



If Jack Had

Steven Rappaport

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Jack, a journalist with a killer story.

This dark, ironic, tale of duality and dying, is a story of fathers and sons. If you love Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, and Elmore Leonard, this book will resonate. Jack is a New York Times journalist with a second job as a contract killer for the Russian Mob. “What’s the difference between a serial killer and an assassin? A pay check.” The events occur mainly in Manhattan, Miami, Tel Aviv, and Greece. The book begins at the end, with the protagonist preparing to kill his final victim; himself. It finishes where it began. In between there is sex, laughs, deaths. . . and a bit of incontinence.

If Jack Had Details

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Author : Steven Rappaport

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From Reader Review If Jack Had for online ebook

Larry H says

Full disclosure: I received an advance copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for an unbiased review.

"Some people choose a profession. For others, there is a calling. Of course, I had never questioned what I did. I was born to it. I loved it."

Jack was a journalist for the *New York Times*, but that's not the profession he's speaking of. Instead, he's referring to his "second," more profitable job—as a hit man for the Russian mob.

In Steven Rappaport's *If Jack Had*, his now-elderly protagonist, whose body and mind are in the midst of daily decline, looks back on his rich, full life. He had a beautiful, devoted wife who was always the love of his life, four children of whom he is proud, wonderful grandchildren. But it is his many years as a hired gun for a Russian mobster and his family that he thinks about most. But make no mistake: these aren't the regrets of a dying man, more the marveling of a life well lived, even if at times it was a bit more exciting than he'd have liked.

This book is a rollicking ride through Jack's life, from being shuttled between two parents who wanted little to do with their child to finding nurturing love from his stepmother, how he pursued his "freelance" career, and some of his most notable assignments. It's also tremendously reflective, a man looking back at his legacy, so to speak, and the few times he actually struggled with what he did. Sure, this is a story of a cold-blooded killer, but it's also the story of a flawed man with a tremendous capacity for love and a tremendous need to be loved. Jack is definitely a colorful, complex, multidimensional character.

If Jack Had is a breezy, fun read. Sometimes it spent a little too much time dwelling on his father's behavior, but it is understandable given the effect his parents' behavior had on his life. And when I read that Rappaport wrote this book to create a life for his son, who died suddenly at age 40 from an unknown neurological disorder, the book took on a little more gravitas. Definitely a fun one.

See all of my reviews at <http://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com>...

Ionia says

I think the blurb description of this book is very apt. It is dark, and it is ironic. This is a gritty, no-holds-barred type of book that will not be for everyone, but those who love it will truly love it.

I've always liked narrators that get right to the heart of the story and tell you how they feel about life, and you definitely get that with this book. From his adventures as a much younger man to the final moments of his life, this narrator gives it to you straight and doesn't hold back.

This is the kind of book that keeps you wondering what will happen next, makes your imagination run wild and then twists and goes for shock value when you don't expect it to. Kind of reminded me a little of Pulp Fiction, at least in the way the atmosphere of the story came across.

I think people who enjoy books that are a bit outside the conventional will find something to love here. There's some dark humour worthy of a good laugh, an interesting story and a character strong enough to lead a book like this. Overall, I thought it was definitely worth a recommendation.

This review is based on a complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Dianne says

Meet Jack. See Jack grow up, watch him become a loving family man, an accomplished journalist, and then in the blink of an eye, see the real Jack, the one able to kill someone else's loved one with steely, cold precision. Jack has a secret life, he is an assassin for the Russian Mafia, and he is good at what he does, why? Because he likes it. But heaven help anyone who hurts HIS family, from the wife he claims to adore to his well-bred children. But the secret Jack has affairs, one night stands, does drugs, and as the years go by, his isn't as sharp as he once was, he is old, feeble, everything he used to his advantage as a killer. A man who has always been on the trigger end of the barrel, the handle end of a knife has decided he will also control his death. Or will he?

If Jack Had by Steven Rappaport is dark, twisted and there is no hero, not really and Mr. Rappaport is good with that in his no holds barred telling of his tale. A very dark sense of humor and a sad look at aging in a man who has played God make **If Jack Had** come across as the seamy side of deceit for a man clearly a cold-hearted sociopath. Per Mr. Rappaport's own words, this tale was created to give a life to a loved one who died too soon, too young. Interesting to note he gave this person a life centered around others dying too soon, too young or to make a statement to another. All in the name of money.

Telling this tale from the perspective of the main character, it is a timeline that reaches into the past and ties it to his present actions, not by way of remorse, but cold facts. A daring move on Mr. Rappaport's part as his bold and calculating style depicts everything from dysfunctional and broken families to the dark secrets of a seemingly "All-American" one. If you want to step off the curb of main stream plots and dare crossing the street to the dark side, you will find this tale an interesting departure from tales of good vs evil. Sometimes evil is just comfortable with itself, and asks no true forgiveness.

