



Raven's Heart: A Tale from the World of Secramore

M.S. Verish

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An exiled man wonders if he should forsake his new life and risk returning to his homeland. A troubled girl seeks redemption for a terrible crime she has committed. A solitary tracker breaks an oath in order to communicate with an infamous, supernatural criminal. A vagabond thief chances leaving behind the world he knew for an unknown destiny.

An unlikely cast of characters, they are thrown together by chance, or perhaps by fate, willingly embarking upon an eccentric wizard's mission to recover a magical stone: Raven's Heart.

A piece of the "Stone of Undoing", Raven's Heart is deadly. Though the stone has the ability to unravel the very essence of magic, it brings Arcturus, Kariayla, Hawkwing, and Jinx together in a mission beyond individual ambition that could determine the fate of the world in which they live.

Raven's Heart: A Tale from the World of Secramore Details

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Author : M.S. Verish

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From Reader Review Raven's Heart: A Tale from the World of Sacramore for online ebook

Rebecca says

I had some trouble getting into the story initially. The POV is unclear for a long time, so it feels more like head hopping than omniscient for a long time. The world building seems pretty complete, but some things about the characters are confusing for a long time when you don't know about their people and culture. But overall I found it a relatively enjoyable read.

Barbara Kay says

This wasn't the book I was reading, I read *The Raven's Heart* by Jesse Blackadder. Simply the best book I have read on the subject this year...

Jason says

A fantasy of the highest order, *Raven's Heart* presents the land of Sacramore, a wonderfully imaginative place filled with an assortment of magical beings trying to coexist despite deep racial misgivings. According to lore, an eruption of violence in the past known as *The Cataclysm* gave way to one man's attempt to bring racial unity to the land, which is known as *The Forging*. In the present, Arcturus, a wise old blood-mage or Markanturian, takes on that mission in an attempt to right the discrimination he himself faces. With him is Kariayla, a perceptive, troubled young girl who has wings, making her a Nemelorean. As much as Arcturus's quest interested me, Kariayla's shameful secret has kept me turning the pages. As punishment for some terrible mistake or atrocity, her wings have shriveled up and hardened like week-old bread.

This story is perfect for readers who want to get in knee-deep with an eclectic cast of characters and their various motivations. You get to know them so well you begin to feel like you can anticipate or expect their responses. But as compelling as the main characters are, I liked the secondary characters and even the extras. One of the most clever things I thought was that the villains were a group of bankrupt aristocrats turned to thievery. Also, there was a talking fireball that was very cool. One aspect of the story I particularly liked was how many of these secondary characters grew to be important contributors to the plot. The variety of the ways they were introduced and developed was creative, though towards the end there are spots where the main characters we've known from the beginning almost get lost in everyone else's action.

Overall, the book is masterfully constructed, clever, and entertaining. It even had me laughing at a few points. I recommend it to fantasy readers who like their stories expansive and thought-provoking. Give it a shot!

Merissa (Archaeoliberalian) says

This is a slow starter and continues as a slow burn throughout. It is a shame when reading a book in a genre that you love when you just don't connect with the main character - or one of them. In this instance it was Arcturus for me. I didn't connect with him, didn't have any empathy/sympathy for him and just found him to be plain annoying. I didn't care for the reasons behind his quest. Considering he was the "leader" of our little group, this made it a bit difficult to read. I was more interested in the rest of the characters although their stories seemed to require filling out as well. The general story is a good one and was very well paced. The ending also seemed a bit strange to me. It didn't really end, it just sort of fizzled out. For saying this is a standalone book (at the moment) there was no real conclusion to the characters except that they all went their separate ways.

I am a bit disappointed with this book because I was wanting to love it, but I don't.

Jenclone says

I really loved having both parts of the story in one volume with this revised edition. It's a big, satisfying experience, getting lost in this world; my favorite thing, though, has to be the characters. There's a wonderfully varied cast of them, all complex and fascinating. I didn't want the book to end, and I'm really looking forward to reading the next installment from Secramore.

