



Unknown Horizons

C.J. Birch

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The moment Lieutenant Alison Ash steps aboard the Persephone, she knows her life will never be the same. She will never again watch the sun rise over the asteroid belt, never again see Earth from a handheld telescope, and never again see her family.

In less than three weeks, the ship will dock at the Posterus and begin the most important journey humankind has ever undertaken. More important than discovering fire, creating language, or even abandoning Earth to live confined in biospheres among the asteroid belt over 100 years ago.

What Ash doesn't expect is that by keeping her recent memory loss a secret she is jeopardizing not only the Persephone's mission but humankind's launch of the first ever generational ship. Nor does she anticipate her attraction to Captain Jordan Kellow, but both will change her life forever.

Words: 52,000

Cover Artist: W.E. Percival

Editor: Katia Noyes

Genre: Speculative Fiction

Unknown Horizons Details

Date : Published April 18th 2017 by Bold Strokes Books

ISBN : 9781626399389

Author : C.J. Birch

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Lgbt, Romance

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From Reader Review Unknown Horizons for online ebook

? percy ♡ says

this book falls in the awkward gray area between novel and novella, and whereas some books can make that work, i'd have vastly preferred a few more thousand words to bring this firmly in the novel category.

the seed for a good story was there, but it was limited in its growth by the short amount of words. there was little worldbuilding, which is pretty crucial for the space opera genre, and none of the storylines were really pursued to their full potential. the romance, for example, was not all that developed at all. (and ash runs away from her after their kiss like i did from my crush one time when i was twelve. i mean, it wasn't after a kiss because i didn't have that much charisma when i was twelve (or currently... haha... ha) but my point still stands, grown-ups don't run away when things go awry.)

In Ageless Sleep is a really good example of a space opera that manages to fit a compelling and well-built world and narrative in the short framework of a novella (and it's also f-f), but *unknown horizons* didn't quite manage it, i'm afraid.

i will fittingly end this review with a comment on the ending: whereas i'm not against cliffhangers as a general concept, i *am* against them when there are no other real threads tied up and the whole plot is just left suspended in midair. cliffhangers only work when all other plotlines are resolved and there is one (maybe two) specific threads that are left, so to speak, hanging over a cliff. but when there is little-to-no resolution, i'm afraid it just does not work, and that is what happened here.

Alex Peters says

I enjoyed reading the book and will keep an eye out for hopefully, the sequel to this book. The story was quite engaging and the action was not lacking. Characterization was a little uneven at points but it did not drag the story down at all. The tension between both characters and the love scenes were done well.

Lex Kent says

2 1/2 Stars. Have you ever finished a book and thought "what the hell did I just read?" It has only happened to me once or twice, but it absolutely happened after reading this book. I'm struggling to process what I just read, how to review it, and even how to rate it.

I love lesfic sci-fi, and will happily read any new books in that category that come out. I was really looking forward to this. I'm just so torn. I thought the setting and world building really worked. The book is very fast paced, and I got into it quickly. It isn't overloaded with made up or real scientific terms; I understood everything that was going on.

The characters were so so. The main character absolutely drove me nuts, contrary to her her rank, she wasn't always the sharpest tool in the shed. And when it came to the Captain, she wasn't as captain-ish, as she

needed to be. The romance is almost nonexistent, which I felt was a real missed opportunity.

However, my biggest issue is with the ending, if you can call it that. What the heck was that? Can I even call it a cliffhanger? I don't know. Was that the end of the story, or will there be a book 2. The book just ends, like it is missing the last 1/3 of it. The book is short, almost a novella, so it really seemed like the book was just cut off. I absolutely hate this kind of ending, and I came away actually feeling angry about it. I really wish the author would have written Fin, End, The End, or let us know the adventure will continue in book 2. Something, anything, but how this book "ended".

I just can't recommend this. I would have rated this 3 or 3 1/2 stars without the ending, it just ruined it too much for me. I think people that read this will get into this book and enjoy the fast paced story. But there is going to be plenty of people that say, "what the hell did I just read?"

An ARC was given to me by BSB, for a honest review.

