



BOOK REVIEW

Book Title	Ravencry
Author	Ed McDonald
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Stars	

Within Ed McDonald's protagonist, Ryhalt Galharrow, lies the possibility of redemption. He may be a ruthless killer, a dark-souled fighter for right, but within his heart there is something profound, even hopeful. What makes this second story so harrowing, so dramatic and so exciting, is the way McDonald forces Galharrow to suffer to achieve that redemption. He faces untold agonies in the first book, this time they are far worse.

This sequel is even darker in tone than the first. Primarily because Galharrow is slowly stripped of everything he holds dear. Nothing is safe. Not his friends, those he loves nor even the city he strives to protect.

What makes this series stand out is the character of Galharrow himself. He is the story. The pain and anguish he suffers is partly borne out of his own weaknesses, strange for a man who appears to be so big and strong. He's a fighter, a killer when he needs to be. The kind of character that fits easily into a Grimdark novel. But he loves – even though he wishes he doesn't and that's what makes him such a perfect protagonist. No matter how great his pain, it's nothing compared to the agonies he suffers for others as he strives to protect them.

Characters in this story are equally as rich and varied as the first. They inhabit it with such depth and vitality. There are those who've stayed with Ryhalt from Book One, but we meet others who we quickly invest in while others we soon hate. Nenn and Tnota continue to provide a foil for Galharrow's wit, hardships and dilemmas. What I love about McDonald's work, is how strong his female characters are, without them being turned into stereotypes.

The drive of this story is relentless. It is a full-throttle race to a climax that astonishes while leaving you breathless and emotional. I read the final 40% of the book in one afternoon, the need to reach the end was inexorable, a headlong-rush-to-the-bottom-of-the-hill-with-the-brakes-shot kind of relentlessness. All the time seeing the hero having more and more of his humanity peeled away from him.

It left me exhausted, empty, elated. How does a book do that? And it's also left me desperate for the next instalment.