



# The Fallen Queen

*Jane Kindred*

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## **The Fallen Queen** Jane Kindred

Until her cousin slaughtered the supernal family, Anazakia's father ruled the Heavens, governing noble Host and Fallen peasants alike. Now Anazakia is the last grand duchess of the House of Arkhangel'sk, and all she wants is to stay alive. Hunted by Seraph assassins, Anazakia flees Heaven with two Fallen thieves-fire demon Vasily and air demon Belphagor, each with their own nefarious agenda-who hide her in the world of Man. The line between vice and virtue soon blurs, and when Belphagor is imprisoned, the unexpected passion of Vasily warms her through the Russian winter. Heaven seems a distant dream, but when Anazakia learns the truth behind the celestial coup, she will have to return to fight for the throne-even if it means saving the man who murdered everyone she loved.

## **The Fallen Queen Details**

Date : Published December 1st 2011 by Entangled Publishing (first published November 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781937044534

Author : Jane Kindred

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Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Paranormal, Urban Fantasy

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## From Reader Review The Fallen Queen for online ebook

### **Sarah says**

3.5/5 stars

When The Fallen Queen is stripped down to its roots, the plot isn't really anything new. There's a battle for power and the unexpected is forced to rise to the challenge. A plot like that can be found in any number of books, but Kindred unique flair, lyrical writing and complex world make it stand apart from the crowd.

While I did feel that characterization and portions of the plot were rather weak, The Fallen Queen is well worth reading and the ending will leave readers yearning for the second installment in this series. The Fallen Queen is set to release on December 6.

Read my full review here:

<http://bookwormblues.blogspot.com/201...>

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### **Lisa Kessler says**

I don't usually read Fantasy, but tying the heavenly story with the Russian Anastasia story really hooked me...

And Belphegor and Vasily were great demons to hang out with too! :)

Looking forward to the next book!

If you enjoy Fantasy, angels, demons, and intrigue, this one is worth checking out!

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### **Buffy Kennedy says**

When I read the blurb for this book, I was expecting a classic Good vs. Evil and Heaven vs. Hell scenario. Well, there's the Good vs. Evil, but they're not quite in the usual places, nor is the romance quite your typical relationship either. Before the story even starts, we're provided with a long detailed cheat sheet about the hierarchy of the Heavens, which is nice and all, but it's a bunch of information that's hard to keep referring to from the middle of the book (especially on an ereader). Thankfully it's fairly easy to get the gist of things from context.

The first chapter jumps around in the timeline, almost to the point that you're disoriented, but that stops once Anazakia is informed about her family and needs to escape those that would hunt her. She runs with the aid of two demons, Vasily and Belphegor, and from the moment they arrive in the world of man, they all begin to realize how hard it would be to hide, but it's not until their pursuers find them that they realize the severity of the deep shit they're in. Things go from bad to worse as they get into trouble way over their heads. The ending isn't quite what I expected and I think the word "complicated" is the best term to describe the final status of the characters' romantic relationships.

There are times throughout the book when things are explained in painful detail, and others that are explained, but still left me confused. Last names and some of the places are so hard to pronounce I stopped trying to keep track because I couldn't remember who was what anymore. Some of the jumps between languages (spending most of their Earth time in Russia, they jumped between demonic, angelic, Russian, and English throughout the book, among others I believe) was a little dizzying.

Regarding this next segment, I will say right now that I have enjoyed some dark fantasy before, and there are some books with tortured heroes that I love, and I like the tortured hero (and heroine) here too, but this book had some really dark moments. That was the worst part for me. Some of the violence, and humiliation for that matter, in this story is graphic. It's detailed and bloody, and there were times I almost couldn't take it. There is another series I'm in the middle of at the moment that I've decided to put off indefinitely because of how dark it can sometimes get, so I guess my capacity for dark fantasy just isn't what it used to be. That being said, the overall ending was gratifying and made me smile, making having thankfully made it through the rough spots worth it.

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## **Katherine Amabel says**

A note on context: this review was originally listed on my blog (Review: The Fallen Queen - Jane Kindred), hence the references to writing techniques etc. Enjoy!

For this review I want to start with the characters, since they are still resonating so strongly in my head. Two in particular had me regularly cracking up, but they weren't just there for comic relief. Their struggles were as heart-wrenching as they were heart-warming, and while I thought I had the romantic subplot guessed, I was thrilled to be proven wrong more than once. The main character was neither flamboyantly bad-ass nor a damsel in distress and instead had moments of both, and it was that combination which made her actions ring out as honest, true, and very likeable. The villainess was beautifully portrayed (and by that I mean I can feel the diamonds woven into her silken robes beneath my hands, such was the skill of her description) and I yearned to know more about her. In fact, my only complaint is that I felt she must have had a deeper motivation than she ever let on.

