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King of Scars

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Book Review

King of Scars

Author

Leigh Bardugo

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

514

Year

2019

ISBN

9781250231079

Publisher

Macmillan Publishers

King of Scars continues the story of the Grishaverse that began with the Shadow and Bone trilogy and continued with the Six of Crows duology. Nikolai Lantsov, former soldier and privateer has become King of Ravka. Civil war has depleted Ravka's treasury and Nikolai is trying to form alliances with neighboring countries, rebuild the once powerful Grisha army, and reconstruct his country's economy. His trusted advisors think that a politically advantageous marriage would solve most of Ravka's problems. Nikolai tends to agree with this strategy, but his only problem is that for the last six months he has been turning into a monster. His faithful general, Zoya, has stopped him before he could drain the blood of human victims, but the monster within is getting stronger. Nikolai and Zoya begin a journey to the Shadowfold, a dangerous place of deep magic, to find a cure for his affliction. Meanwhile, Nikolai's loyal court prepares to host royal families with eligible daughters. Unbeknownst to the King, old enemies await him in the Shadowfold, and back at the palace assassins also plot to end his rule.

Bardugo is an accomplished world builder, a fact that has been shown through all her books. In this novel Bardugo weaves a complicated tale with two main plotlines and multiple other events that refer to people, places and events that took place in past books. Because of this, reading King of Scars without understanding the history recounted in her previous books could cause confusion for the reader. While the title leads one to assume the main protagonist to be Nikolai, a separate but loosely connected storyline concerning Grisha rescue missions also fills the pages. It is this second story that seems to be the most developed. Events with Nikolai and Zoya at the Shadowfold seemed rushed and contrived and almost too fantastical. However, Bardugo is a master storyteller and this book is full of description, intrigue, and adventure throughout all its plotlines. Readers young and old will want to know what happens to all the characters in the second book in the duology which has yet to be announced.

*Contains moderate violence and mild substance abuse.