



# Scribes

*James Wolanyk*

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*Pawns in an endless war, scribes are feared and worshipped, valued and exploited, prized and hunted. But there is only one whose powers can determine the fate of the world . . .*

Born into the ruins of Rzolka's brutal civil unrest, Anna has never known peace. Here, in her remote village—a wasteland smoldering in the shadows of outlying foreign armies—being imbued with the magic of the scribes has made her future all the more uncertain.

Through intricate carvings of the flesh, scribes can grant temporary invulnerability against enemies to those seeking protection. In an embattled world where child scribes are sold and traded to corrupt leaders, Anna is invaluable. Her scars never fade. The immunity she grants lasts forever.

Taken to a desert metropolis, Anna is promised a life of reverence, wealth, and fame—in exchange for her gifts. She believes she is helping to restore her homeland, creating gods and kings for an immortal army—until she witnesses the hordes slaughtering without reproach, sacking cities, and threatening everything she holds dear. Now, with the help of an enigmatic assassin, Anna must reclaim the power of her scars—before she becomes the unwitting architect of an apocalyptic war.

## Scribes Details

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Author : James Wolanyk

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## From Reader Review Scribes for online ebook

### Jodi says

I received this book in a Goodreads giveaway, and so I hate to give a negative review and say that it just wasn't what I was hoping for. I love SciFi/Fantasy and had high hopes for this book, but it just took too many wrong turns for me. It failed to hold my interest and the story line was just not one that appealed to me. The story seemed dark and depressing with no uplifting counter story, or characters, to balance it out. The author used too many made up terms and mixed them with current day curses which made for a confusing read at times. The main character was likable but even she didn't have much depth. I get what the author was trying to do. He wanted to take a girl who had a gift and show that it could be used for evil even though that's not what she intended. But the brutal death of her little brother was never avenged, and who doesn't want to see an unjust death go unpunished? The other characters as well had no depth to them, nothing to make me love them and cry over their death or plight. I guess there just wasn't anything in Scribes to make me bond with it and keep going back whenever I had to put it down. In fact it was just the opposite, I had to force myself to continue to pick it up in order to even finish it.

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### Sharon Jane says

I received a free advance copy of this book for a fair review. I thoroughly enjoyed reading Scribes and couldn't put it down. This is more than just a story of Anna, an innocent young girl who has the power of life and death, it is a story of lost innocence, of morality and of how good and evil are merely perceptions based on the vantage point you are looking at things from.

Anna's simple, fairly safe, life in a war ravaged remote village, is blown apart when her father's betrayal forces her to run away with her little disabled brother and things go downhill from there. We are plunged from the start into a dark realm where dangers lurk everywhere, the worth of a life can be measured in grains of salt and reality can be harsh and cruel. She is thrust into the midst of grief, pain, deception, confusion, and the harshness of a world where she is unprotected, vulnerable and alone, not knowing who, if anyone she can trust. We follow her as she endures hardships, learns and acquires knowledge and finds inner strength.

The action is fast paced in a world in turmoil as the fight for power rages on and brutality is the norm - Scribes are sought after because only they can grant temporary invulnerability, they are therefore captured and used by leaders of armies. Until now, the fact that Anna is a scribe has been kept hidden for her protection but once her secret is uncovered, there is no going back. She is torn from all that she knows and forced to question what if anything she has been told is true. Anna has the most powerful abilities of her kind and as such is sought after by ruthless leaders who will stop at nothing to use her powers to create legions of immortal soldiers. In such a dark world there are thankfully pockets of humanity to be found but the lines between enemies and friends can be hard to determine.

Though the story is of a battle ravaged land, I enjoyed the descriptive settings and the imagination of the writer who blended the ancient, the modern, and the mythical, to draw me into a unique world. The descriptive writing style made me feel like I was in the story - I heard the sounds, saw the sights, inhaled the rancid smells, felt the weariness, knew the pain and disillusionment, torment and anxiety of the characters. The story line and writing style is refreshingly different from other stories I've read and I can't wait to read the next story in the series.

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## **Harro says**

I saw a post on Reddit that the book was on sale, after a search it was available on kobo too for about the same price. Decided to buy it and read it whenever I felt like it.

Now I'm finished and my feelings are mixed. The same way I felt like after finishing the Gardens if the Moon by Steven Erikson, What I mean by that is that it is written as a story where as a reader you lack information that is common knowledge for the characters. But by just continuing to read you slowly get a better sense of the factions and the people.

Having said that, I do wish there was a bit more character building, the motivation of the characters was sometimes a bit hard to grasp.