While we're on the subject of descriptions, a lot must be said for the world building. The story took me from the pure and pristine scenes of Heaven to its fascinating back alleys and gambling dens, and then on to the spectacular European Alps, with such realism that any writer trying to improve their showing instead of telling should really take note. The descriptions are built up organically so that the information feels incidental yet turns out to be incredibly vivid, and the same techniques are used for characterization too. I can't remember a single instance where description stalled the flow, and I love the use of unique and varying beats to show the characters' emotions.

Again reading this as a writer, I loved the twisting plot and the constant increase in both internal and external conflict. Chapters often ended with dramatic one-liners but the effect is subtle and modest enough not to irritate. My only disappointment, if you can even call it that, related to a minor subplot. It had me absolutely fascinated from the start, only to be resolved halfway through with a two sentence explanation I neither understood nor wanted to believe. The book is part of a series thought, so with luck my questions will be resolved in the next installment.

There is a lot to applaud in the editing, too. Elegant descriptions clashed beautifully against the dialogue of

some of the rougher characters, but the swearing was never gratuitous and only served to increase the emotional tension. There was a hardly a beat used twice, and hardly a clichéd description anywhere. And the fact that words were rarely repeated in close proximity to each other – an intense pet hate of mine – kept the pace fast and smooth.

Finally, the themes of the novel were embedded subtly enough that the message came through without me feeling lectured. I won't mention my interpretations at the risk of spoiling anyone else's, because whenever I read I like to mull that sort of thing over for myself afterward. And I'm sure over the next few days I'll be doing just that.

Overall, a fantastic read with just the right amount of mystery and action. 8/10

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### **Kayleigh {K-Books} says**

Did Not Finish.

There'll be no review as I only read about a chapter. I know, I know that not enough to give up which is why I am not reviewing it. Within the first chapter I was just really confused and didn't really know what was going on. After reading some reviews I found out that there's stuff going on in the book that isn't really my thing which is the reason I am not reading or reviewing the rest of this book.

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### **Vaughn Roycroft says**

Yes, Anastasia:

I knew going in that *The Fallen Queen* was set in Heaven, and its characters were angels and demons, so I was taken aback by the opening. In meeting Anazakia of House Arkhangel'sk, in hearing the baroque certainty of her voice, in the descriptions of her life in the Winter Palace among her three elders sisters and sickly younger brother, I was instantly reminded of the ill-fated family of Tsar Nicholas II—and, of course, of the youngest Romanov daughter, Anastasia. Yes, this was a version of Heaven based on the final days of Imperial Russia, and I couldn't have been more charmed. I found it an enchanting way to set the scene and create a totally unique mood for what promised to be a fantasy of truly epic proportions.

Paradise, Never Found:

In her debut novel, Jane Kindred creates a celestial realm totally unlike any I'd ever encountered, populated by both angels (or Host) and demons (or Fallen). This is not your family minister's Heaven, and even seems not to be a destination for the departed souls of mankind. Although the inhabitants live much longer lives than the earthbound, they are far from immortal—indeed we quickly find that the Host's supernal family not only bleeds, but dies.

To Russia With Love:

Through circumstance (which I won't name as either fortune or fate) on the night of her family's murders, Anazakia becomes the ward/hostage of demons Belphagor and Vasily. The Fallen pair take her in flight to, of all places, modern day Russia. Despite the prohibition against falling, a fair number of demons had settled in the world of Man over the centuries, and St. Petersburg, by far, had the most thriving population. I've never been, but the foreignness of Russia gave the story the perfect distance, and I was perfectly able to suspend disbelief.

While all other characters are portrayed in third person, we experience the story most intimately, and strikingly, through the first person voice of Anazakia. Her segments come in a wonderfully lush memoir format, as when she awakens from being drugged to find herself on a train with the demons. “When I tried to place my traveling companion, disquiet fluttered like a bird trapped in the dark attic of my head but could go no further. Beside me, my seatmate opened ebony eyes in which the pupils drowned. Out of the dark bog of his gaze a piece of unanchored memory floated to the surface.”

The unlikely trio soon comes to terms with the necessity of their alliance as they flee across Russia from the Seraphim—a Gestapo-like order of fiery angelic enforcers. This section of the story, from the brilliantly evocative opening to the turning point created by the trio’s sundering, progressed a bit slowly for me—although there is much to discover throughout. Anazakia learns of the earthly Romanov family and their sad fate, and we, the readers, learn that the similarities are caused by inter-dimensional echoes. We discover the depth and, what some would surely call, deviance of the preexisting relationship between the two demons. It turns out the pages Kindred devotes here are well-spent, as I was quite moved during the later payoff scenes by the weft and warp of the emotional triangle she had woven between our intrepid if peculiar triune. I was almost instantly attached to Anazakia, but as the story unfolded and the pace quickened, I found I’d grown fond of her demon cohorts as well.

