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Nikolai Duology #1: King of Scars

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Nikolai Duology #1: King of Scars

In the aftermath of the Ravkan civil war, King Nikolai Lantsov must find a way to unite Ravka, establish his place and authority on the throne, and keep the kingdom from falling back into bloodshed and disrepair. But the war has left a lasting mark on Nikolai—the monster curled inside his heart. Meanwhile, Nina Zenik has been sent on a reconnaissance mission to Fjerda to locate and help Grisha living in secret to escape the country. If she has any hope of helping her fellow Grisha and defeating Fjerdan prejudices, Nina must learn to face her pain and let go of her grief. And with the help of fearless Grisha commander Zoya Nazyalensky, Nikolai must confront the demon inside of himself and come to terms with the man he was before the war, the man he will never be again.

The main issue with this book is its pacing. It starts off extremely slow, and there is no true plot progression until halfway through. In all honesty, the book could have been 250 pages shorter. Additionally, this book is hardly about Nikolai. The main focus is on Zoya and Nina, who are both wonderful characters, but readers expecting a large character arc for Nikolai will be disappointed. This is not a book that can be read as a standalone; to be able to understand the story, you will have to read the other books in the Grishaverse. However, Bardugo’s world-building is fantastic. As always, Bardugo’s twists and turns and surprises do not disappoint, and readers who love the other books in the Grishaverse will celebrate to see their favorite characters again. Overall, this is a decent book, but it feels like a prologue to a better story.

*Contains mild language and moderate violence.*