



Raven Son

Nicholas Kotar

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To save his love and his country, the Raven Son must leave it behind to find a way to destroy an ancient evil forever, but first he will have to overcome a more insidious danger – the darkness within himself.

Raven Son is based on Russian fairy tales and myths.

Raven Son Details

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From Reader Review Raven Son for online ebook

Claire Stibbe says

Raven Son by Nicholas Kotar is a delightful mix of song and myth that keeps the reader spellbound. With all the vivid descriptions, a reader can't help but wonder what Vasyllia truly looks like.

Voran must chase an elusive song even as far as the sky. He must chase it beyond the city walls and the thickest groves, and he must find the stag with the golden antlers and hide the color of moss. You can't fault Kotar's imagery and his deep appreciation of character and landscape. It's truly astounding. And what makes this book stand out from others is the intrinsic sense that you are right there in the scene with Voran, seeing what he sees, smelling what he smells. His journey becomes your journey, a long road without certainty. Escapism, magic, a great quest, mysterious strangers and a search for something lost. Classic high fantasy at its best.

You can dip into this book time and time again, and still find something new on every page. It's another world filled with firebirds and talking beasts, and deer that can tell the future. Beautiful front cover and interior gives this book a professional face and one in keeping with its unique genre.

If you want to be taken on an adventure then this is the book for you.

Anya Tenney says

From the very first pages I was swept away by the beauty of Nicholas's writing – poetic, elegant, and luring like a Syrin's song. The story goes deep, trying to uncover the very mysteries existence. The characters are believable and well developed through the whole book. The use of Slavic mythological creatures was a pleasant touch, however I felt protective of the hag in the story. (Baba Yaga if that was the prototype of the hag, was never evil in the fairy tales and always helped the main character)

Even though I do not consider myself religious person I was very accepting of the religious aspect of the story, keeping in mind that it is the part of the world of the book, until it became overbearing by the end. Overall Raven Son is a great book.

John Campbell says

For those who enjoy fantasy and the richness of Russian fable, this is a well-written gem. Three cheers for a brilliant debut novel.

Alexandra Taylor says

Nicholas Kotar's writing has the elegance, lyricism, and attention to detail that all fantasy readers eagerly

hope for. With these skills he crafts the beautiful setting of Vasyllia which comes to life before the reader's eyes, and we are introduced to a refreshingly new scene for the contemporary fantasy/adventure genre. After I finished reading *Raven Son*, it took me some time to narrow down the specific elements of the novel that raised it from great to masterful. The answer is not in the previously mentioned components, but in the seamlessly incorporated philosophical questions raised by the author. Kotar uses the train of the thought of the protagonist, Voran, to ask the reader a very important question: what happens to society when there is no longer a need to strive towards perfection and betterment, when beauty can be cheaply imitated? Kotar avoids preaching to the reader instead choosing to point the reader eloquently towards an answer through Voran's internal and external conflicts. It is impossible to read *Raven Son* and not see the parallels between Vasyllia and the twenty-first century. I look forward to more from Nicholas Kotar, and know that he will not disappoint.

Elsbeth says

Wonderful, mythical story! I think it can be on the same shelf as Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings - just as good! Only one point: it is too short - I can't wait to see how the story continues...

Thank you for sharing this, Nicholas Kotar!

Sophia Moshura says

The novel *Raven Son* by Nicholas Kotar belongs to the high fantasy genre. From the very first page, the reader is intrigued and swept up by the Syrin's song into the glorious land of Vasyllia. The central figure is Voran, a restless young nobleman that goes through adventures and battles to protect those he loves, meeting both beauty and monstrosity along the way. Voran's experiences lead him to understand that our inner dark passions and emotions are far more deadly than the Darkness that comes from the outer world. Every character in the novel is deeply portrayed; each character has its own vital mission to fulfill. Through the high art of storytelling, the author in an involving and acutely personal manner leads us to believe that regardless of our individual missteps, we can always draw strength from our faith in order to become the people we were created to be.

“Whatever happens, do not lose hope. There is always hope”.

Entwined with motives from ancient Russian fairy tales and legends, the novel is not simply a fantasy book filled with striking descriptions of Nature, raging battles and insuperable foes, it strikes the deepest chords of our hearts, sweeping the reader through Voran's victories and defeats, and gently guiding us to analyze our own life path and choices.

Heather Langston says

This was...intriguing. I must say, I don't know much about Russian fairy tales and myths so any ties to those I'm afraid I don't have any input for (however, this has piqued my interest to look into some). But I don't feel like that's a prerequisite for one to be able to enjoy this read. I believe fantasy lovers will enjoy it regardless if they have knowledge of Russian fairy tales. This is not a light read. It's not one that should be rushed through but one that needs to be savored. Oh the layers within this story! I will definitely read this one again just so that I can absorb all this book has to offer...one read definitely did not do it justice! Highly

recommend this book!!