#### Heavenly Subversion:

The story really soars once Belphagor leaves his companions hidden in a wintery Russian hinterland dacha, returning to Heaven to seek a solution to their plight. Ever the gambler, the elder demon plays his last card, right into the hands of the newly-risen false queen, Aeval—a deliciously apt name for an adept foil. Kindred keeps the pages turning from here to the concluding scenes, although I found the last action sequence limped a bit when it should have galloped.

I fear superficial description of *The Fallen Queen* may paint it as tritely ironic or even subversive, with its demons as saviors, angels as assassins, and its portrayal of Heaven as a metaphor for the decadence and elitism that provoked the Bolshevik revolution, but the effect of the whole was never off-putting. The book is indeed provocative, but refreshingly so. Kindred’s world feels both new and old at once; a must for those interested in angelic myth and its hierarchy. It is also sexy (at times bordering on lascivious), moving, and always entertaining.

The ending leaves no doubt that *The Fallen Queen* is the first of a trilogy, in that the story is far from over, with some lingering issues left blatantly unresolved. And yet I found the arc of the story and its conclusion very satisfying—something often lacking in the first and second editions of epic fantasy trilogies. I happily look forward to revisiting Kindred’s celestial creation.

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#### Andrea says

What a book! At first glance, I would have written *The Fallen Queen* off as a strictly High Fantasy book. And it is a Fantasy, a great one at that, full of deceit, betrayal, and despair. The world building is beautiful and complex, involving a Heaven more elaborate than I could have ever imagined. It was perhaps a bit complex for my taste, but I just sort of let the intricate political and geographical bits go and took in the rest of the details, which I loved.

What really jerked me into the story and held me captivated was the relationship between Anazakia and Vasily, and Vasily and Belphagor. I don't even know where to begin. It was weird...and HOT. When I say weird, I'm not even talking about genders and sexuality, that's not important. I'm talking about the, I don't

know, fluidness, of the relationships. I'm sure I am not properly conveying my thoughts, but honestly, I'm still reeling over the triangle. Wow!

At it's core, *The Fallen Queen* is the story of a girl whose entire life is ripped apart. It reminded me, and this story is even referred to, of Anastasia. Anazakia, (oh, I just got the name similarity) was a brave, resourceful girl who literally makes the best of what is handed to her. If you like Fantasy books, at all, this one is highly recommended.

Favorite Quote:

" 'What happens,' I breathed, 'when a firespirit and a waterspirit come together?'  
He pressed his fingers to my lips as if to be sure I was speaking and a spark of wavering violet danced on his hand. I sought his mouth with mine and at the meeting of our lips, the light surged around us like our own aurora."

\*I received this book from Entangled Publishing, via NetGalley.\*

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## **Deelylah Mullin says**

*The Fallen Queen* is the first book in Ms. Kindred's series, of which I can already tell that I'm going to be a HUGE fan. My initial reaction, at 20% of the book read, was: This is like *Dune* (Herbert) meets *Singh's Guild Hunters*! What a win-win for me!

The beginning of *The Fallen Queen* revealed a bit of history, as well as Anazakia doing her best to 'test the limits' regarding the rules of her station, as an heir to the throne of Arkhangel'sk. Kindred did a phenomenal job of setting-up her world. What can only be described as a coup, masterminded by the Evil Queen, as I came to call her, left Anazakia the only surviving heir...and only because she was acting 'slightly' outside the expected societal norm. Luckily, Anazakia's Nurse/confidante/governess (whatever you want to call her...) knew about Anazakia's penchant for livin' on the edge, found her with a necessary item, and paid a demon to keep her hidden. Really enjoyed the Russian language, as well.

As we get further into the story, it becomes painfully obvious that Anazakia is someone important, and there are those that are willing to 'obtain' her. It seems that it's not simply her station that creates her importance. Unfortunately, one of her 'captors' was injured, although she was able to assist with his rapid healing...to a certain point, and concurrently learned about her own powers in the world of Man. Anazakia also learned a secret from those 'Unseen' when she leaves the hotel because Vasily and Belphagor were engaging in act with which she was unfamiliar. MMMmmmmhmmmm... a little M/M tossed into the mix. It's interesting watching the tension between Vasily and Belphagor, as well. But wait! Vasily isn't only into Belphagor! A twisted (in a good way!) love triangle develops, increasing the already intense tension between our three main characters.