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## **Jaime says**

An interesting premise that caught my attention, but there were too many issues to keep my interest. Too much of the story defied logic. Not in a fantastical way, but in a “that doesn’t make any actual sense” sort of way. Right from the beginning. The book starts with Anna running away from home with her little brother because he was sold for an unknown purpose. Her brother is handicap and always rides a pony when they leave the house. Her escape was planned in advance, but she left the horse behind. Then while on the run one of the trackers catches up to them. Anna makes a bargain, but she comes up with the idea to leave her brother and she will run off with the tracker. What? She loves him, he’s handicapped and can’t continue on, they ran away so he could be free, but she wants to leave him to the men who will take him to be a slave. It made no sense. That beginning set the tone for other things that are simply nonsensical.

Another issue I had with this book is that we are dropped in this world with no explanation of the climate and feeling of the cultures. While she was still in her homeland we got no feel for it. She travels, but we don’t know how far it is between each stop. She goes to other lands with people that speak different languages and look different from her, but there isn’t any much context. Dropping the reader like this without clear world building only works when the lead character is also lost, so surroundings are learned in tandem. I highly doubt I’ll read the next book in this series because of how hard it was for me to get through this one.

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## **Michelle says**

This is one of those reads in which you must go in with an open mind, especially the build-up. Our main character is Anna who starts off the story running away from home with her handicapped little brother in order to save him, but when in-between a rock and a hard place drops him like a bad habit and essentially writes him off. Her world is full of different cultures within different lands all vying to over take each other through the use of scribes.

Scribes are those with magic carvings in ones flesh and Anna had been hiding the fact that she was a very powerful one that ultimately gets manipulated for her magic. A dark, descriptive read that shows both sides of humanity, mostly the evil side. However, this IS the first book in the series (Cycle #1) which sets the stage for the rest of the waging wars of the world.

Not for the faint of heart, but for those who are ready to have their eyes opened to a world in which a naive girl starts to learn about herself and has to choose between what is right and wrong to restore her homeland. Happy I received this to read as part of a book tour, looking forward to more from the author, James Wolanyk.

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### **TL says**

I received this via Goodreads Giveaways in exchange for an honest review. All my opinions are my own.

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I appreciate winning the book but just couldn't get into it :(

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### **ShaunHen says**

Note: I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

If I had to rate the book with precise markings, it would probably be somewhere between 4 and 5, but I'm not sure where. I will say that it was a refreshing read, if nothing else. Scribes is the story of Anna, a young girl who can create life-saving magic using scars on her "victims'" bodies. The premise is fairly average for fantasy, but the real heart of the story was the emotional component of things. Over the years I've lost most of my appetite for fantasy, since much of it is recycled themes, wars, and so forth, but I was intrigued by the author's description on his blog, which pointed to another type of fantasy that I, perhaps, hadn't encountered yet.

The prose is fairly neat and I enjoyed it. At some points I felt that the characters were a bit outlandish, but it IS fantasy, so I can't be bothered with that too much. Additionally, the storytelling itself drags in a few places, but not enough to weigh down my enjoyment. Overall I found it to be compelling, only because the story didn't seem to pull any punches. The ending was satisfying, given the majority of the book, but I did find myself a bit troubled by some of the more graphic scenes later on.

That being said, it was a fun, engaging read.

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### **Carrie says**

Scribes by James Wolanyk is the first book of the new fantasy Scribe Cycle series. The series introduces Anna who had been hiding her ability of being a Scribe and being able to carve runes into others flesh to grant temporary invulnerability against enemies.

When Anna was forced to run she finds herself trapped by a tracker and as negotiations begin to decline Anna uses her ability to bargain. This puts Anna at the trackers mercy at which time Anna vows to use her ability to help fight to restore her homeland.

I have to first admit the idea of carving runes into someone immediately had me thinking of the

Shadowhunter series by Cassandra Clare in which they tattoo protection upon each other. This story however is pretty far away from that book in the type of fantasy that is contained within. The opening chapter quickly showed the reader just how dark and disturbing Anna's world could be.

Now while I did find this book to be an entertaining fantasy for the most part there were a couple of things that I noticed while reading that lowered my rating a bit. First, the style of the writing in the book is one that can be a bit on the overly descriptive/wordy side for my taste which does make parts drag to me. But I also thought to myself a few times that the story seemed a little jumpy getting from one scene to the next. Overall though it was a pretty intense darker fantasy for the adult readers.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

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## **Robin Goodfellow says**

-I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Scribes, by James Wolanyk, tells the story of a young girl who, through her gift, was able to see the world as how it truly was, both in its beauty and its corruption.

Anna, first of Thomas, was running from trackers alongside her younger brother, Julek. When Julek is killed, she is taken in by a tracker who recognizes her abilities as a scribe. She then goes up North, where she meets a young boy named Shem, as well as a woman named Bora, who shows her the realities of the world. As she continues on her journey, she realizes that sometimes, she has to stand up for herself if she wanted survive. In this fantastical novel, Wolanyk illustrates that not every gift is blessed, and that even power that can heal can lead to the most devastating consequences.