Maya Lantz says

Well it took me several months to read but I'm happy to say I finally made it to the end! Raven's Heart is a humongous undertaking into the extremely well developed world of Secramore. It was slow in the beginning as there are many characters and before really getting to know everyone I found it complicated to keep everything straight. Once, the merry band of travelers all met up (Arcturus, Kariayla, Jinx and Hawkwing) it was easy and fun reading from there, up to a point.

I really got into their journey and rooted for all of them. Arcturus was pretty straightforward, you knew what he wanted and there weren't really very many surprises. Kariayla's past was hinted at numerous times throughout the book and left you wondering and intrigued throughout constantly waiting to find out the mystery behind her. Jinx again was a straightforward easy going character with little surprises. Hawkwing was another character built upon by intrigue and a dark past. He was another character that you constantly wanted to know more about and at times thought you knew what was going on with him and were either pleasantly surprised you were right or perhaps mildly shocked that you were wrong and it was something else altogether.

The character's themselves were extremely well written as was the journey itself from the start until the end of part one. At the end of part one I really felt as though it could have been the end of "Book One" with the rest to follow in a sequel. Part Two was much more disjointed as the band of travelers broke up and most went their separate ways, either by choice or by force, and the rest of the part two, the majority actually followed two new characters whom I didn't care as much for and just wanted to get past their bit and find out what was happening with the original main characters. Of the original main characters one of them is barely in the second half as he is taken against his will and the rest then commence trying to find him and rescue him, yet he was one of my favorite characters so that was a big disappointment. Another character who plays a large role is the white demon, he comes in during part one and is very mysterious and intriguing yet once

you find out more about him you genuinely care for him and wish for him to succeed in his endeavors. Yet, once he goes off on his own way you never hear from him or about him again, there isn't even any summary of he is alive or perhaps captured at the end of conclusion of the book. I was extremely disappointed by this as I figured maybe there would be a few lines in an epilogue about him or something else small to summarize where he was and what he had been doing during the rest of the characters adventures.

I thoroughly enjoyed part one, I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys epic fantasy, however I cannot say the same for part two of the book. While part two did hold my interest I just did not find it as enjoyable as part one. Also, as far as the writing style goes one thing that drove me crazy while reading this was the author's use of quotation marks during large speaking parts, and there were many large speaking parts throughout this book. If one character was speaking and they broke it into paragraphs they would not end the first paragraph with quotations marks but they would start the next paragraph with them. I have never seen this before when reading and it drove me nuts! Also, the characters come across elves in part two of their journey. I have nothing against elves or the flowery language the elves used, but if you are going to employ flowery language then use the word "yes" instead of "yea". The use of "yea" when the elves spoke seemed so out of place and really ruined reading their eloquent way of speaking, in my opinion.

Aaron Wamsley says

I just couldn't make it through. I tried and tried and tried. The characters just had nothing I could connect with, their personalities all felt flat. The dialog felt forced. The plot itself seemed like it had potential and I kept thinking it was going to get better, but at over halfway through the book, when I was dreading going to pick it back up, I realized I needed to shelf it and move on to somethin gelse.

Raven says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is reminiscent of the Dragonlance or Forgotten Realms series published by TSR. We were introduced to each of the characters over time. As in the aforementioned books, the characters headed out on a quest, each for their own personal reasons and as each part of the quest appeared to end, another part of the journey would manifest. This is a stand alone novel, although I would not be disappointed if other stories set in Secramore were to be written. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys the fantasy genre!

D.P. Prior says

Review of The Forging by M.S. Verish.

This is an epic fantasy in the old style, by which I mean there is no adherence to strict point of view, there is a wealth of fantastical happenings and beings, a lack of gritty "realistic" violence, and an absence of bad language.

In many ways, that was extremely refreshing. It's a book in which to immerse yourself and breath in the

aroma of the world of Secramore without a mirror being held up to your face showing you how terrible the real world is (which seems to happen a lot in popular modern fantasy).