Tensions rise as Belphagor does something totally out of character...he's selfless. In order to protect Anazakia and Vasily, Belphagor leaves to find a way to get the reigning queen to give him an audience. Long story short, Belphagor gets the audience, and fails to leave for an extended period of time. Hatin' on the Queen. She's the resident baddie, and we're supposed to hate her. We all know someone like her – self-centered and self-serving.

I could tell, at the end of the title, that other titles are planned for this storyline, as there really wasn't much resolution, nor a concrete HEA. Usually, that bugs me, but it didn't this time. For me, even a series needs to provide some significant resolution at the conclusion of each title. Personal preference, and the only thing keeping me from giving this title the highest rating.

This was a very nice paranormal romance, light on the romance, heavy on the action in the final third of the story. I enjoyed the way *The Fallen Queen* was written. The languages used were quite appropriate, and added a lot to the story for me. Ms. Kindred surely has created a beautiful world, and I look forward to reading future installments of her *House of Arkhangel'sk* series.

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## **Marlene says**

This review was originally posted at Book Lovers Inc

I think it is going to be very, very important later, possibly much, much later, that this entire story is told as a flashback. It's an intriguing plot device, and one that's easy to forget as you get caught up in this wild and compelling tale of fallen angels and risen demons, but the narrator is remembering the story she tells.

That means Anazakia, unlike her earthly counterpart (oh yes, that matters too) survives her trials. You can't narrate your memoirs unless you live to tell the tale.

There were four princesses and one sickly prince in the supernal *House of Arkhangel'sk*. And their fate is made to almost, but not quite, mirror the earthly history of the *House of Romanov* more than a century previous. The Romanovs also had four princesses and one sickly prince. But unlike the Romanovs, the youngest princess survived, and thereby hangs the proverbial tale.

Because she survived through magic. And it's magic that makes this story of power lost, power gained, and ultimately, power corrupted, different from history. It's also where it merges with myth.

There's also more than a touch of Hans Christian Andersen's *Snow Queen*, a very evil version, at the cold, dark heart of this story.

And then there are the angels, and the demons. Don't attach traditional definitions to these terms, because they aren't strictly applicable. Demons in this myth refer to those who have fallen from the supernal realms, or have mixed their blood with humans. Sin as we know it may or may not apply.

Righteousness, carried too far, can be much more deadly, and more damning, than any "fall from grace". And angels can be hoodwinked.

The best man in the story is a demon. The biggest fool is an angel.

At heart, this is a story about political power. The evil *Snow Queen* wants to control the Supernal Realms, so she stages a coup, using magic. Anazakia escapes, because she's in the wrong place at the right time, also using magic.

That's where the "fun" begins. By escaping, Anazakia becomes more than the privileged daughter of the upper classes. She learns how the other half, several other halves (demons, fallen, humans) live. She fights

for her life. She learns to love.

And she becomes part of a legend.

Or so she says. After all, she's the one telling the story.

The Fallen Queen fascinated me. The layers to it keep peeling back and there is just more stuff in each layer. Be warned, this story is not for the faint of heart. The Snow Queen is really evil, and characters get tortured in some seriously inventive ways. And as the interview with author Jane Kindred detailed, the demons Belphegor and Vasily are very into BDSM. (It's consensual between them, not so much when the Queen does the torture thing) The parallels between Russian history and the Supernal Realms are intentional, and must go somewhere in later books. This political density reminds me of the Kushiel books.

The Fallen Queen is the start of Anazakia's epic journey through dark places to find herself.

I give The Fallen Queen 4 1/2 stars

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## **Lillie says**

See the full review at: **[Read My Mind](#)**

### **My Review:**

All hail fantasy. My roots in genre fiction started with high fantasy. I love reading it, but I don't do it often enough for some reason. I love the world-building, I love the character development, I love the seemingly impossible quest the protags must go on... And when I finish reading a truly good fantasy book, I realize how much I missed the genre. That's exactly what happened to me during and after my reading of THE FALLEN QUEEN.

Kindred has put a twist on angel lore in a new and captivating way. Angels and Demons are still at odds, but they both reside in Heaven. Fallen refers to those that have step foot upon the human earthly plane. Heaven echoes earth. Or is it the other way around? Kindred's plot and characters were utterly engrossing. They took me on a ride of danger, violence, sex, redemption, mystery, and cultural immersion that I have yet to come down from.

The central plotline revolved around Anazakia and her flight from heaven after her family is murdered. However, this puts her in the hands of Belphegor and Vasily, two demons and complex characters in their own right, whose relationship with each other and their pasts are explored throughout the novel. The earthly setting is in Russia, and Kindred infuses Vasily, Belphegor and Anazakia's interactions with the Russian language and culture of the time. Though there is plenty of strange-looking vocabulary from both the Russian and Arkhangel'sk languages, it lends authenticity and I enjoyed the inclusion.

