



## The Unseen Face

*Joannes Rhino , Don Cox (Contributor)*

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James Maddox must face the demons of his past and question everything he thought was real; even his own memory. James was used to living without emotion after losing his Emilia unexpectedly; he gave up on happiness the day she died. His plans for their future, of marriage and kids, died right along with her. He preferred feeling numb, rather than feeling the pain of losing his dreams. That all changed the day he received an anonymous letter in the mail with just three words: I am innocent. James began dreaming of Emilia that same night. However, his dream quickly becomes his nightmare as she haunts his sleep, demanding he knows the truth, that he faces the unseen. And what is hidden threatens to change James' life forever.

## **The Unseen Face Details**

Date : Published June 15th 2014 by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (first published June 22nd 2013)

ISBN : 9781514210062

Author : Joannes Rhino , Don Cox (Contributor)

Format : Paperback 250 pages

Genre : Fiction, Thriller, Mystery, Suspense

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# From Reader Review The Unseen Face for online ebook

## Julie Powell says

I was sent this book for review and found it an interesting read.

I have always been fascinated with the mind and how it works and why people do the things they do and this story explores the very nature of illusion and delusion in an unusual way.

It concerns memory and dreams and how the mind can trick in the most brutal of ways.

A good read for those who like to delve into the ways of human behaviour.

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## James Sillwood says

James Maddox is 22, living and working in New York. Five years earlier his girlfriend Emilia supposedly died from a brain disease. James has recently been having nightmares involving Emilia. He tells his friend Richard who sets up a meeting for him with a psychiatrist Dr Glockman. He also tells his current girlfriend Jennifer. Together, James and Jennifer, visit Emilia's grave and go to her parents home in an effort to help James discover the reason for his nightmares.

The plot intrigued me, but also confused me. Richard is a high school friend of James and must know the truth about Emilia's death, but he says nothing. And how do Jennifer and Dr. Glockman not know about it? Richard seems more like an older uncle than a friend of a similar age to James, only appearing to dispense advice. I didn't really get a sense of what he or Jennifer were like, or why Jennifer stays with James. She constantly tries to help him but, in return, he's rude and inconsiderate, at one point calling her "meek and mousy".

The main problem I found with this book, however, is the language. The characters often speak to one another in a stilted manner, i.e. "I will do this", "I am coming", and many of the phrases use are incorrect (A bike is not driven, a dog does not trill it's tail, masts are found on a ship and not poles, and you don't give someone an ugly eye). I was also distracted by phrases such as "a gorgeous tower of hope" and "provoke into banging her terribly". When James and Emilia are at the cemetery, they see Sarcophagi bungalows. There are also spelling and punctuation errors. I understand that the author may not have English as his first language but, if this is the case, he could ask a native English speaker to check through the book.

Despite this, there are times when the writing has a lyrical and poetic quality, particularly at the beginning and end of the book when James goes up onto the rooftop of his work place.

This is quite a dark story and the author makes good use of the weather to create a gloomy and foreboding atmosphere. At times there is a mystical feeling to the story, as when James encounters a stray dog several times digging in the road. This turns out to be of great significance for James.

Although in need of an edit, this is an atmospheric book which intrigued me and kept me reading until the end. An atmospheric and intriguing story.

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## Cameron Atkinson says

Joannes Rhino has definitely written a high-quality piece of literature. The Unseen Face brings to life the

internal conflicts that humans experience every day. When these conflicts escalate, they often have disastrous consequences for others. More important, they make the life of the person experiencing them a living hell. Literary critics often point to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* as best portrayal of the life someone experiencing this type of conflict leads; however, it is clear that, in his novel *The Unseen Face*, Joannes Rhino has surpassed the standard set by Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* addressed a straightforward, internal conflict where the character knew all the events that took place. Rhino's *The Unseen Face* provides the reader with a more accurate portrayal of reality in that the main character does not know all the events that create his living hell.

Mr. Rhino writes in simple, but effective prose, which adds to the appeal of the book because it is the way we speak and think every day. As he describes the hell of James Maddox, the words begin to leap from the pages, and the reader feels like he is standing beside James and sharing in his distress. As the mystery heightens and the conflict intensifies, the reader is caught up in the flowing lines that Mr. Rhino has written. My overall assessment of *The Unseen Face* was that it was so well written that it surpassed a classic piece of literature in its quality.

