

THE  
UNKNOWN  
BELOVED

*a novel*

AMY HARMON

Bestselling author of *Where the Lost Wander*  
and *What the Wind Knows*

# THE UNKNOWN BELOVED

*From the bestselling author of **Where the Lost Wander** and **What the Wind Knows** comes the evocative story of two people whose paths collide against the backdrop of mystery, murder, and the Great Depression.*

*Chicago, 1923: Ten-year-old Dani Flanagan returns home to find police swarming the house, her parents dead. Michael Malone, the young patrolman assigned to the case, discovers there's more to the situation—and to Dani Flanagan herself—than the authorities care to explore. Malone is told to shut his mouth, and Dani is sent away to live with her spinster aunts in Cleveland.*

*Fifteen years later, Michael Malone is summoned to Cleveland to investigate a series of murders that have everyone stumped, including his friend and famed Prohibition agent Eliot Ness, now Cleveland's director of safety. There, in a city caught in the grip of a serial killer, Dani and Malone cross paths once again.*

*Malone is drawn to Dani and her affinity for the dead and compassion for the destitute. It doesn't take long for him to realize that she could help him solve his case. As terror descends on the city and Malone and Dani confront the dark secrets that draw them together, it's a race to find the killer or risk becoming his next victims.*



Publication date: April 19, 2022  
Genre: Historical, Crime, Mystery, Romance  
Recommended for ages: +16



## ATTENTION

**THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDES SPECIFICS YOU MIGHT WANT TO AVOID  
UNTIL YOU HAVE FINISHED READING THE BOOK.**

## BOOK CLUB KIT – THE UNKNOWN BELOVED

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## CHARACTERS

Do you think the characters were realistically portrayed? Describe the characters' personalities.

Which character do you relate to most?

Who did you like the least? Why?

Did a specific character remind you of someone you know?

How does the way the characters see themselves, differ from how others see them?

How do you see the various characters?

What did you think about Dani and Malone's relationship? How does age affect Dani and Malone's relationship?

Were there any moments where you disagreed with the choices of any of the characters? What would you have done differently?

How does loss shape the personalities of certain characters?

What is motivating the actions of the characters in the story?

What past influences are shaping the actions of the characters in the story?

Do the main characters change by the end of this novel? Do they grow or mature? What events trigger such changes?

What were the dynamics of "power" between the characters? How did that play a factor in their interactions?

## QUOTES

*Discuss the following quotes:*

"To call her strange was true. But it wasn't the whole truth. Words like strange reduced men and women to their oddities. To flat, unfeeling objects to be studied and dismissed. People deserved more than that. Dani Flanagan deserved more than that."

"As lovely as gold is...as lovely as memories are...both become much less so without moderation."

"Must we try everything to know something is wonderful?"

"The truth is, the harder we are, the easier we shatter. It takes some softness to absorb life's blows."

**Were there any particular quotes that stood out to you? Which ones and why?**

# THEME

*Discuss the theme:*

## **The Plight of the Unknown**

Have you considered what happens to the indigent dead in the world?

Why is Dani's care for them important?

Why should we care about unknown stories? Heroes? Or Horrors?

Some of the victims of the Butcher were never identified.  
Can you imagine never having the answers for the death of a loved one?

## STRUCTURE, WRITING & GENERAL DISCUSSION

Structure, Writing, and General Discussion:

What did you think of the overall structure of the novel?

Were you engaged immediately?

Did you race to the end, or was this a slow-burn story for you?

What did you think about the time-line and point of view?

How did you feel reading the story?

Which emotions conveyed the story?

Did the story keep you interested?

Would you say this is a plot-driven book or does the story unfold slowly with a focus on character development?

Were you surprised by the plot? Or did you find it predictable?

How credible did the author make the setting and dialogue?

What scene did you find was the most pivotal for the book? How do you think the story would have changed had that scene not taken place?

What scene resonated most with you personally in either a positive or negative way?

Did certain parts of the novel make you uncomfortable?

Were there any scenes that made you laugh?

What is the significance of the title? Did you recognize it in the book?

Would you have given the book a different title? If yes, what is your title?

What surprised you the most about the book?

What did you learn about this time period from reading the book?

Did you think the ending was appropriate?

How would you have liked to have seen the ending go?

Have any of YOUR views or thoughts changed after reading this book?

What do you think about the cover of this book? Would you change it? How?

Has this book changed you, broadened your perspective?

What did you learn from, take away from, or get out of this book?

Did your opinion of the book change as you read it? How? Did this book leave any lingering questions you're still thinking about?

If you were making a movie of this book, who would you cast?

Though this story is set in the past, how do the issues the characters face relate to today?

How original or unique was this book?

## Discussion questions by chapter

### Prologue:

What is your impression of Dani's apparent gift? Do you believe people can have abilities like she and Malone?

What were your thoughts as Dani discovered her parents?

### Chapter 1:

What were you able to gather about Malone in this chapter? Who is Irene?

Why do you think he's reluctant to go to Cleveland?

### Chapter 2:

Did you catch any potential foreshadowing in this chapter?

What are the chances of Dani and Malone being brought together again on the fifteenth anniversary of their first meeting? What were your thoughts as he recognized Dani?

### Chapter 3:

Do you agree with Malone's assessment of time: "The jump from ten to twenty-five was a lifetime. The leap from twenty-five to forty was but a long weekend"? Why or why not?

How do you think Dani's gift came about? What purpose does it serve her life? Why does it scare people? Would you be scared?