THE FALLEN QUEEN is not fantasy lite, where a fantasy setting falls to the background of a romance or love triangle. This is fantasy at its best, where the intricacies of the world are spun out amidst angel court intrigue, three people on the run from a mad queen and her bespelled pawn, sacrifice and discovery.

**5/5 for plot**

4.5/5 for characters

4.5/5 for language

**My Rating: 14/15 (4.5 stars)**

**Must Read, if you liked:**

*The Demon King* by Cinda Williams Chima

*The Keepers of Sulbreth* by Susan Gourley

*October Daye (series)* by Seanan McGuire

Find the author at:

**Website | Blog | Twitter | GoodReads**

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## Scooper Speaks says

2.5 Not my thing.

**Favorite Lines:** “Fear and instinct propelled me to flight. If not for the violent downpour, I might have lost myself in the glorious feeling of riding the wind, but the rain beat down against me with tiny fists.” (p. 73)

I was expecting book one of Jane Kindred’s House of Arkhangelsk series to be racy. I thought it might have a menage type feel, but I was wrong. *The Fallen Queen* is not what I imagined, nor is it the type of book I normally read. I was uncomfortable with much of the book which involved BDSM, a gay couple and a 17-year-old getting it on with a much older man. If I had known any of those themes were included in the story, I would not have read it.

As it was, I almost stopped reading the book several times. It was interesting enough that I wanted to know where it was going, but the themes—oh, the themes—about drove me mad.

The story is told in first and third person. I was never confused with the POV switch; it was clear and well written. One of the biggest obstacles to my enjoyment of the story was the words used. For example, the names of people, places and items were hard to pronounce, define and keep clear. Words like: Belphegor, Paimon, Raqia, Anazakia Helisonovna, Arkhangel’sk, perferans, Elysium, Omeliea, Aravoth, Pyriphlegethon, Empyrean, Aeval and aeth. The Russian words which were interspersed within the text didn’t help.

I’m extremely uncomfortable with BDSM and I’m not interested in gay or lesbian themed stories. They create an awkward feeling in me and I prefer to read about heterosexual couples, but I can choke it down. In *The Fallen Queen*, the two main male characters have a romantic history together. They participate in a BDSM lifestyle and begin to rekindle it (along with oral sex) while on their journey with Anazakia, the heroine. There are many undertones that I’m unfamiliar with in the book and they all revolve around BDSM and the gay and lesbian world.

The underage heroine’s head is shaved and she is dressed to look like a man. She is called “boy” and has her breasts bound. At different points, she is interested in both of the men. Because she only interacts with the gay couple and is sexually attracted to a clearly gay man (although later she is attracted to the gay man

who considers himself bi-sexual), I think the gay community would call her a “fag hag.” I don’t know. It was too much.

Add to that the scene where the male couple is enjoying whipping and being whipped, prison rape and forced degradation and I was pushed too far. I’m sure there are other things. So, yeah, the story is about fallen angels and demons and a fight to control heaven. In the end I was so distracted by the details that I lost track of the actual point of the story.

When push comes to shove I read for enjoyment. I don’t want to be depressed when I finish reading a book. I don’t want to feel conflicted. I have enough problems in life that when I finish reading a book I want to know that someone—even an imaginary someone—can have a happy conclusion. Now there’s room in that for a lot of leeway. But at the end of *The Fallen Queen* I never felt that there was hope of any type of satisfactory ending. **SPOILER\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*DON’T READ ON IF YOU DON’T WANT TO READ A SPOILER\*\*\*SPOILER\*\*\*SPOILER**

(view spoiler)

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## LK Griffie says

Epic Fantasy, Action, Adventure, Romance, Angels, Demons, Heaven and Earth. I have been waiting for a chance to read *The Fallen Queen* for quite some time now. I've had the privilege of catching some snippets of the book while playing on Twitter, and the concept intrigued me, so I jumped at the chance to get my hands on an Advanced Reader Copy (ARC) of the book. *The Fallen Queen* is full of angels and demons, but not in the way you might think. Jane Kindred has taken the story of Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia and the fall of Imperial Russia and blended it with fantasy, with current day Heaven being a reflection of the happenings of Russia, 1918, down to the rumors of the escape of Anastasia. The result is an engaging tale which takes the reader through a maze of political intrigue, assassinations, and romance.

