's always a 40.32 Bronson Emmittifier with a 629 scope, burnished steel plating and a kung-fu grip that fires 347.9325764 gas-injected copper tipped wad cutters. Every single person that touches a weapon is an expert marksman- every single one. The women are caricatures- all of the women in the post-apocalypse world are slim, trim and gorgeous, and they are incredibly flirtatious even with perfect strangers. Our Hero spends a few weeks living in an abandoned warehouse with about 40 other people. And though they kill the undead by the hundreds nearly every day (no kidding- one day they record 800 kills, 600 another) they don't lose a single person. Hell, nobody even sprains an ankle. The only person lost to zombies when our Hero is around is an Army NCO.

You see how it's sort of a horny teenagers dream of what life in the post-apocalypse is like?

This is a particular pet peeve of mine. Characters rarely 'say' anything in No Easy Hope. Most comments are spat, cursed, chuckled, grinned, glowered, grimaced, or said with a stare, with a glare, with irritation. It keeps pulling the reader out of the story.

Now here's the weird part. I'm going to read book two. Three reasons. In book two now that our Hero has found his friend they decide to try and make it to Colorado where, they have been told, there are other survivors and relative safety. Again- great concept. Two, I want to see if James has put a little more depth to his characters and a little more realism (for a zombie book) in his prose.

And three, and I'm going to give credit where credit is due because I ripped him pretty hard above- the man writes great narrative. Dialogue is sparse in No Easy Hope- there are pages of narrative where nobody says anything. I normally detest that, but Cook's ability to write makes it enjoyable. When the action is ripping along, the characters aren't saying things in annoying ways, and he has already described the firearms in that scene, he writes a very readable book.

Bro.