I received an ARC edition in exchange for my honest review.

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Reviewed for: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

Starr says

This was an interesting idea of a story. It was on that took me a while to get into, and in the end I would say that this just wasn't for me. But it did leave me curious. Jack leads a double life as an assassin and a journalist. But the story is more about the family with sprinklings of stories about his job tossed in. I read the entire book, but have to admit it was more to finish the book than anything to do with the story. It was an okay story, and maybe I would have enjoyed it a bit more if it had not been so slow. The ending had the potential to be ironic and maybe even heartfelt, but it fell flat. If Jack is suffering from dementia, as we are told in the end he is, I would have liked to see evidence of that throughout the entire story. While this story isn't for me, I am curious to check out what else Rappaport writes.

2 stars**

Heidi Gonzalez says

Dark and funny this book is the dark tale of getting old, and trying to reconcile your life. It's also about family. Jack is a NY times journalist who realizes when he is in college that he also has a knack for killing people and getting away with it. So he hooks up with the Russian Mob to start his second job as a hit man for the Mafia, his secret life isn't known to his children but he uses it to keep tabs on them.

Jack is a no holds barred kinda guy, he tells it like it is, well mostly in his head but sometimes to the people around him. His father is an ass, his step-mother a doll, his mother a narcissistic bitch, his children have made something of themselves, and his wife was the love of his life and now that she is gone and he is mostly incontinent he doesn't feel life is worth living anymore.

The story of Jack's life flips back and forth in time and is extremely entertaining, and often tongue in cheek. If you like Woody Allen there are quite a few similarities in this style of book so you may want to find this one for your shelves.

Rita says

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. My opinion is in no way biased.

Initial thoughts:

1. An out of comfort zone read for me, but still a nice experience overall.
2. Liked especially the family dynamics and Jack's personal life.
3. The jumps through Jack's life and from storyline to storyline were a bit too abrupt and irritating for me.
4. The ending was, in my opinion, not believable and too far-fetched.
5. Still, the story was easy and fast to fly through. It was an okay read for me.

Check out my full review on my blog!

Yolanda Johnson-Bryant says

If Jack Had – Steven Rappaport – Publication Date: 2015 - No other data – 978-612964911 – Black Rose Writing – Paperback ARC - 2 Stars

I have to admit that I couldn't finish this book. Tried as I might, even after several tries I just gave up. The opening chapter hooked me, but from there I was lost. Not only was I lost, I found the book hard to follow. As an author and former editor, I would recommend that the author get this book professionally edited. Literary Wonders! rarely comments on errors found in book, UNLESS they interfere with the story line and overall reading of the book. The noticeable errors in this book were not grammar or misspelled words, but there were constant story flow issues. There were instances where one thought, or even a sentence, was separated by another sentence or even another paragraph. I put this book down several times and picked it back up, but I still found the same problems.

Again, I am not saying the author does not have a good story or plot, but when the writing makes it hard for a reader to follow the book, then they miss the story. I would suggest a professional edit and a re-release. I received this complimentary book from Smith Publicity in exchange for my honest review.

Cats of Ulthar says

REVIEW: IF JACK HAD by Steven Rappaport

IF JACK HAD is a first-person narrative as told by an aging individual whose life has been one of ongoing, nearly seamless, deception. Born of hideous parents, at age three Jack is shunted to his foul-mouthed father and loving and lovable new stepmother. Growing up, Jack manages the trappings of success and maintenance of the appearance of normality. A respected traveling New York journalist, with a lovely wife and well-brought up children and grandchildren, Jack builds a few friendships and meanwhile hides his true nature (or lack of nature). Jack is a cold-natured sociopathic killer for contract, employed by (of all things) the Russian Mafiya. Jack is very skilled at his second vocation, but eventually, all processes, even success and talent, must meet an end.

MaryJane Brodeck says

If Jack Had is a dark, ironic story of a man in search of filling the void of his father's love, only to resolve it as an adult in a dysfunctional and violent way.

Rappaport gives the reader an insider's look at the Russian mob through the eyes of Jack, a journalist with a dualistic personality who has a second "job" as a hired hit man. Jack was the product of a dysfunctional family. His young hippy mother worked from home as a masseuse – and whore. Behind Jack's gentle façade, he was overflowing with rage. A school bully taunted him relentlessly about his mother being a whore. The next day, Jack killed the bully with one rock to his head in Central Park. Jack was never caught.

After entering Columbia's School of Journalism, he sought out work in the journalism field, along with a job feeding his dark side. He woos Monika Minskova, the daughter of Serge Minskova. Serge controlled most of the drugs, loan sharking, illegal gambling and a stable of contract killers in New York. After seeing Monika

for a few months, Serge pulls Jack aside after dinner. Serge's instinct picked up on Jack's evil side. Serge asked him to be a contract killer. As arrogant and boastful Jack's father had been, Serge was soft-spoken and understated, never revealing his massive power and influence. Jack was only too happy to agree to this second job.

