



## Jovian Son

**Kim Catanzarite**

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*In the fantastical thriller Jovian Son, a mother faces off against an unrelenting alien family whose members hope to alter human history.*

In Kim Catanzarite's thriller *Jovian Son*, a mother tries to keep her son hidden from his paternal family, who hope to use him to usher in a new age of human evolution.

Ten years have passed since Svetlana fled to Russia with her infant, Evander. She lives every day in dread, hoping that her late husband's family, the Jovians, won't find her and take her son. The Jovians are well respected, but they harbor a sinister secret: they're aliens from Jupiter who conduct elaborate genetic experiments on human beings.

But Evander's gifts are becoming obvious. At the age of ten, he has matured to the physical and mental age of a twenty-year-old. Then Evander vanishes, and the Jovian patriarch asserts that he has been sent on a mission. Svetlana is given a choice: she can return to the Jovian circle in the US, or she can live without her son. Though Svetlana opts to return to the US, she also sets a plan for Evander's rescue into motion.

This volume is the conclusion of a duology; understanding it is reliant on having read the previous entry, including when it comes to characterizations. The nature of the Jovian family, its alien culture, and Svetlana's history are crucial narrative elements, but there's little context provided here.

Evander is a fascinating secondary hero. Raised as a human and with selective knowledge of his alien heritage, his reintroduction to the Jovian clan is terse. But Svetlana narrates most of the tale, and she is not always party to its most important events; questions remain about Evander's experiences with the Jovian family and about what the Jovians are doing while Svetlana tries to find her son.

Svetlana comes to doubt what she sees and thinks, and she spends much time trying to break into a facility where she believes Evander is being held. She also reconnects with her adoptive parents. Her observations are poetic but verbose, as when she compares a fellow traveler's scarf to lava or when she says that her laptop smells like fresh-baked bread. Such moments are incongruous, clashing with the book's central tensions and even Svetlana's own desperation to find her son. Further, much of the volume's action happens off of the page, resulting in a sense of unevenness: the story is often uneventful, and its conclusion is rushed.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (September 23, 2022)

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