The book opens in the realm of Heaven with the Grand Duchess Anazakia Helisonovna of the House of Arkhangel'sk, a mere seventeen-year-old, playing against a demon in a game of chance at a wingcasting table in Raqia -- a city of the Fallen in Heaven, and home to several dens of iniquity, such as the Brimstone where our Angel gambled her crystals away. And just like that -- I was hooked. Raqia, the Brimstone, just the names set the atmosphere for what was to come. And opening with an Angel at a wingcasting table? Superb.

Our Angel, Anazakia, is a rather self-absorbed person at the beginning of the book, looking for fun and adventure, and didn't realize she had brought on more adventure than she could handle. Using a form of magic, she split her essence, so there was a version of herself left at home to attend balls, or dinners, things that Anazakia herself would find boring, while the real Anazakia would sneak out of the palace and head to Raqia to *experience life*.

It is during one of these forays to Raqia when she finds herself at the wingcasting table facing the demon Belphagor, and is gambling away her crystals while her family is violently slain by her cousin Kae -- including the shade of herself.

And lest you think that since this book is about Angels and Demons there are religious overtones to it -- there are not. Angels are the Host and reflective of nobility and the supernal (imperial) family. Demons represent the peasant class. And in this peasant class is Belphagor, *The Prince of Tricks*, and the hero of the piece.

Here is Anazakia's description of Belpagor upon their first meeting:

Raqia's reigning prince that night was a dark-haired demon with eyes as sharp as the waxed points of his hair. He played his hand as cool as you please and barely seemed to notice me, but he put nearly card I discarded into play with his own and soon had me hemorrhaging both cards and crystal.

Smoke burned my eyes as the demon nursed his cigar in a deliberate distraction. When he took it between his fingers, I could not help following with my eyes. Beneath the tattered lace of his cuffs, black crosses and diamonds, interlaced with characters of an unfamiliar alphabet, braced his fingers between the knuckles like rings made of ink.

Kindred hooks the reader from the start and takes them on a wild chase from Heaven to the terrestrial plane of man, with the Grand Duchess in the care of two demons as she flees for her life. A brilliantly executed story and one any fantasy lover must read. Jane Kindred is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors and would highly recommend you read *The Devil's Garden*, a novella by Kindred which I reviewed in August, while waiting for the release on December 6th of *The Fallen Queen*.

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## Crystal ★ Lost in Storyland says

The Fallen Queen is not your classic Good versus Evil story. It isn't simply about Heaven being overrun evil forces and the ousted heir rallying the good to fight back. Though evil reigns on the throne and seeks to kill Anazakia so that she cannot take back her rightful place, those who should side with her are glad to see her family dead and gone while those who should hate her fight for her. I love the complexity of the world building and plot development. It makes it that much harder to predict what's going to happen next, and I'm happy to say that the story continued to surprise me from start to finish.

The story is slow to start. At first, I was completely lost and had no idea what was going on, even after Anazakia's nursemaid puts her in the care of Belpagor and Vasily, hoping the demons can hide her from the ones who killed her family, and though there is a fair amount of telling going on. It isn't until the pieces come together that I could understand the storyline. For the most part, there is a lot of waiting involved in between the running and fighting. It would have been nice to get more world building worked into the context, as I found myself lost several times because I didn't know the world adequately to piece together the situation, though we do get to learn more about the characters during the waiting periods. The story gets better once the pace picks up and the plot gets moving. I have to mention that I love the battles scenes. As graphic as they are, I like how they portray the brutal realities of battle and don't romanticize it.

Anazakia and her friends are interesting characters. They have likable personalities. A sheltered Grand Duchess, Anazakia is naive and gullible and sometimes resembles a damsel in distress, particularly after she learns of the massacre of her family. However, she also has heart, and that's what won me over. She isn't afraid to put her life on the line to help her comrades or to give her opinion on matters. Though she didn't bother getting into politics before, she has the makings of a ruler within her. Belpagar and Vasily, the

demons who shelter her, are two characters brimming with life and personality. Belphegor is the hot conniving one who only likes men. He's the one who accepts the mission to protect Anazakia; though he initially does it for the money, they develop a good relationship, though they tend to quarrel. Vasily is the nice one and has a certain characteristic about him that makes the other two want to protect him. Amongst the three of them, complex relationships develop.

Overall, The Fallen Queen does what I expect a first novel to do. It introduces the characters and sets up the initial conflict, giving it somewhat of a resolutions while teasing readers with the promise of greater conflict to come. I love the characters, and I'm interested in seeing where the story takes us.

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For more of my reviews, visit my blog Imaginary Reads.

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## Cocktails and Books says

Let me start off by saying this. Holy Hell! Do not let the first chapter of this book deceive you. What I thought was a YA book was nothing of the sort.