Jack, the main protagonist, is a well fleshed out and relatable character. His lack of acceptance from his father becomes misplaced onto Serge. Jack continues to work as an assassin, feeling guilty about it his entire life. Plenty of Yiddish is peppered throughout adds to the story's flavor. For those not familiar with Yiddish, you may need to look up some of the words. For the most part, you'll understand the meaning.

You'll follow Jack as he leads his second life doing "jobs" all over the world. From Paris, to Greece, to the pot havens of Northern California. Rappaport's direct, colorful style of storytelling suits this dark, gritty story. I was on edge through the entire book, leading to a surprising end. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys stories about assassins, Russian Mobs, and father son relationships.

A copy of this book was provided to me from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Arra Abella says

If *Jack Had* caught my attention from the moment I read its synopsis. From its tagline, "A journalist with a killer story", clearly, I was promised to have an exciting ride. The plot was really interesting I have to give the author that. How cool it is to be a journalist by day and a secret hitman or assassin by night. How could you say no to such a unique storyline? Like a fish that was about to bite a worm on a hook, I took the bait.

The story was told in a very complex way of narrating. Jack told his story from his point of view and started off on how he ended up with his nighttime job. It shifts from present Jack to his younger version then to another timeline. It's quite hard to keep track and it made the story less cohesive in terms of having a progressive storyline.

When it comes to the characters, I had a clear idea on who's who, what they are, and how they do. But for some reason, I feel like the character that lacks more personality is the protagonist himself--Jack. For such an exciting persona, he should've had a strong aura about him that will get you hooked to know him more. I appreciate that he was able to make me curious with his sociopathic instincts, but I guess that's not enough. For me, Jack fell flat, and the rest followed--which includes every event that occurred or mentioned, other characters, and the rest of the story. I wish the author digged deeper when it comes to Jack's thoughts, assignments, and a stronger backstory. I think the ending was also an overkill. I felt that it was too good to be true or too forced at the same time. It was too scripted.

Overall, it was still an interesting read but, not a book you should pick up when you're looking for something worthwhile to read. It definitely needs a lot of improvement and adjustments. Though I appreciate that it was a story Jack could've had, but I believe that the author could've done a way better job to it because it really felt half-baked.

Jason Pettus says

(Reprinted from the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com]. I am the original author of this essay, as well as the owner of CCLaP; it is not being reprinted illegally.)

I have a special sympathetic place in my heart for amateur writers who publish through glorified quasi-vanity places like Eraserhead, iAuthor and Black Rose, otherwise normal people out in the private sector who had exactly one story in them that they felt particularly compelled to write down; for while all these presses mentioned are legitimate ones that don't charge authors money to publish with them (the usual definition of a "vanity" press), they nonetheless make their money off the "long tail" theory of content economics, under the assumption that if they can release a million print-on-demand books that each sell one copy apiece, that still makes them millionaires, turning their business model into the same traditional one of actual vanity presses, to publish every single manuscript they can possibly get their hands on and then rely on a well-oiled publicity staff to squeeze out as many Amazon reviews as they can before moving on to book #1,463.

That's how I ended up with a copy of Steven Rappaport's *If Jack Had*, which serves as a great example of what I'm talking about; the first and only novel from a self-described "former stock trader, former pot dealer, and current real estate salesperson," it's clearly not up to even the minimum standards of literary quality that most professional review organizations would require for a book to even be considered, the kind of cheapie POD paperback with a cheesy Photoshopped cover that your middle-aged "artsy" uncle might give you a copy of over Thanksgiving, just to find yourself praying on Christmas on the car ride over, "Oh God I hope Uncle Steve doesn't ask me what I thought of his book." There's a legitimate place in our society for books like these, and I love that we exist in an age where non-professionals can so easily put out these kinds of titles to sell to their twenty friends and relatives who might actually care; but it's clearly the kind of book that should've never been sent to an industry-focused publication like ours in the first place, and that only was because up to recently we've had an open promise to review each and every book that ever gets sent to us, a policy we're changing this year precisely because of titles like *If Jack Had*. (Change #1 -- we're no longer accepting books directly from publicists, where 95 percent of these unreviewable titles come from.) Although I'm glad to see Rappaport go to the trouble of writing a book like this, and would give him the same feedback as any well-meaning nephew if I saw him over Christmas ("Great job, Uncle Steve! I can't believe you actually published a book!"), I can't in good conscience say that this novel is worth anyone besides those nephews and office co-workers of his checking it out.

Out of 10: **2.0**

Andrew says

I offer this review, having been given a pre-release copy, through Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.