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## **Joannes Rhino says**

I tried my best to write this book. Let me hear your thoughts

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## **Bruce Perrin says**

Good Plot Potential, but Flawed in Its Telling

*The Unseen Face* has the plot of a taut, psychological thriller. James Maddox is slowly self-destructing, as his nights are plagued by a recurring, horrifying nightmare. Only his two friends, Richard and Jennifer, seem to stand between him and complete withdrawal, depression, and perhaps, insanity. The author builds the tension immediately in chapter one by presenting a scene that logically falls near the end of the story. Use of the technique is fortunate, however, as the following chapters, which represent a prolonged flashback, move somewhat slowly. As they unfold, we see James as immature, self-centered, and self-destructive. He is not easy to like, but then, the main character of a psychological thriller will seldom be 'the life of the party.' Unfortunately, much of James' histrionics extend to Jennifer and Richard, so that many of the dialogs in these chapters deteriorate into shouting matches. The ending involves a plot twist, with the story now moving at a better pace. But the final outcome seems predictable at this point, in all but the details.

In general, the plot falls short of its full potential due to a host of flaws in its telling. The dark mood of the initial scenes is reinforced by a series of violent rainstorms, and James seems to be always caught in them...on his bike. An hour riding a bike in New York City in pouring rain in December sounds like the recipe for pneumonia, but this is just one of many suggestions that the author may not be completely familiar with the setting he selected for his tale. As another example, James mentioned being disciplined in high school by getting his hands slapped with a "rattan." That sounds like grounds for a lawsuit, rather than typical discipline in a NYC high school in the 2010-2012 timeframe. At another point, James mentioned being as forgotten as Neil Armstrong was after his historic walk on the moon, but Armstrong was in fact a very private person and even fought a couple of legal battles to maintain some distance between himself and an admiring public.

Many of the difficulties James faced and solutions he found seemed too convenient. Although now 27, he was still living in his boyhood home, and yet, had so little continuity in his friends and family that no one seemed to know what had happened to him just five years earlier. Additionally, the possibility he was investigating was so heinous that it would have been in the media; I am not sure why he never checked. I found the scenes with the psychiatrist somewhat troubling as well. His counsel had a 'fortune cookie' feel to it – too quick, too pat, too generic. He wanted to take objects in James' dream and give them what might be considered a literary interpretation. An antique chandelier meant that James was looking into the past. Presumably, if it was an ultra-modern lighting fixture, the dream was about looking into the future. The misperceptions of the American legal system, however, were probably the most serious.

Overall, the storyline had great potential that was only partially realized. I came away wondering why the author had chosen NYC as the setting, when the situation James faced and his response could have been found anywhere in the world. For me, it reinforced the old adage, an author should write about what he/she knows.

I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Pavitra (For The Love of Fictional Worlds) says**

The review was first posted on For The Love of Fictional Worlds.

*I received a digital copy of the book in exchange for an honest review*

Before you read the review (or even the book), you should know that you need a particular mindset to actually be able to immerse in this book - You need to be a little philosophical and lot more pragmatic because when this book grips you, it won't let go until it has wrung out each and every bit of emotion that you have in you.

Or maybe it was just me!

James has been living with a lie - the death of his girlfriend Emilia. Nightmares that have no meaning have been plaguing James regarding Emilia that he feels are a sign from her!

This book is bleak (I think that was the intention of the author!), but it is also hopeful. It deals with mental illness in a way that I haven't read before. The journey the author takes us on, is nothing if not emotionally wringing. Being a reader, I tend to get over -invested in what I am currently reading (even if it's two different books at the same time!) and the view I had of a mind that is depressed and overcome with grief is something that I have a feeling I will never be able to forget!

As for the writing, while I did feel the story a bit lagging at times, the plotline and the story never suffered for it - the story and the characters were enough for me to keep turning pages to find out what would happen next! The ending while predictable is also a point in favour for the story because it isn't the ending, but the journey that James goes through (and the one you tag along for!) is what the book is all about!!