Jane Shambler says

Have you ever read a book that left you thinking wtf? Well this one did to me. There is no explanation to why what or where. You jump straight in. Now that can be a good thing admittedly getting straight to the story but I needed just a little more information.

Now, I liked what I read but I'm still feeling a little dazed. Let me see if I get this right. Earth is no longer populated due to it being unable to support human life. They now live amongst the stars. Ash the first officer was held hostage in the past and a module put in her body which made her forget her internment. But with the on board doctors help she starts to remember. The Burrs are some kind of human x cyborg beings who feel the mission that Ash is on is wrong and are using Ash to stop it. Am I confusing you? Good. Now the Captain Jordan has a twist at the end that I honestly did not see coming. As you can guess there is some kind of romance between Ash and Jordan.

Then, Birch decides not to finish the dam book. COME ON? Cliffhanger maybe, tormenting me definitely. Now I am praying to anyone who will listen... there had better be a sequel or I'm jumping out or my window. Don't worry I live in a bungalow drop is about 4 feet.

NOTE TO AUTHOR.... WE NEED A SEQUEL AND MAYBE A PREQUEL

I gave it 3.5 stars because what I read I liked. My other complaint was that it was way too short. You got to the juicy bit and it stops and everything go's white. Frustrated? you bet!

I would recommend it but please do not read it anywhere you could do yourself damage. You need to be safe and secure because the urge will hit you. Enjoy!

ARC provided by publisher via NetGalley

Yoly says

This was a very quick read. Firstly, because the book isn't too long (I'm not complaining) and secondly, I couldn't put it down. From the first chapter the author throws you into this fast-paced story that doesn't feel rushed.

Although I appreciate a short story, I think an extra 100 pages on this one wouldn't have hurt. By the time it ended I really wanted more. I hope this is just the first part of a series, at least it felt that way. But it doesn't say it's a first part of a series so that worries me a bit. I NEED to know more!

My wishlist for a sequel (or sequels?) is more world building because the setting was interesting enough that I want to know more. More background on the characters, while we got some back story on Alison and Jordan I think there is room for more.

Either way, this was a fantastic read for me. It is always a nice surprise when I can't put a book down. I will be keeping an eye out for this author.

Karen says

Good points: The basic through-line of the plot and the grammar. Birch thanked her editor, because she did not know about the proper uses of commas.

Bad points: Everything else. This is probably one of the worst books I have read in years. The author is good at telling, but horrible at showing action. The main characters are absolutely unbelievable. Birch shows she has never read a proper space opera or knows anything about how the military operates.. The first give away was the fact that Lieutenant Alison Ash is met by a corporal. She is on a ship. SHe would have been met by an ensign or a midshipman. She says the crew is small, but how small? She gives no number, which might not seem important, but is due to the fact 1). neither she nor security can figure out who breaks into her quarters and vandalizes everything (this happens before the end of Ash's first week), 2). the same "corporal" who welcomed Ash when she came on board and who Ash apparently assaults is the only one able to bring her meals, which he spits into while she watches, when she is confined to the brig and later her quarters, and 3). Vasa, who is assigned to keep track of Ash, must also cover the communications station at the same time. The ship has security. Why isn't security having one of it's members following Ash? This Vasa apparently also stinks for lack of bathing. Would the crew that serves with him complain. Why doesn't Ash, who is the exec, order him to shower before his smell kills everyone and they have to fumigate the ship?

Apparently Ash upsets the crew the first day of her arrival, because she orders them to run. We never see the scene. Yet, are they not part of the Union fleet and should be exercising. The only scenes we ever have are of Captain Jordan Kellow reprimanding Ash or of Ash's internal musings. No captain would ever have his or her office in a bedroom. It would be a room situated off the bridge. Apparently, an entire society exists out in the asteroid belt, but the first person to arrive did so only two generations ago. Birch says the asteroid settlements do not have a central government, yet Ash's father served in the Commons, the legislature. Well, that is the central government. May I suggest Ben Bova's Grand Tour series, including the Asteroid Wars trilogy.