I enjoyed the relationship between Anna and the tracker. While the tracker did seem heartless at first, I did come to admire him. He knew people would do anything for salt, and even called out her parents for it. Not only that, but it's like he was mentoring her, making sure she knew what to do and how to survive in the world. Bora did the same thing, although even now I still find it hard to trust her. Shem, on the other hand, was completely innocent. He felt like he only had to rely on Anna, that he could protect her and that everything will be fine. He got his first taste when they came to the orza, where she didn't call him by his name, when he experienced jealousy for the first time. All these characters played a role in Anna's development, forcing her to see what life truly was.

The world Anna grew up in was also astonishing. From being sold out by her parents to being worshiped as a goddess, it was all she could do to not let that perfect life go to her head. On the surface, it seemed like a fairytale come true, but even so, there was still something sinister festering in the darkness. People like the traveler, Bora, and Shem helped her find her way, made sure she wasn't swept up by the gilded promise the orza promised her. Because in the end, she can't afford to. She had to grow up quickly, and the only thing she could do was simply live her life, not only as a scribe, but as a human.

I did wish that the relationship between Anna and Konrad were more fleshed out. But more than that, while I did think it cute, I also felt it was a bit out of place in this story. I would've preferred more of a transition between scenes; there were times when I had to reread the sentence simply because the locations suddenly

jumped from one place to the other.

Nevertheless, I did like the book. While the sudden change in scenes can be dizzying, Anna's development, as well as her relationships with the other characters, make the book unpredictably wonderful. Wolanyk shows that the world isn't at all like the fairytale we often dream of, that it comes with its own set of dangers. As such I would give this book a rating of a 3.4 out of 5.0 stars, and recommend it to those who love Howl's Moving Castle by Diana Wynne Jones and Updrift by Errin Stevens.

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## **M?ra El?za says**

I had ordered a copy of Scribes a while ago, but only now ended up reading it. The book is written very poetically, every little detail is mentioned, so you feel like you are there with Anna, overlooking every event and imagining how differently you would make all the decisions that Anna is faced with. Anna is a fourteen year old girl, who is angry with the world because of her father and then because of the Tracker, yet she's trying to make her home a better place. It's surprising that the main character Anna is written appropriately for her age and gender- a bit annoying, eager to learn and imagining that she knows what good and bad looks like. Along the way we meet such interesting characters as Tracker, Shem and Bora. They most certainly are not one dimensional characters. Tracker and Bora were easily my favorite characters, as they have some mystery about them and you ache to see them more in the story. The book itself is very dark and definitely not meant for the faint of heart. It's like a cross between Harry Potter and Game of Thrones. The main characters is young and incredibly powerful, while the world created in the book is dark and gloomy. And from the moment Anna arrived in Malchym I couldn't put the book down, I just had to read it till the end. And I'm ordering the second book ASAP, because I need to know what happens next.

The book had a few beautiful and thoughtful lessons. And here are a few of my favorite quotes:

"Men with sweet tongues are the root of suffering, because they weave traps so cruel that they are beyond the thinking mind's comprehension."

"You are not a victim. You create victims. This is the truth of the world."

"If you think that you're finished, then you haven't taken a single step."

"How do you expect to see the truth of this world if you are unaware of the harm that you cause?"

"Truth is a murderous thing."

"We are all indebted to death."

"Hold onto that fire, goddess, but don't let it burn you."

"You exist. Anything beyond that is an illusion."

And there are even better lines in the book, which I don't want to spoil here for you.

So if you are a fan of fantasy, and you like thought provoking books, then this is the book for you. Definitely recommending it to everyone I know.

Thanks to the author for creating something so beautiful, I'll be waiting for the next installments of the series.

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## **Sonja says**

This was not a bad book, it was simply not a *me* book. It wasn't borING, but I was borED. I liked the world

that was created here and how well things were described. I just didn't get into it all that much. It did bug me that there were so many made up words for the languages here that were not always explained. Or things in general that were not explained. I also did not like the main character, Anna. I'm not sure of her exact age, but I know she is young. Maybe just barely a teenager or almost a teenager. And it shows. She was **so** immature and naive that it drove me absolutely insane sometimes. I didn't agree with most of her decisions and I really disliked how she was so selfish so often.

Anna had lived a simple life with her family, hiding the fact that she was a scribe. That is until her parents sell her younger brother, and in an attempt to save him, she takes him and flees. She's found by a guy that we only ever know as the Tracker (though I do have an idea of what he might have once been) and when she reveals to him that she is a scribe, her life will never be the same. Scribes have the power to cut runes into the flesh of people for protection/healing/or such, but they always fade. But Anna's are special as they apparently do not. So the Tracker convinces her to go with him back to his group and use her skills to further their cause. Throwing Anna into a world that she never thought to find herself and doesn't know how to navigate. And more often than not, her decisions can and do lead to the deaths or suffering of others. No matter what she does.