### Chapter 4:

Why do you think Michael is upset when Dani knows about Irene's funeral?

What might the reason be for the apparent cover up of Dani's parents' cause of death?

### Chapter 5:

Despite their lack of interaction, Dani finds herself drawn to Malone's belongings. Why do you think this is?

Why do you think Malone asked Ness's opinion on a person having a sixth sense?



**Chapter 6:**

Why do you think Zuzanna is stand-offish toward Malone? Will he be able to win her over?

What does conversation seem so fragile between Dani and Malone? Though they both seem interested in the other, conversation is difficult to navigate.

**Chapter 7:**

What do you think about Dani's odd job? Could you ever do something like that? Do you think it's weird or noble?

What makes Malone realize he likes Dani? Why did it take so long?

**Chapter 8:**

How might Dani be able to assist Malone on his case?

Have you thought of clothing as both characters do in this story or do they offer a new perspective?

**Chapter 9:**

What were your thoughts as you read Malone's descriptions of the victims?

Does anything stand out to you about the killer? Do you have any theories?

**Chapter 10:**

Describe the intimacy in the moment when Dani sees Malone smile for the first time. Do you know anyone in real life whose smiles are hard to come by?

Why do you suspect Malone hasn't let himself feel anything in regards to his wife's death?

**Chapter 11:**

Dani thinks Malone thinks "himself quite the villain". Do you agree with her assessment? Why do you think Michael might think this of himself?

Dani's conversation with Steve eludes to bigger players being possibly involved in the crime Michael is investigating. Do you have any theories or suspects in mind?

**Chapter 12:**

Considering the details of the Butcher's murders, do you think there is a reason or pattern for the killing? Do you see anything Malone might have missed?

Do you think it could be dangerous for Malone to possibly put Dani into contact with her uncle again, considering his connections?

Discuss the kiss.

**Chapter 13:**

Why do you think Malone is still guarded when it comes to Dani? Is his excuse of it "being too soon" legitimate?

Do you consider Dani's actions snooping? Is it warranted or is she being disrespectful?

**Chapter 14:**

Do you agree with Lenka's advice to Dani to be direct about her feelings with Malone?

Malone says, "I'm not at all convinced anyone really wants to know, it's more exciting that way," in regards to the Butcher. Do you think this is true for most gruesome cases? Why are people excited by disturbing things?

**Chapter 15:**

Why did Ness subtly change his expression when Malone was mentioning the informant, Pete Kostura, who had been run over?

How much about the case do you think Ness is keeping from Malone?

**Chapter 16:**

After Dani's descriptions of her tactile gift in this chapter, like being caught in a crowd when she touches the couch, are you able to understand what she's experiencing better? Would you want to be the owner of a power like hers?

Do you have any guesses who the drunk man on the couch may be?

**Chapter 17:**

What do you think of Zuzanna's confession and tears as she considers Dani leaving with Malone in the future?

How do the simultaneous historical events impact your views of the story?

**Chapter 18:**

Why did Dani have such a visceral reaction to the curtains?

How did that dark moment allow intimacy to grow between Dani and Malone?

**Chapter 19:**

Why is Malone good at putting distance between himself and Dani? Do you think it's necessary?

What important details did you gather from Dani's inspection of the clothing?

**Chapter 20:**

Dani says, "The very best things are old, and we let nothing grow old here." Do you agree with this sentiment? Do you prefer old things or the new and fresh?

Michale says, "Equity is impossible. There is inequity in all things." What do you think about his point-of-view?

**Chapter 21:**

Why do the dolls upset Dani more than all of the victims' clothes she rifled through before?

**Chapter 22:**

What was your favorite moment from Dani and Malone's time at the gala?

Did any of the characters at the gala stand out to you? Why?

**Chapter 23:**

Why does Ness's entanglement with the Butcher prove to be a possible problem?

When Dani confirms the Butcher's identity, along with his thoughts, what do you feel for or about him?

**Chapter 24:**

Why do you think the Butcher is obsessed with Ness?

Do you think Malone will be able to leave after his assignment?

Discuss your thoughts on Dani's meeting with Darby.

**Chapter 25:**

Malone is "comforted by bad news, because he could go about making things better." Do you view this as a pessimistic point-of-view or vice versa?

Discuss Frank being let go and Irey's decision to send Malone to Chicago. What was the purpose of Malone being brought to Cleveland if Irey was going to make a decision like this?

**Chapter 26:**

If it hurts Malone so badly to leave, why do you think he went through with it?

Do you think danger will find him back in Chicago?

**Chapter 27:**

Dani compares her grief to that of when her parents died. Do you think the grief from death or being left by choice would be worse? Can that be measured or is it simply different?

Do you agree with Molly's idea that love is a burden? Is an unburdened life a truly happy life?

**Chapter 28:**

Why does Frank feel connected to Dani? What purpose does her capture serve? How did you feel as you read this scene?

**Chapter 29:**

Did you suspect Darby had been the person trying to get info from Steve about Malone?

What are some reasons the Butcher has been able to hide in plain sight for so long?

**Chapter 30:**

Did you think Darby was the charred body they found in The Run?

Why did Darby choose to tell Malone the truth even though it could have been a danger to him?

**Epilogue:**

Why does Malone change his tune about Cleveland?

Are you satisfied with the story's ending?

**Author's Note:**

Do you hope to see more of Dani and Malone in the future?

How do the historical facts impact your view of the story?