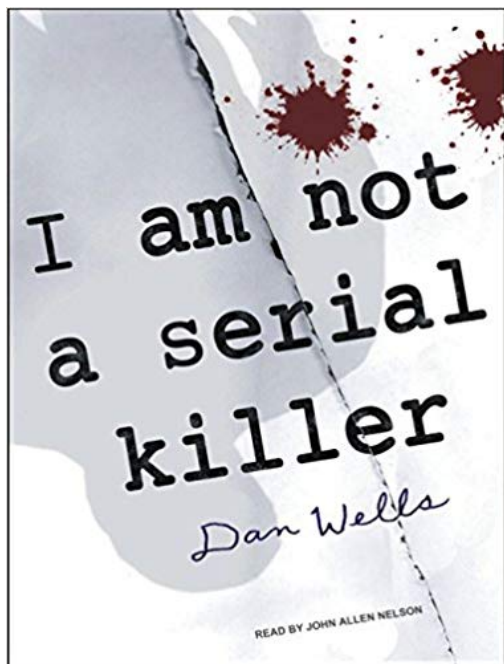
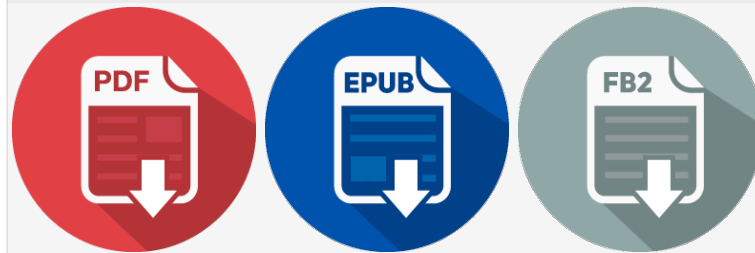


I Am Not a Serial Killer (John Cleaver) by John Allen Nelson, Dan Wells



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John works in his family's mortuary and has an obsession with serial killers. He wants to be a good person but fears he is a sociopath, and for years he has suppressed his dark side through a strict system of rules designed to mimic "normal" behavior. Then a demon begins stalking his small town and killing people one by one, and John is forced to give in to his darker nature in order to save them. As he struggles to understand the demon and find a way to kill it, his own mind begins to unravel until he fears he may never regain control. Faced with the reality that he is, perhaps, more monstrous than the monster he is fighting, John must make a final stand against the horrors of both the demon and himself.



Reviews of the I Am Not a Serial Killer (John Cleaver) by John Allen Nelson, Dan Wells

Ydely

I watched the movie first, thankfully, so I was prepared for what was all coming in the book.

I loved it so much more than the movie. John is the kind of character every author wishes he/she could create. I certainly do. He's an anti-hero that you can't help but fall in love with, and then you feel guilty about loving someone so screwed up, but that makes you love him more, because he's screwed up. A lovely sick cycle.

If you like incredibly well written YA paranormal, this is for you - don't let the YA deter you, John is every bit as adult as you or I. Maybe more so? He's a self-proclaimed, semi-diagnosed sociopath. He lacks empathy. He's got rules to keep him from doing anything bad, but he really really wants to do bad. He's a training mortician, and he dreams about embalming the girls in his classes. Yet there's something about him that's easy to associate with. Or maybe I'm just a psycho, who knows. He knows he can't hurt people, but when someone else starts hurting the people in his town, he figures maybe he can fight fire with fire. Emphasis on fire.

I will be honest - the series did not maintain the excellence that was this first novel. You can't maintain a character like John without losing something.

But with that being said, I inhaled all five over the course of four days, and I'm anxiously awaiting book six, and none of the books were rated below a 4 star from me, so they're still better than most of the stuff I read.

If you like dark and screwed up and strange and entrancing, I cannot recommend this book enough
DireRaven

At first, the protagonist in Dan Wells' *I Am Not a Serial Killer* feels like a young-adult version of Dexter (Jeff Lindsay's surprisingly likable vigilante psychopath). John Wayne Cleaver is a teenager with murderous impulses. But he doesn't want to act on them, so he walls off his inner monster with an ironclad set of rules: if you're thinking about hurting someone, compliment them instead; if you're starting to obsess over someone, avoid them for at least a week; etc. Basically, don't be crazy. All of this is similar to Dexter's "code," guidelines he follows to channel his demons in ways that don't endanger innocents.

But then a real demon shows up and starts butchering people. And it's this supernatural component that begins to set *I Am Not a Serial Killer* apart. We've seen the "It takes a killer to catch a killer" angle before; setting John on the trail of an actual monster was an interesting wrinkle.

Beyond the otherworldly aspect, though, what I really liked was how John's inner conflict drove the story. He convinces himself he's the only one who can stop the demon, but to do so, he has to unleash his own. Embracing his personal darkness both helps and hurts his cause: John's confident he can kill the demon, but he's drawn to—and distracted by—the carnage his quarry leaves in its wake. The demon also turns out to be a reluctant villain, motivated by emotions that make it feel more human to John than he does to himself.

My only real issue was that the supernatural element ultimately felt a little underplayed (and late; it doesn't get introduced until several chapters in). John is shocked when he first sees the demon reveal its true form, but he doesn't seem surprised that it exists. Even if this is because he lives with his own beast, I could have done with more of John researching tales of demons, looking to mythology for ways to defeat them, etc.

Oh, and it goes without saying that the story is super twisted. But if you liked Dexter or want to see a great example of how to connect—and complicate—a character's inner and external goals, give *I Am Not a Serial Killer* a shot.

saafari

A 15-year-old sociopath knows his tendencies and resists them with (or despite) the help of his therapist.

I had this book in my queue for a couple of years and resisted reading, probably because of the years I had been immersed in the TV show Dexter. Once I decided to read it, I found it much more compelling than I expected. And I must say that by the final third of the book, I found myself in full non-stop reading mode.

As a Thomas Harris fan, I enjoy psychological horror. Although Dan Wells is not yet a Thomas Harris (and really, few pro writers are) I found that there was enough interesting psychology to propel the novel and my interest.

And though I was initially unsure about this being a series I would continue, I'm now putting the second book in my cue and warming up for it.

Other reviews have already given away the genre-mixing difference in this book. I recommend that if you don't know about it, avoid those reviews and dive in. It's a refreshing difference, one that helps keep this world unique and not so Dexterish.

Recommended.

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