There is a lot of fighting, a lot of politics, some good people, some bad people, and whole lot of "who do you trust?" going on here. It was an interesting story, but like I said, just not one I particularly got into so I won't be continuing it.

*ARC provided by publisher via Netgalley.*

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## **Trey richardson says**

### **Annoying**

The only saving grace to this book is the ending and Bora. The MC was extremely weak. I don't mind a book on the darker side of things but there was no reasoning or will behind the MC actions. This book fails where a lot of others do in that the MC is selfish and others pay for that. The scribing system would have been interesting if it was explained more but you really don't get to know much about it other than it makes people immortal. The feelings she has for the tracker are literally the worst thing in the book. She should have zero issue with killing him. First 75% is horrible last 25 isn't that bad but idk if I would read the next book.

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## **Lindsey Roberts says**

### **Original Review Here**

The synopsis of Scribes caught my attention and I was looking forward to it. It was a disappointment: I couldn't connect to the world or the characters for the entire book.

It starts well: siblings on the run from trackers. They get caught and the older sister tries to bargain her secret power as a scribe to save her brother. It backfires, the brother gets killed and she ends up taken prisoner by the tracker. I started to get a grip on the characters and what being a scribe meant.



After that?

No idea.

One of the main problems was that I didn't like Anna. She starts off alright; a frightened girl in over her head, struggling to keep a secret. But her refusal to leave Shem forces the boy into a sort-of-slavery, and Anna doesn't care about the consequences. She uses his awe of her to suit her own purposes, then treats him like a jealous lover, or a tool, for the rest of the book.

Anna enjoys her power. She likes being the chosen one, being considered as a goddess. She thinks it is her right. Of course, there are passages of her lamenting that she can't control it etc, but apart from refusing to mark a few of the darker characters, she makes no attempt to use her power to help people, or think about the consequences of marking those attempting to wage war on others. She mourns her brother, but never thinks about the destruction she is causing in his name.

It's always fun when the lines between the good guys and the bad guys are blurry, but in this case, I struggled to identify friend from foe. Anna's own opinions do not help: she states she hates the tracker but does nothing to escape from him. She thinks negatively about Bora, yet seeks her counsel and advice. It read as if the character relationships progress, but Anna's thinking doesn't, leaving the reader muddling their way with no clear idea.

There are no strong characters: the tracker dissolves into the background, Bora is too abrupt to connect to her, Shem acts as a jealous child and even a supposedly-powerful leader is nothing but a shell by the end.

I also couldn't figure out the world. There were a lot of fantasy-based names and places, but nothing to ground the reader. I couldn't figure out the world the characters lived in, meaning I couldn't connect or envision it.

This is a book about morals, responsibility and power. It is about considering the consequences of actions: what it means for Shem's family that he is forced to leave, what it means to have violent men forever marked and made invulnerable, what it means to hold the fate of people in your hands. For me, however, Anna never considers those consequences; she acts as she wants and uses her status as a goddess to get away with it.

Unfortunately, for me, the book lacked clarity and a forward momentum.

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## **Hunter Patrick says**

I happened upon this book on a Reddit AMA James did a while back, and decided to give it a go.

Firstly, if you read this book, get a paperback/e-book version. The audible narrator made this almost impossible to finish.

After the somewhat unbelievable events that happen in the beginning with the MC stranding her crippled brother, there were portions where my expectations were raised, and I was genuinely enamored with James's world-building and character relationships. But the euphoria slipped away pretty quickly.

Anna is not an enjoyable MC to follow. She makes naive decisions again and again, adding a layer of

depression onto a layer of despair. Nothing happens in this book to equalize it.

I also found James's action scenes to be dizzying and hard to follow. Having listened to it and not read it, I can't say for certain, but I think the prose could be simplified in certain sections.

This book did not work for me, and a large part of that boils down to personal taste, which is why I am deciding to not leave a rating on this book. But there are plenty of five stars here, so don't let me be the guiding voice!

Whether or not I will read the sequel, is yet to be determined.

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## **Maggies Daisy says**

Humph, not sure why I could not really get my teeth into this book. There are some good qualities to the novel by author James Wolanyk that include the overall story of a young girl who has the gift of using magical cuts upon the skin that bring health and healing upon the person. This was the first in the Scribe series so hopefully, in the next one, the action can be ramped up a few notches. At every turn, Anna is subjected to violence and cruelty but she finds real peace when she helps the foundling children that have lost everything. Can she break away from the individuals that want to use her power to back their side of the war? I was given a chance to read this book through the Goodreads giveaways for my honest opinion in a book review. Thank you, James Wolanyk, Goodreads and publisher Rebel Base Books.

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