

A Drowned Kingdom

P. L. Stuart

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A Drowned Kingdom is a faith-based fantasy novel in which a prince from a lost kingdom fights for dominance in a new land.

In P. L. Stuart's contemplative fantasy novel *A Drowned Kingdom*, a fallen kingdom gives rise to a legend.

Accompanied by almost two thousand of his allies, Prince Othrun prepares to sail from his beloved homeland, Atalantyx. But disaster strikes, wiping the island kingdom from existence. The Atalatean survivors venture across the Shimmering Sea to Acremia, a pagan land that's filled with nonbelievers and mages. A legend about Othrun precedes him in Acremia, where barbaric kings are eager to defeat him—both for their own glory, and to prevent the Atalateans from rising to power.

Othrun refuses to let his people fade into history, though. He sets out to claim land, alliances, and to unite people under his god's banner. But Acremia's warlords are imbued with powers from the elemental gods, and it will take all remaining Atalateans, a cursed sword, and a spiritual guide to defeat them.

Othrun narrates, and is an intriguing lead. His tone is recitational; he is dedicated to his own perspective of events; and his contradictions make him sometimes unreliable. As supernatural elements arise, Othrun at first eschews them, as he does anything that's magical; only his god matters to him.

But a spiritual guide who claims that Othrun has a divine mandate arrives, and Othrun chooses to believe that the guide's prophecies are true; his experiences in magic-infused Acremia are colored by this belief. Though Acremia's magic flies in the face of his faith, he comes to accept that it is real. He experiences discovery and wonder as he faces looming threats, most of which he is able to overcome with logic, heart, and, above all, faith. Opposite Othrun, Acremia's warlords and mages are positioned as sinister figures, their goals self-important above all else. One mage hopes to escape the clutches of her clan; a power-hungry warlord's son is motivated to fight in order to preserve his way of life.

Beyond Othrun's narration, fascinating conversations help to reveal who the people of both lands are. Atalateans speak in a formal, almost biblical, way; Acremian mages speak in a more poetic manner, their words tinged by double-talk and colorful phrases. Among Othrun's allies, a shorthand language blossoms, its subtext subtle.

The story's pace is contemplative, moving through long sea voyages during which Othrun reminisces about the recent past, ponders the dangers to come, and interacts with his spiritual guide. Elsewhere, hectic sword battles and harrowing escapes are described with precise details of where the characters are, how their swords move, and of the states of their natural surroundings. In a standout scene, Othrun and his allies survey the continent; each kingdom is laid out with intricacy and care.

The first book in a series, *A Drowned Kingdom* is a faith-based fantasy novel in which a prince from a lost kingdom fights for dominance in a new land.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 15, 2021)

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