Anazakia is the youngest daughter to the Heavenly King of Arkhangel'sk. As Grand Dutchess, her only concern was sneaking out to gamble in the demon enclave, Raqia, or to ride her horse. But her world is turned upside down when her beloved cousin slaughters her entire family. Forced onto the demon Belphegor and his friend, Vasily, she is hidden in the realm of man in present day Russia. Unfortunately, for the trio, the evil queen who has taken over Heaven is bound and determined to see Anazakia dead, after discovering her secret magic trick from the night of the slaughter. Anazakia must now depend on two demons, who admittedly were only using her for money, to help keep her hidden.

When the story starts off, Anazakia does appear to be a very spoiled, very selfish seventeen year old. She used magic to leave a "version" of herself at the palace while she wandered about gambling and whatnot. But after the death of her family, you start to see Anazakia in a different light. She lived a very sheltered life and was not at all prepared for what she was about to embark on. She had to grow up fast and figure out who she should trust.

While initially Anazakia thought Belphegor was that person she could lean on and trust, her discovery of his relationship with Vasily actually helped pave the way for the bond that would develop between Anazakia and Vasily. Vasily may not have like Anazakia at first, he soon discovered there was much more to this young woman than her title.

Then there is Belphegor and Vasily. Belphegor was a hard character to warm up to. Even when he was protecting Anazakia, I couldn't trust that he was doing what was in her best interest. Even when he went to the lengths he did to ensure the Seraphim wouldn't come after them any longer, it seemed he was really doing it to save Vasily. Even when he sacrifice himself to the Queen, it was to save Vasily.

Vasily, on the other hand, I like immediately. I think he originally disliked Anazakia because she was competition for Belphegor's attention. I don't think he discovers his need for Anazakia until after Belphegor's

presence is removed from the equation. Then he realizes, that he needs both Anazakia and Belphagor. They both bring something to their relationships with him that is different from the other, and calls to the different halves of him.

This book has a little bit of everything. Angels, demons, nephilim, fae, grigori, and seraphim. It was fascinating to see the story unfold and discover the similarity between ancient buildings and families in Russia and how they closely resembled what was found in Heaven. I only wonder if those similarities will have an impact on the storyline down the trilogy. This was definitely a book that kept my attention and had me wondering "what next". I can't wait for the next release, *Midnight Court*, slated for an August release.

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## Emme says

I met Jane Kindred at a women's retreat for a San Francisco Bay Area org-- many moons ago. She stood out in the group because she was personable, smart as a whip and attractive. During that weekend Jane shared about some of her writings, but I was just beginning to read erotica so I wasn't familiar with any of her work. Several weeks later, Jane was in attendance at another of this organization's get-togethers-- and this time she played host. And Jane was the consummate host-- making us all comfortable, serving us yummy food and providing some entertainment. This evening, that entertainment took the form of tarot readings-- Jane pulled out a deck and offered to read each of us. I watched in fascination as Jane read each person, with nervous titters from the observers as the cards revealed various outcomes. My turn came last, as I wasn't in any hurry to see what the tarot cards would say-- I didn't really believe in that sort of thing, but was willing to go along for the hell of it. It wasn't too long, though, before the mood seemed to change from frivolity to...I don't know what! I was taken aback by how quiet Jane got as she dealt my cards. As a matter-of-fact, Jane's hands were shaking as she spread the tarot cards out. I honestly don't remember anything that was said during the reading that day, but Jane's response to me has stuck in my mind all these 14+ years. It takes more than a questionable tarot reading to scare me off, so after that night I did what I could to follow Jane's writing career online (hmmm, that sounds a little stalkerish, doesn't it? It really wasn't...mostly. hehehe).

I am glad that I kept tabs on Jane. I love her lyrical style of writing and how she takes chances with characters and subject matter. I thoroughly enjoyed her novella, *The Devil's Garden*, a richly woven tale of gender fluidity and love. I knew I was in for a treat when I read about her latest novel, *The Fallen Queen*. What's not to love about a book with angels and demons, falling dynasties, an ice queen, Russia, two male lovers and the young woman who forever changes their lives?

If you want to read a synopsis of *The Fallen Queen*, you can find that here (scroll down to "Heaven can go to hell" section): <http://www.janekindred.com/books/the-...> . **This review is a bit spoilery**-- but it's difficult to discuss such an epic tale without bringing up some plot points.

There are several things I absolutely love about this novel. Jane Kindred is a gifted storyteller. What really caught my attention about *The Fallen Queen* was that the book is inspired by the fall of the Romanov dynasty in early 20th Century Russia. *The Fallen Queen* almost serves as a frame story, a shadowing of the execution of the Romanov royals-- the tsar and tsarina, their four daughters and one son. Or perhaps those earth-bound events in Russia's history are framed by the coup in Heaven that takes place in the novel. In this urban fantasy, Heaven is an alternative universe with a similar set of circumstances to Tsarist Russia-- political unrest brought on by ineffective leadership, war and resentments of the working class.