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### **Glede Kabongo says**

A clever psychological thriller with a shocking twist

As a fan of psychological thrillers, this one made me sit up and take notice. *The Unseen Face* by Johannes Rhino is a cleverly plotted, well written and complex novel that delves into the incredible power of the human mind, its ability to create any narrative of its choosing, and how easily we accept that narrative and cling to it as the truth.

James Maddox is an orphaned twenty-two year old who works at a bank, smokes too much, and is still grieving the loss of the love of his life, Emilia, who died several years ago. His best friend Richard insists that James seeks help for the horrible nightmares that plague him —nightmares about Emilia's death (she died of a brain disease) triggered by a letter he receives, that simply says, "I am innocent."

The nightmares begin to take over and James' life starts to unravel; his neglected girlfriend Jennifer is angry with him, he makes mistakes at work but soon doesn't care much about the job, and sleep becomes the bogeyman just waiting to get him the minute he closes his eyes.

Richard decides to take matters into his own hands and calls his brother-in-law a psychiatrist to help James. Reluctantly, James begins to see Dr. Glockman on a regular basis, and he seems to be making progress as the doctor forces him to confront the nightmares and take action. James is able to open up to Jennifer about Emilia, and the nightmares. They even visit Emilia's parents. And that's when James' world hits the point of no return.

James discovers Emilia wasn't the perfect angel he's made her out to be and soon, the terrifying truth slams into him like a ton of bricks. The mysterious letter now makes sense.

For all his flaws, James is a character readers can connect to: he's young, has suffered multiple losses, seems all alone in the world except for his best friend and a girlfriend he struggles to open his heart to. He can sometimes come off as a jerk but he's a decent guy who does the right thing in the end at great personal cost. A good read for fans of the genre.

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**Nick Abbate says**

THIS ONE IS 5 OUT OF 5 STARS

Go buy this book now, and sink your teeth into "The Unseen Face". You will NEVER be the same again.

"The Unseen face" is gripping non-stop roller coaster ride of heart throbbing screams, and a bit of emotional baggage. Rhino, puts a wicked spin on reality and an unpredictable way of shining circumstances to make you think twice about certain things you have experienced in your own life. With that said this is an enjoyable book for the ages. One to be remembered, and one to be read more than twice.

Nick Abbate, American Author & Success Coach, Glendale Arizona

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## **Nadezdha Lesstiu says**

Perfect ending! I really didn't see it coming at all. Love it!

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## **Heather Hayden says**

The story is told in first person, with much introspection and internal monologues. Although it took me a while to get into the flow of the narrative, as the story unfolded I found myself becoming more and more intrigued. What at first seems like a cut-and-dried case of long-lost love develops into an unexpected mystery centered around the main character's dead girlfriend.

Without saying too much about the plot, for fear of spoiling any of the many surprises waiting within the pages, I will admit that my initial impression of the main character was of a whiner, too lost in his past to look forward to the future, or even enjoy the present.

As he shares his story, though, he begins to strive to change, to accept what has happened. His ever-loyal friend, Richard, stays by his side, as does his new girlfriend (and Jen herself deserves full marks for all the crap she's been dealing with...she's truly an angel.)

However, the more he struggles to find the truth, the more elusive it becomes. A letter, an unexpected remark, a stray dog... It is clear, as the story races towards the conclusion, that not everything is as it seems. Not even the man who, in the opening chapter, stands on a precipice, ready to jump.

Although not the kind of story I usually seek out, I did find *The Unseen Face* an interesting read, one that captured and held my attention until the end. It's short enough to be read in one sitting, perhaps a stormy afternoon--dark clouds and thunder would be the perfect backdrop for this mystery.

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## **Christopher Allen says**

*The Unseen Face* is one of those books that manages the most important thing I can ask for from a story – it kept me turning the pages. It's a bit of a departure from some of my usual literary fare, but I certainly don't regret the time I spent reading it.

I'll say straight up that *The Unseen Face* is quite a bleak story – quite intentionally – and Joannes Rhino writes in a spare style about the world through which the protagonist, James, finds himself moving. This works pretty well to give focus to the real battlegrounds on which the story plays out, namely within the mind of James and in his interactions with those around him. It's a story about mental illness, depression and identity and, while sometimes Rhino's poetic prose gets the better of him and slips out of his grasp a little, he does a good job of portraying the grim revelations of James' troubled mind. To be honest, mental illness is a topic that is often handled clumsily and with a fairly slapdash understanding, but the author clearly has done research or has personal experience and this shows through.

