

A Wicked Wind: Book Two of the Archanium Codex

Nicholas McIntire

Black Dove Press

(786pp)

978-1-73384-914-2

A Wicked Wind is a taut high fantasy novel in which the fate of a realm rests on the deep love between two men.

In Nicholas McIntire's fantasy novel *A Wicked Wind*, a prince's soul is imperiled, and magic threatens to consume the world.

The land of Ilyar is still reeling from the fall of Kalinor. Prince Jonas is trapped in the Undercroft, a heavenlike realm overseen by angelic beings, and is in the fight of his life. Jonas has already defied the prophecies that foresaw his death, but demonic magic is still entangled within his very being.

Meanwhile, Jonas's beloved, Aleksei, tries to smooth over a civil war that broke out among the surviving rebel soldiers. Jonas and Aleksei have a bond formed by the magic connection the two forged as knight and magi, but that bond fails to pierce the boundaries between realms. Aleksei chooses between rebuilding his shattered homeland and finding his lost love, all while dodging a tireless gust of wind pursuing him.

At the core of the story is the endearing relationship between Jonas and Aleksei. As part of their bond, if one dies, the other will die soon after. There's an overarching sense of impending doom as a result. And the intense backstories of the rest of the cast lead to a showcasing of general growth, even though the story focuses on the couple. The book's women are flawed and compelling; they are defined by their competency and drives to succeed. And the cast's conversations maintain their sense of humor well, even during dire circumstances.

This second series title does not do enough to flesh out its fantasy world, though, for those not already familiar with its background events. Aspects of its magic system, and of the characters' intricate relationship dynamics, are under defined for new audiences. When these elements are explained, they are fascinating: the book blends biblical stories with song-based incantations, and the result is both ancient-feeling and fresh. The book's style also evokes ancient mythologies, with a sense of history that's strong: most of the book's angelic beings and demonic creatures are revealed to have lived for centuries, and their world evolves as the story unfolds.

While at the book's end, the fate of Ilyar remains uncertain, the powerful relationships between those who populate its realm are a compelling draw. *A Wicked Wind* is a taut high fantasy novel in which the fate of an entire realm rests on the deep love between two passionate men who are driven to protect it.

JOHN M. MURRAY (September 17, 2021)

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