



Ravensoul

James Barclay

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The Raven: The final stand.

NOT EVEN DEATH CAN STOP THEM.

The Unknown Warrior has spent last ten years mourning his dead - those of the legendary mercenary band, The Raven, who fell in battle. As the reluctant ruler of Balaia, he has also presided over the gradual recovery of his land after the devastation wreaked by the Demonstorm. The other survivor from The Raven, Denser, has spent those years rebuilding Xetesk to be the dominant college of magic.

But something is wrong. The Elves are fleeing their homeland, as rumours of the dead coming back to life ... of something that has so terrified the spirits of the dead that they are returning to Balaia. And amongst them are The Raven's fallen. The legendary band are together again - just in time to face a battle that cannot be won ...

Ravensoul Details

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EP says

mmmm.... for any Drawn together fans, out there... This book is like the DT movie. it brings back everyone... and kind of make sure the franchise can't go anywhere else. And I can't help thinking that if we didn't have the 6 books to make each character so strong and defined, this book would be really disappointing. I didn't like the whole Fantasy vs Sci-Fi; didn't buy it at all. That being said, the book got me a few times teared eyes. Barclay was able to really get us attached to Hiram, Sol, Denser and Erienne... So, to see them very emotional gets me. But all in all, the book didn't give me a sense of enjoyment, but of frustration while reading it. The 3 stars are for the characters, not the storyline...

Beth says

If you have not read any of the previous books about The Raven, then do not bother picking this one up. Prior knowledge of the characters seems to be required. Otherwise, it is slow going. You also need to appreciate unending close quarter combat where the heroes are always outnumbered.

Kyle Bennett says

A book too far. A very fitting end to the story of the Raven but it felt tacked on. Demonstorm left Balaia at an appropriate end. The addition of the Garonin and the return of previous raven members just felt like a way to squeeze a little bit more from the story as a whole. The ending however was very satisfying, but I feel it could have been worked into the ending of Demonstorm.

Timothy Boyd says

Overall this has been a very good Fantasy series to read. The first 6 books, broken into 2 trilogies are well plotted and nicely written. However when it comes to the last, seemingly an afterthought book, I think the series drags. Much like Operation Market Garden in WWII that went "A bridge too far" this series went "a book too many". Still good overall characters but the story seemed unneeded and just an add on for the overall storyline. The thing that saved it for me was the description of the detailed complex magic system that is a main part of the story. Recommended if you just want to read the complete set.

Sean says

If you're reading this review, I'm assuming you've read the other 6 books in James Barclay's Raven series. This one is kind of an afterthought—we all thought we were done with the Raven after the seeming finality of DemonStorm.

RavenSoul doesn't retroactively change any of that, it just continues where DemonStorm left off, and brings us to a whole new conclusion. I think it takes a certain expertise to pull off a book of this calibre and make it not seem like just a spin-off or an attempted cash-in on the franchise. It's still a really good book, and it gives us a link to Barclay's new Elves series as well as a better overall ending, and almost anyone who read the previous books would only be ecstatic to discover that there's yet another book in the series to read.

Andy says

A book too far really - I love the Raven but this just seemed like an afterthought. I did like the ending though - almost as good as the ending of the previous book - but he should have picked one or the other.

Chris Harvey says

A little bit self indulgent and not really accessible to anyone who hasn't read the other raven books. That said there are some good moments where the classic raven are reformed. My two major criticisms are that the Garonin feel a little Sci-Fi rather than fantasy and that the book almost throws out the shock factor of random characters being killed by giving them all life after death. This sometimes feels a little uneasy as if it has been done just to evoke memories and introduce old characters just when you think there is no hope. At times Barclay slips into not explaining things clearly and sometimes it feels as if things have just appeared in the scene or he has forgotten to mention them earlier. All in all a decent read, if not a little poor by Barclay's usual standards, although I actually loved the section in Ulanderneth where the logic of dead vs alive in the afterlife actually worked. Good if you're a raven fan but avoid if not, better still read the others firsts. The ending also reads SPIN-OFF (Balaia and the new world!)