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

Forrest Schultz says

Russian Orthodox Literary Concern Rekindled:

Nicholar Kotar Pens Russian Fantasy

A Review of

Nicholas Kotar "Raven Son" (Conquering Time Pubs., 2014)

\$16.95 282 pp ISBN: 978-0-61596-02702

Reviewer: Forrest W. Schultz

The examples set by C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien are producing concern for literature among Protestants and Roman Catholics, but there has been no such example for Russian Orthodox believers since Fyodor Dostoevsky. Nicholas Kotar belongs to a Russian Orthodox community based in California which intends to do something about this, and his book under review here is a means toward that end. One of the attached photos shows him speaking on the subject to the "Prav Mir" group, and the other one shows the cover of his book, which is a fantasy based on traditional Russian legends and fairy tales.

I recommend this book for anyone who likes fantasy, and I especially recommend it to those who would like to read a fantasy placed in a traditional Russian milieu and incorporating Russian fantasy elements. The story

is like Dostoevsky in grabbing and holding your interest but its characters, plot, and settings are very different -- it occurs in days of yore, not in the late 19th century! This story and these characters and these fantasy beings are quite memorable and attract your concern and are full of puzzles and surprises and mysteries, which call to mind the famous saying of Churchill about the mystery that is Russia!

For further information you can visit these sites: <http://www.raven-son.org/>,

<http://www.conquering-time.org/>, and www.pravmir.com/conquering-time-an-or...

Mimi says

This is the Russian Orthodox "Lord of the Rings" - an excellently done fable that weaves in Russian folklore characters and beautiful writing that echoes the hymnography of the church.

However, it's me not the book. My feeling about it is about the same as my feeling about the Catholic original. It's well done and not my favorite.

Julia Stephanie says

This is an epic tale that is every bit as mystical and beautiful as the cover depicts! It's written in the old world style, part of why I love it so much. There are many riddles and fantastical beasts littered between the intricately woven story of how every little person can make a difference and of their trials and suffering. It reminds me of the old Greek and Roman hero stories, with less brute, and is reminiscent of old Russian fairy tales. It is a truly wonderful story and I am eagerly anticipating a sequel to quell my curiosity of how The Vasyllyi's battle against the Raven continues!

Kaz says

There are some questions better left unasked, and yet others that no one has ever thought to ask. Such as: What if Krilof or Afanasief had been Inklings? Perhaps this is not a question that Nicholas Kotar sought to discover as he ground pen and key to produce the manuscript for **Raven Son**, but in a roundabout way the tale borrows freely from both traditions of Russian Folklore and English/Anglophonic Mythopœia to create a tale that both entertains and edifies the soul. There's even allusion to the Mongol Invasion, Time of Troubles, and even October Revolution which all befell and tested the Russian lands.

Raven Son is not without its faults: there is uncertainty in the middle of Kotar's debut novel between story and moral, where at times plot and philosophy would vie instead of compliment, sometimes to the detriment of dynamicism. However, the secret genius of this work is the appropriation of *Deus ex Machina*, the red herring plot vouchers which unknowingly push the reader onto the rails of a sideswiping dénouement.

This is to say nothing of the moral message, which in itself is an act of war against the feel-good individualism of Young Adult literature: Kotar's protagonists are brought to the zenith only to discover that they've ascended a cragg. This is perhaps one of the few modern books to praise true humility, viz. neither superficial nor self-serving in its application. This is no doubt a result of the heavy influence of Orthodox Christianity, which permeates the culture and religion of the Three Lands, from the Byzantine prayers and Znamenny chanting to the theology of the religion of Adonais and his covenant. Even the Syrin had metaphorical significance in the mediæval Russian Church.

If Nicholas Kotar had ever thought to submit himself as the Russian Orthodox answer to CS Lewis, **Raven Son** surely suggests a clear candidacy. However rough this initial work may be, vindication lies in the œuvre. Let us hope a sequel promptly follows!

Dcn Peter Markevich says

Nicholas Kotar's debut novel has the enviable quality of becoming increasingly difficult to put down as one reaches all the way to the last page. The flip side of this is that the first chapter almost turned me off the whole book. There were just too many concepts and characters with their backstories introduced at breakneck speed. The author seemed to forget that this world, which has been swirling around in his head for years, is still completely new to the reader. Fortunately, the confusion I was left with after the first chapter quickly dissipated as the plot developed and the various characters and ideas were flushed out and further explored.

One of the highlights of the book was the author's masterful use of detailed imagery, especially when describing the geographic surroundings of the Three Lands. Kotar's skillful incorporation of musical themes into the story is also worth noting, although not at all surprising given his background. I would have appreciated a more sparing use of the effect whereby at certain points we were given the characters' thoughts in italics. The story would have been better served by using the same approach to descriptive imagery and dialog to point to those thoughts as subtext.