Grand Duchess Anazakia Helisonovna (the Fallen Queen of this tale) is an indulged princess, the daughter of the supernal ruler of the House of Arkhangel'sk. The majority of the story is told through Anazakia's memoirs. Anazakia is an angel, but not exactly angelic, as she escapes execution because she has slipped off to find mischief at a casino, while the rest of her family meets their doom at the hands of her deranged cousin. Anazaki's story mirrors the pop culture stories of Anastasia Romanov's escape from her family's execution. Anazakia unwittingly falls in with a couple of demons-- Belphago and Vasily, air and fire demons, respectively. Anazakia, as innocent and inexperienced as she is, does not completely trust these Fallen demons, but has little choice but to put her faith in them until she can figure a way out of her situation (when her escape from execution is discovered a team of angelic enforcers is sent to retrieve her).

I can imagine that some readers would be put off by a story filled with angels and demons, but Jane really bends the usual heaven/hell/earth motif to her will. Kindred draws on some of the names and descriptions of the angelic hosts, fallen angels or demons of the Christian mythos. There are Seraphims, Nephilims, Cherubim (there are some extra-biblical classes added for good measure) and their abodes within various dominions and principalities-- any student of the bible would have at least a passing familiarity with these terms. But, Kindred turns the KJV on its head-- this is not a simple angels-good vs demons-bad story: the demons Vasily and Belphago are the heroes, here.

Oh, and usually biblical accounts don't include fairies-- and as much as I usually dislike fairies (which is funny, because I love "fairy" tales), the fae in this story serve their purpose and don't overwhelm the story. I must say, that trying to keep up with all the different bands and factions of angels and demons-- and humans, once our main characters fall to the World of Man (semi-modern day Russia-- the timing isn't exactly nailed down)--is a bit daunting, but Kindred does include a hierarchy at the beginning of the book that should help readers out. I've got to say that there's enough world-building here for a rather elaborate video game.

Speaking of the World of Man, one of my favorite parts of the book is when Anazakia finds her self in a parallel universe-palace, that mirrors the one where she has grown up, and where her loved ones were murdered. It seemed to me that this is the place in the story where Anazakia sobers up and starts to grasp how her world of privilege has passed, just as it did for Russia's royal family in 1917. This is but one instance where Anazakia must make sense of her predicament and seek a way out-- and it seems like it ultimately takes all of heaven and earth to restore the Fallen Queen.

One of my favorite characters in The Fallen Queen is Aeval. I don't know how to pronounce this bitch's name, but "evil" certainly seems to fit! Aeval is the epitome of a "ice queen"-- she has very little regard for the suffering of others, is madly driven to having her way, is cold to the touch, and has a sparkly white wardrobe. Just as in Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen, we have a frosty temptress that bespells a prince, Kae, Anazakia's cousin, who has been overpowered by Aeval and tasked with carrying out her evil biddings. I really shouldn't feel sorry for Kae, because his own lust for power and position renders him susceptible to the Aeval's corruption, but he's not the first character (and certainly won't be the last) to fall under the charms of evil woman.

This is starting to sound like one major run-on sentence, so I'll try to move things along. Romance! Ah, there's an abundance of romance in The Fallen Queen. To me, Anazakia is so much, in turns, a spoiled brat or an annoyingly naive angel that I found that I really didn't care if she ever found love or not. The relationship between Belphagor and Vasily, though, tugged at my heartstrings. Yeah, I'm a sucker for demon love stories, and their's is BDSM-tinged and orientation-fluid-- there were just enough angsty-goings on to keep me glued to the story. Belphagor may be the "Prince of Tricks," but his love for Vasily brings out all of the most noble in him.

The Fallen Queen is a very complex story, and there are many more things I could discuss about it, but I'm really trying to scale back so that my reviews aren't longer than the source material. There are so many other things in the story worth looking into-- the Romany/Gypsies and the part these humans play in knocking down Queen Aeval quest for empire. I wanted to know more about Vashti, Demetri and Nephilim politics. Just what kind of organization is Knud really a part of? The fairies-- what's their agenda? Perhaps these and other questions will be answered in the next installment-- The Fallen Queen will be followed up with a sequel called The Midnight Court, coming in early 2012.

The Fallen Queen fascinated me as much as its author has all these years. This novel is a fantastical blend of great storytelling, myth and legend, adventure, magic, political intrigue and a hint of social consciousness. Tall order, sure-- but Jane Kindred more than pulls its off. I highly recommend this one.

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