The characters are distinctive and fairly easy to empathize with. Arcturus, the scholarly pariah, is a tetchy old Gandalf type, right down to his penchant for pipe smoking. Like most academics, he gets a bit over-specialized and myopic, which leads to the somewhat selfish abandonment of his partner, Eribeth. This was certainly a brave move by the authors, as I never fully liked Arcturus as a person from that moment on. He's entertaining, for sure, and an utter know-it-all, but he's also flawed. Those flaws are revealed further during his interactions with the enigmatic Kariyayla and the delightful Jinx.

I loved some of the mundane things the characters do, especially early on with Eribeth, who was terrific, but at times the pacing suffered as a result. Pace was also hurt by the nature of the plot: the premise of Arcturus's quest just wasn't compelling enough for me. I didn't believe in his motivation, nor in his willingness to leave Eribeth behind. It was a vague search for a tracker who could then lead Arcturus and Kariyayla to find a former mentor named William. I got the sense it was harder to find the tracker than the man they wanted him to track.

The events that triggered Arcturus's decision to leave never really added up for me. There was little urgency to the journey, no sense of anything to be averted, anyone to save. At times it felt more like an aimless road-trip without much focus.

The book really came alive at about 40% through when Jinx appears. His POV was well-written, and given a bit more time, without another character's POV intruding. The Forging is always best when there is consistent (and sustained) POV. The head-hopping became irritating at times—I'd just start to settle into a character only to find myself in someone else's head. The few scenes where this doesn't happen (Eribeth, Jinx, and Kariyayla's were most memorable) the writing reached new levels. If each scene had been reserved to a single POV, I think reader identification would have been much easier.

There were some other POV issues that got in the way of my enjoyment of the book. In a couple of scenes, characters are described but not named. Their descriptors are then used as speech tags, even when we have access to their POV thoughts. This sort of thing destroys the illusion. The dramatic intention is to be enigmatic or mysterious, but it only served to frustrate this reader.

Language was mostly good, but there were occasional forays into fantasy-speak and verbosity. The style of some chapters was appreciably different to others in this respect, and that may indicate one of the pitfalls of co-writing. Whilst there were not very many spelling errors, there were some grammatical oddities and quite a few redundant words and phrases, word omissions, and borderline usages.

Dialogue was mostly very good. I always knew when Arcturus was speaking (pompous git!) and Jinx's dialect was subtle and easy to read. Not so for some of the other characters, including the White Demon, when the word contractions really drew too much attention and catapulted me out of the story.

It's a tough one to call as I really liked some of the characterization. There were also some spells of very good prose (always when the author was keeping it simple), and nice use of POV from time to time. It's worth reading for these things alone, and it may be that my issues with the plot are simply a matter of expectation. Perhaps there doesn't always have to be an urgent battle to save the world; maybe the protagonist doesn't have to have his farm burned to the ground by evil raiders, forcing him to seek justice or revenge. There is something quite earthy and mundane about these characters, in spite of their undeniably exotic natures. In this sense, they are like Chesterton's ideal protagonist—an ordinary person who explores an extraordinary world whilst we look on.

Writing style: 4/5

Technically very competent, but occasional fluctuations in style and a tendency to be overly wordy.

Characterization: 4/5

Good relationships with satisfying access to inner thoughts and motives. Weakened by the omniscient style (head-hopping).

Plot: 2/5

Not compelling enough for me. There were also a few lapses of focus (the introduction of peripheral characters for the odd scene). The stakes never felt high enough.

World building: 4/5

A great map, but very little sense of geography and distance came across in the writing. I didn't get much of a feel for the politics politics, and there were a few cliched elements in the culture. That said, once or twice I felt transported. It's a world I'd be interested in seeing more of.

My overall impression is that this is a well-written tale that should appeal to lovers of old-style high fantasy. This is not my preferred sub-genre (Gemmell, Moorcock, R.E. Howard etc are more to my taste; the style here reminded me more of Anne McCaffrey, David Eddings, Terry Brooks, and Ursula LeGuinn).