Raven Son is a valiant first effort, yes. But this book also stands on its own as a clarion call to a world that has either forgotten the meaning of beauty or denied its very existence as an objective principle. I look forward to reading the promised sequel.

Howard Isaac says

Full disclosure : The author is my friend.

Raven Son is Nicholas Kotar's first book, a fantasy novel aspiring to the tradition set by J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and similar authors. The novel is also influenced by Russian fairy tales and the author's roots in Orthodox Christianity.

The main character is Voran, a brave, young warrior who has lost his mother by death and his father in a mysterious disappearance. Of his immediate family, only he and his sister remain. In the opening chapter, the deeply spiritual Voran receives a vision that predicts tragic hardships for both himself and his home city-state of Vasyllia.

In ancient times, Vasyllia had made a covenant with the Supreme God Adonais. The Covenant is that

Adonais would protect Vasyllia from a mysterious evil known as the Darkness. Said to be as old as Vasyllia itself, a sacred tree known as the Covenant Tree stands in the city center. But as more and more of Vasyllia's citizens become complacent and then decadent, the tree begins to die. Meanwhile, along with a steppe tribe known as the Gumiren and a sinister being known as the Raven, the Darkness invades the neighboring city-state and advances toward Vasyllia. When refugees from the invasion pour into Vasyllia, the rich are stingy. As a result, the resources of those who do help the refugees are soon stretched thin. The widening gulf between the socioeconomic classes causes disunity and the people of Vasyllia cannot muster an effective defense.

Voran and two other men are ordered by Vasyllia's ruling monarch to find the Living Water before the Raven does. The Living Water is able to heal grave illnesses, extend life far beyond its natural duration and even revive the dead. Although the order to find the Living Water is a straightforward one, the task is so difficult that the quest leads to a series of diversions, ambushes, rescues, mountain treks and other trials involving witches, traitors, angelic and demonic spirits, mysterious strangers and other beings. Through it all Voran must struggle to maintain not only his purpose but even the very essence of his soul.

The novel's end is not a definitive one and suggests that *Raven Son* is the first of a series.

The author often uses the technique of telling stories within the story to illustrate important points or to advance the plot. Because the stories are concise and relevant, he usually employs this technique very effectively.

Most of the names are unfamiliar to ears accustomed to the English languages. Accordingly, a future edition with a list of characters would benefit readers. A list would help them keep up with each character and thus the plot as well. The author often enhances his descriptions with similes. While most are descriptive, a few are unnecessary.

In *Raven Son*, Nicholas Kotar, a recent graduate of Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary (Jordanville, New York), examines many timeless spiritual questions. Why does evil exist and why doesn't God arbitrarily stop it? When God does help us why does such assistance often seem limited? When a virtuous person such as Voran sins just once, why is his punishment more severe than when less conscientious people sin so casually? When the Darkness threatens, the author reminds us after Solzhenitsyn, that the division between Good and Evil is not between different persons but within each person's heart. And in depicting a city threatened from without and within, *Raven Son* shows us that the ethical decisions of our personal lives have consequences that go beyond our individual selves to affect not only ourselves and those we directly encounter but eventually many, many others. The novel examines these and other issues without being didactic. These issues are organically encountered by the characters in the situations they experience. This reader agrees with other reviewers that Vasyllia is a metaphor for both pre-revolutionary Russia and present day America and that this fantasy novel must be read as a warning about the weaknesses that threaten our own homeland.

Alexandra Weber says

To read *Raven Son* is to forget the banal niceties of modern literature and to be swept up in a world of passion, ancient tradition, magic, and faith. The book evokes a tapestry – each richly-colored thread interweaves with the other, drawing the reader deeper and deeper into its intricate pattern, only to reveal a breathtaking image when all the loose ends are tied. There is something in the story for everyone – the philosopher, the theologian, the lover of fairy tales and myth, the poet, the artist, and the child at heart. Nicholas Kotar has managed to take all these fields and combine them together, infusing them with his love of Russian culture, folklore, and religious heritage. The result is a living portrayal of Vasyllia, a land richly gifted and at one time intrinsically connected to its Creator, but one which has lost its way and stands to be

destroyed from within. Its only hope lies in Voran Raven Son, a warrior who must conquer his inner demons before he can become strong enough to bring salvation to his storied homeland.

Merissa (Archaeolibrarian) says

I received this book from StoryCartel in return for a fair and honest review.

This fantastical story takes its roots from the stories of Russian Folklore and myth so immediately you have a story that hasn't been written a hundred different ways already.

The basics of the story is that Voran is unsettled but doesn't know why. He is searching for the bird who sings a song that only he seems to hear. The country of Vasyllia has gotten lazy and is in danger of forgetting the promise that they have made to Adonais. A darkness is flowing through the land and Voran is dispatched by his king to try to find an answer.

This story is very intricate and is definitely a page turner. There are snippets of wisdom to be found throughout. One book just isn't enough and I look forward to reading more about Vasyllia and the troubles that they face.