Ash does not show at any point that she has the ability or the qualifications to be second in command. She is petulant and should have been relieved immediately and sent back to headquarters. She shows no understanding of her job or how and exec acts or behaves. She totally unbelievable. If you are looking for a novel with a proper second may I suggest the first in David Weber's Honor Harrington series, Balasik

Station. Here is a strong woman exec. Weber is also a damn good writer. Captain Kellow is also unfit for her job. She does not act like a captain. Part of the reason is that Birch never writes any scenes that show her being a captain.

If you are looking for a book with a lesbian sex scene, yep it is here. If you are looking for a good space opera or science fiction novel, this is not it. I wanted to believe. I love space operas and hard core science fiction, but male authors of the heterosexual persuasion dominate the field. I want to see more women authors. I also want to see a universe that is not 100% heterosexual. This story had potential, but poor storytelling gives this a D.

sarah pregit says

Hard to get into and not a good story line

Atlas says

I don't know what it is, but there's something comforting about cruising through space wrapped in the certainty that you're sometimes only inches from the utter stillness of space

* * *

3 / 5

Unknown Horizons absolutely nails some good sci-fi staples: an officer aboard a starship, a mission to help save humanity, a sort-of savage mech race, some religious aspects, and a nice romance. Lieutenant Alison "Ali" Ash has memory loss, a fact she conceal from Captain Jordan Kellow when she boards her vessel *Persephone*, en route to the *Posterus*, the first multigenerational ship setting sail for new habitable planets. As Ash alienates almost all of the crew, stranger things keep happening to her.

First off, this is a lesbian sci-fi romance. It's actually the second one I've read recently (In Ageless Sleep was the other) and both have suffered from the same problem: the romance isn't developed enough! In Unknown Horizons the chemistry between Ali and her Captain Jordan feels very real, but because this is a mere slim volume of a book, clocking in at about 240 pages, and not an epic sci-fi escapade, the romance is always competing for page time with the big plot that's going on. What we get is sweet and lovely and there's a rather explicit sex scene, but it really could have done with a bit more focus.

Part of me has been lost forever. I am one of the monsters who haunt our night time.

Then there's Ali herself. She's a bit standoffish, alienates the crew, is apparently a hard taskworker, and argues with her dad a lot. A few months beforehand, Ali was stationed on a station when the Burr attacked. The Burr are a type of semi-automated soldier, humans with mechanical parts, built for wars when people still lived on Earth. They have all sorts of weird ideas about human purity, but most worryingly, Ali can't actually remember much about the attack. Ali goes through some good character development.

I did really quite like the plot and Birch is good at doling out information when it becomes important and relevant. I was surprised, however, that the plot is so small and self-contained, as it were. The *Persephone*

barely reaches the *Posterus*, to begin the "most important journey humankind has ever undertaken". When I picked up *Unknown Horizons* that's what I expected it to be about: exploration, science, journeys. But it kinda ... isn't. Whilst I still really enjoyed the plot, it was not what I expected.

I'm seeing the captain, not Jordan. And it's not just that she's about to give me a direct order, it's everything about her.

Jordan is a much more interesting character with a delicious backstory that comes into play. She does seem like a bit of a weak Captain, however; she's got a first officer whose mattress has been sliced open by a crew member in a non-friendly manner, and there's all sorts of mutiny going on, but she never really does much about it. We also never really get to see Ali at her day to day job, which is a shame.

Unknown Horizons is quite a short but enjoyable sci-fi & romance novel. I particularly enjoyed the whole memory loss aspect and the beginning development of Ali and Jordan's relationship.

My thanks to Netgalley, the publisher, and the author for an ARC of this book.

Read this review and more on my blog: <https://atlasrisingbooks.wordpress.co...>

Neil says

I received a free copy via Netgalley in exchange for a honest review.

I really did not like this.

The book is poorly written and the characters were more like children than adults.

The only good thing was it is fairly short.

Just not for me.

John Purvis says

“Unknown Horizons” eBook was published in 2017 and was written by C. J. Birch. This is Birch’s first novel.