If you prefer your fantasy to be intelligent, slower in pace, and devoid of graphic violence, swearing, and heroic machismo, you would do well to take a look at *The Forging*.

Rating: 3.5/5

Kirsten Lenius says

This was in the way of an epic fantasy, very nicely done.

The world was not derived from any other that I recall reading, though there were some kind of elfy and wizardly bits. Those rang a Tolkienesque bell, but were different enough that it didn't vex me.

The characters were complex and imperfect and held my attention strongly enough that I will go and see if there are more stories. Always a good sign.

Arian says

This is a great fantasy book although some of the dialog is choppy (especially at the beginning of the book). What I liked most about it is the overall plot development and the wonderful "heroes" who are so different from heroes in many other books.

Overall highly recommended.

Deidre says

Fairly contrived in the resolution of most conflicts, mediocre to fair character development, and a plethora of loose ends at the end of the trilogy. I hope these authors improve with experience because the last 1/2 of the book felt like they pushed the characters into unplanned conflicts for which they (the characters) were in no way equipped to handle so. . . presto, change-o, have a supernatural take care of the problem for you or else the villain is so stupid as to send the most effective of his protections elsewhere at the end.

Alice Yeh says

The tale begins, as so many do, with a deceptively simple quest: to find one book that will satisfy a man's thirst for historical truth and personal direction. Through a combination of fortune and his own morality, companions are collected, and what was initially a three-step journey becomes an adventure to save all of Secramore.

The development of the plot was flawless, from the completion of each minor task to their interlacing into a larger problem to be solved. Throughout, the pace is set to keep the reader in a state of anticipation — fast enough to avoid alienating the impatient, and slow enough to let one savor the tension. Each of the elements was introduced with a naturalness that made it easy both to absorb and to believe, and I found myself quickly immersed in this fantastical realm.

In truth, the strength of *Raven's Heart* lies within the authors' attention to detail. Though hard to pinpoint where the distinctions lay, it was quickly evident that the names of individual people groups and their citadels reflected a great deal of the race's personalities and culture. For the Markanturians, for instance, their nomenclature melds well with the intellectualism, ethics, and aristocratic tendencies that govern their society. They are subtle, but these small attentions help the reader to assimilate these foreign ideas as truths.

Characterizations were another area in which this book excels. It was inevitable that the characters would change over the course of a long journey, but the maturation process was one that made sense. At its core, each persona remained true to itself: Arcturos' selfish tendencies and self-righteousness did not simply disappear, yet he did learn to recognize them instead of continuing in ignorance of his own flaws. Instead of choosing long discourse to dissect motivations and attitudes, the authors opted to use the past and present not only to advance the plot but also to enrich one's understanding of who these "people" are.

There is much more praise, and little criticism, that I could lay upon this work, but in the interest of brevity, I will make a only few more comments. The sketches that appear every few chapters are remarkably detailed, as is the map provided at the start of the book. There were two or three instances where the absence of proper subjunctive use was glaringly obvious, but aside from these missteps and less than a handful of typographical errors, the writing of this novel left little to be desired. It is well-executed storytelling, similar to that of Brian Jacques, and I eagerly await the next installment of what is likely become a very well-loved series.

Suan K. Hopper says

Full of mystery and magic

This is wonderful book with all kinds of mystical and magic! Would highly recommend this book. It kept me on the edge, just could not stop reading this wonderful story

D.P. Prior says

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This is a review of book 1, *The Forging*, only:

This is an epic fantasy in the old style, by which I mean there is no adherence to strict point of view, there is a wealth of fantastical happenings and beings, a lack of gritty “realistic” violence, and an absence of bad language.

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Rating: 3.5/5

Brian Pettera says

I think it was a solid Fantasy book. What makes it especially good is the diversity of the characters. Also the fact that this is the debut work of the authors. Only more good things to come.