From chapter one I liked this story. The character of Jack is subtly drawn out. I liked the parts from his early childhood. Where his determination and personality are explained. So this is how he ended up with such an unusual 'second job'.

With my English roots, I sometimes find that I miss some of your American humour. However in this book there are some clever humorous lines:

"Most of my life my father was fat, bald and sedentary. He found the gym at fifty and shaped up pretty much. But no amount of exercise grows hair."

"She was passionate, but mostly passionately mean. She was brilliant, with an off-the-chart IQ, but the emotional IQ of a bird."

He's full of himself and thinks he's the smartest guy in the room. Sadly, that's true only if it is an empty room."

The way the story jumps to different stages in Jack's life helps to keep you guessing. You know where the end is, because you are told at the start. However there is something interesting about the end, when you get there.

I liked the way the story of Jack's life was told.

Kristen Chandler says

Do you ever read a book that is so unique, you don't think you've ever read one quite like it? That is how i felt about If Jack Had. Sure it may fall under a certain genre, or the story line may resemble that of another but overall.....nope, I don't think I've read a book quite like If Jack Had. If I have, it apparently was nowhere as good as this one, because it didn't make an impression.

If Jack Had is narrated by the protagonist, Jack, when he is an old man. He's looking back on his life and remembering. Jack was a journalist for the NY Times, as well as a husband, father and grandfather. But what Jack reflects on the most was his second job, that as a hitman for the mob.

AND that is where the story completely grabbed me. Call me, weird, twisted, dark whatever you want.....but I am extremely fascinated by mob stories. I love them. I'm intrigued for some reason. So i breezed threw this book and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Now, if you're not into mob stories, or a story told from a hitman's POV, or dark humor, then this book probably isn't for you. But if you are into reading those things, then you should check out If Jack Had today.

Maureen says

In 'If Jack Had' we meet Jack, a man in his nighties and on the end of his life. Jack has had a very different life than most. He spend his life working to two totally different jobs. Jack is a journalist and an assassin for the Brighton Beach Russian Mobsters. His wife and his four children have no idea of his double life. And that is exactly how Jack likes it. Jack is not your average assassin. Jack really is a kind and loving man, who would give everything for his wife and family. But Jack really loved his job as an assassin. Jack is the kind of guy who's better in killing someone, than to make a simple request.

In 'If Jack Had', we go through Jack's life, his kills, his travels, his life as a child with ignorant parents and his life as an old man tired of life.

Like I said before 'If Jack Had' is a very different read for me than my normal reads. But I'm glad I tried this book because it really was a fun read. It's totally different than what I'm used to, but I really liked the way Steven Rappaport wrote this book. This book is fun, a little weird but it also makes you want to keep reading.

I read this book in one day, because I just had to read more about how a guy became an assassin and still seemed to be the perfect dad and husband.

This book starts at the end, when Jack is in his nighties, and with each chapter we get more and more to the beginning of his life. But there are some parts about Jack's early childhood throughout this book. Although this is a very interesting thing about this book, it also made it a little hard for me to keep track of everything all the time. But thankfully, it always became clear where we were in Jack's life.

'If Jack Had' was definitely a read out of my comfort zone, but I really enjoyed it and would definitely recommend it to other readers out there, looking for something different. I promise you, Steven Rappaport has this way of writing that even makes a romance/ fantasy/ paranormal book lover like me enjoy it. It has to be a good book if he was able to do that!! ;)

Cheryl M-M says

Rappaport has written a main character, who is full of a deep inner anger. Jack comprehends that particular side of himself, which is why I think he decides to seek out a solution or rather an avenue to express his true emotions.

The anger and resentment is present from the very beginning. The violence goes hand in hand with him throughout his childhood and then adult life. Does he enjoy it? Does he feel the need to kill? Do the kills fill him with an inner satisfaction?

I think the answer to those questions is fairly obvious at any time during the story. Jack is two people at the same time. The loving family man with a mediocre life, and the killer with a penchant for brutality. Never the twain shall meet.

Jack comes to a drastic conclusion towards the end of his life. In his muddled state he has become a liability, a risk factor he and others can't really measure. To save his fake image, his family and to keep everyone safe from his business associates.

In an ironic twist, someone close to him has followed in the same angry footsteps. Is that the call of nature or has he nurtured someone like himself? Perhaps his secret life wasn't as secret as he thought. The ones who think they are smarter than everyone else, tend not be as smart as they think they are. Jack seems to have become a believer in his own myth.

I enjoyed the way Rappaport ended the book. In his own way he has shown that we are all but mere mortals, no matter how great, intelligent, dangerous or humane we are. No difference is made between a person, who has led their life with integrity, purpose and has left a positive mark on society or one who has left nothing but a trail of negativity behind them. Death is the same to all.

This is a fast paced tale with many layers if you look closely and read between the lines.
I received a free copy of this book courtesy of the publisher & author.