Although a book that's mostly about one man's mental breakdown, I found it very readable throughout; the

pacing is good and didn't leave me feeling like I was slogging through any slow points. I didn't find the reveal of the ending to be a great surprise, but I didn't mind that much either – the pleasure in reading *The Unseen Face* is in the journey you take alongside James.

My one concern with the book is that it does feel like it could do with at least another pass from an editor. There are occasional spelling or grammar mistakes that could easily be cleared out, and as an editor myself I found that I was sometimes reaching for the red pen to mark out Rhino's more florid poetic excesses for pruning or reigning in.

Overall, however, I enjoyed the story and it kept my attention the whole way through. It's an exploration of emotion, depression and grief with some very dark undercurrents, leavened with a reminder of hope.

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### **Vaughan Humphries says**

*The Unseen Face* is a psychological thriller from an up and coming author, certainly one to keep an eye out for in the future. It starts in media res, making use of classic literary vehicles and there is some truly brilliant writing in places that make the most mundane moments seem so much more vibrant and engaging.

We follow the protagonist James Maddox to the depths of his living hell and back again. Despite having the apparent trappings of success working at the bank and the support of his closest friend Richard and his beautiful girlfriend Jennifer, Maddox suffers from an agonising personal conflict and recurring nightmare of the violent death of the love of his life Emilia, which he struggles to share with anyone. The murky depths of his mind slowly clears with the patience and guidance of his psychiatrist Dr. Jonathan. Unfortunately, the truth is hard to handle and the overlying question as the story progresses is can Maddox handle the truth?

Mental illness is a subject that although not taboo, is something that is very rarely covered in the literary world and it is evident from the execution of the narrative that Rhino has spent a great deal of time and thought into this book.

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### **Roy De la pena says**

This is one of the complicated books I've ever read. But quite entertaining.

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### **Pattimari says**

Busy, but never too busy to write a review on a book that I thought was well written and held my attention throughout the entire read. Joannes has done an excellent job of offering the reader a feeling of being connected in the story. I had to rate it a five because he deserves it. Great job Joannes!

Pattimari Sheets Cacciolfi, Therapist, Author, VP to PnPAuthors Promotions where we spotlight author's book; free  
pattimari@hotmail.com



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## **sue says**

When the author Joannes Rhino approached me on Goodreads to ask if I would be interested in reading *The Unseen Face*, I first of all read the blurb to find out what it was about.

I started to read it, as I turned the pages, it intrigued me with how the book was going, it was not straight forward reading at times, but I knew that it was going to be something I needed to read more of for things to fall into place more with me, so I carried on.

The first part was a slow burner for me, but it soon heated up in a way that I didn't expect.

The dreams, or should I say, Nightmares that he was experiencing was awful. I think I would get nightmares after reading it. Its graphic enough for me to imagine what he himself was experiencing! I have a pretty weak stomach, but I got through it OK. It wasn't that bad looking back, but I'm not much into horror. Its the imagining the blood and gore. This did not distract from the storyline as it was vital to it. I could see that something was amiss.

This is a psychological thriller at its best.

I learnt quite a few things from this book too. I learnt about how to see dreams from different angles amongst other things, very enlightening.

I wish I could say I didn't guess the ending, but I did. I still enjoyed the book though as there were many facets to it that took you down roads and cul de sacs that kept your mind alert.

The relationship he had with his girlfriend I thought was good, at times I wanted to kick him up the jacksy for not telling her what was happening to him. Even though his best mate told him it was the right thing to do, tell her for gods sake, let her have a choice.

I can honestly say I've not read a book like this before that was written in such a way as this.

I started out wondering and willing myself to like it, and in the end, I loved it. Brilliant piece of work.

The only downside for me was the proofing, the layout was such that it needs some attention and the editing needs to be relooked at as the speech mark are mostly incorrect and other things too. Maybe the author would like to address that problem.

Also at the beginning of each chapter the first letter is above the beginning sentence.....for example:

T  
he cat sat on the mat.

This was the layout throughout the book. Although minor things, nothing that wouldn't help the reader keep

more focused instead of the distraction at times.

I would like to thank Joannes Rhino for allowing me to read and review his book.

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