I received an ARC of this novel through <https://www.netgalley.com> in return for a fair and honest review. I categorize this novel as ‘R’ because it contains scenes of Violence, Mature Language and Mature Situations. The story is set in the future as humanity is about to launch its first colony ship to the stars. The primary character is Lieutenant Alison Ash.

Ash is newly assigned to the *Persephone* as the Executive Officer. While on their short journey to the colony ship *Posterus*, things begin to happen to Ash. The memory loss she experienced after the attack on Europa Science Station still bothers her and she is reluctant to let anyone know.

The Burrs (bio-technically enhanced throwbacks from the resource wars on Earth before humanity spread through the Solar System more than 100 years ago) want to stop the colony ship and are willing to do anything to prevent what they see as the abandonment of the human race. Complicating matters is the

increasing attraction between Ash and the Persephone's Captain, Jordan Kellow. Ash is not well liked by the crew for many reasons, but she is driven by honor, duty and loyalty to those she loves.

I thought that this was a very interesting 4 hour read of this 240 page science fiction novel. I liked the character of Ash and the plot. Some may not like the LGBTQ romance aspect of the novel, but that was not an overwhelming thread in the overall story. The cover art is OK. I give this novel a 4.2 (rounded down to a 4) out of 5.

Further book reviews I have written can be accessed at <https://johnpurvis.wordpress.com/blog/>.

Cathy (cathepsut) says

Ash is the new first officer of a generation ship about to set off into space, for a century long trip to a new home that she herself will never see. She has memory gaps from a previous event. Concealing those gaps makes life difficult at first and then quickly leads to the main storyline.

I am not quite sure what to make of this book. Told in first person, present tense. That took some getting used to. The writing is a little uneven and could have done with more editing. Some details are glanced over and not explained enough, others are explained too much. Some plot holes. And what's up with the tofu obsession? Would that be such a big deal, needing to get mentioned every single time, considering the setting?

One moment Ash is this insecure girl, in the next chapter she is assertive and a wanna-be kick-as heroine. The captain is not much more convincing. I really can't see those two as the commanding officers tasked with bringing 45 thousand people to a new home. Especially Ash doesn't come across as mature enough for her position.

My favourite characters were the engineer (Hello, Scotty!) and the doctor, but their roles were largely in the sidelines.

The plot idea was good and not what I expected. I am not sold on the writing though. I would have liked a stronger sci-fi element and less sappy romance.

And the ending - WTF? Massive cliffhanger and no sequel in sight. Now that sucks. I wasn't planning on getting a potential sequel, but now I will have no choice. Smart move, Ms Birch! Hurry the heck up!

The book blurb could probably do with a hint, that there will be a sequel, so people can consider the possibility of getting left dangling at the end of the book.

I received this free e-copy from the publisher/author via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review, thank you!

Jade says

ARC provided by Netgalley and the Publisher for an honest review

I absolutely enjoyed this storyline and couldn't put the book down which means that I sat up all night until I finished it. The premise of this book was unique and interesting and there was so much more potential for it but then I got to the end...

And that is exactly what happened. I feel like this is a book which could have just been about the sci-fi plot without the romance but there was a relationship in it so I think the author should have invested a bit more time in that if they were going to add that storyline in.

The only reason that I am giving this book 4 stars is because of how interesting the storyline was and how well written the book was until the end...

But if there is no sequel to this book then that rating will definitely drop.

Jem says

[dang cliffhanger! :((hide spoiler)]

Lawrence says

Couldn't even finish this book. The plot was all over the place .

I tried to give it a chance but it just got worst as it went on and on ...

Jackie says

What..... Is this the first book of a series or is this just a really crappy way to end the book????? I can't really tell!

This was an okay read. It was very short and fast-paced so you could read this super fast which was cool. The story had an interesting premise and was quite good, it could have used a bit more world building in my opinion.

There was a f/f romance which could have been really good, however, I didn't really connect with the characters and I REALLY didn't understand how the romance between the two of them developed. It was just kind of there???

Anyway, I'm giving this 3 stars maybe 2.5 I can't decide.

After some consideration, I'm giving this book 2 stars because I don't think I would recommend it to anyone.

I received an ARC from the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review