Lucinda says

My bookshelf is filling up with books by the author James Barclay ever since I read 'RavenSoul' and I absolutely fell in love with his creative fantasy series, that is stunningly beautiful and captivating. It is a series that is in two separate parts being 1). the chronicles of the raven and 2). the legends of the raven, which is an epic fantasy masterpiece that is completely original and totally unique that really raises the standards for other authors of this particular genre to aspire to. Packed to the brim with non-stop action, gore and bloodshed it certainly was a pacey read that was just excellent heroic fantasy at its very best. I loved the author's fluid style that was character-driven with much emphasis drawn to each individual, distinctive character that made you feel as though you were actually standing right there in the middle of the action; one could almost smell the leather and sweat. I had such an enjoyable time reading this particular book that sparked a passion for this author and an appreciation of his writing style and kind of work, and as a consequence I shall continue to read other novels within this series as they are truly fantastic examples of brilliant fantasy fiction. Anyone who is an avid reader that likes books to really 'stick their teeth into' and be able to engross yourself in a thrilling and detailed plot, then I can not praise James Barclay enough for this type of work. A really thrilling, exciting and gripping read that will have you on the edge of your seat with anticipation and I cannot recommend this particular book more so to any reader who enjoys fantasy fiction at its very best. It is really, really great!

Carole-Ann says

Oh Yes !! such a run-away conclusion to the Raven.

So very much like David Gemmell, it's no wonder that Barclay has taken up the mantle.

Page-turning, on the edge-of-your-seat novel; never letting up; satisfying to the end.

Thoroughly enjoyable.

Mark says

Never say never again....

At the end of the last Legends of the Raven book (Demonstorm) in 2004, things had got to a fairly satisfactory ending: though most of the Raven were dead (a Barclay trademark!), the world of Balaia was at peace, the multidimensional rift (which had been the cause of much of the previous disturbance) healed and the survivors of the Demonstorm had settled into relatively peaceful post-conflict occupations. Sol, the Unknown Warrior (and coincidentally First King of Balaia) was the landlord of The Raven's Rest, raising his family, whilst Denser was the Lord of the Mount, principal of the magic college of Xetesk. And so it closed, with the losses mourned yet accepted, as something that had to happen for the sake of the future. It was widely accepted that this was as far as things were going to go.

Therefore, this is a book that many thought they would never see. For James Barclay has returned to the world of his extremely popular Raven series, revisiting the place that made him a genre bestseller and, more enticingly, characters that fans never realised they would meet again.

Here you can return again to read about the mercenaries they call the Raven, past and present. For, a decade later than Demonstorm, the dead are returning, and they need something from the living. Their souls and those of the living are at risk, and it is up to the Raven to sort it out.

Thus the book begins strikingly, with the return of old characters in new bodies. The souls of the dead, under threat, are drawn to those they knew best. Removed from their place of rest, they are being hunted by a new enemy travelling across dimensions, the Garonin. These seemingly unstoppable opponents appear from nowhere in Balaia, mining mana, the magical force that drives this world. Any attack on them means they vanish to other dimensions in the blink of an eye. When engaged in combat, their speed is phenomenal, their weaponry awesome and their battle-skills are ferociously scary.

And so the Raven return, fighting not only for their own futures, but also for Balaia.

For many fans, this book is what they've needed for a while: the world-in-peril, the return of beloved characters, and more importantly the interaction between them that made *The Raven* so memorable. There are chances here to make amends for earlier mistakes, to reinforce friendships and sort out misunderstandings.

As well as the camaraderie's of old, James has also addressed other issues here. Perhaps most importantly, this novel is about death. The book examines the necessity of death and its value in life, as well as touching issues which are the foundations of Epic Fantasy. Heroism, loyalty, bravery, family values, comradeship and betrayal – all are here. As you might expect, such eventful change is not always easily expected, or earned. Ultimately, it is a tale perhaps not only of death but of redemption, though with major prices to pay.

In some author's hands, revisiting old favourites could be seen as a cop-out, a safety net, writing to satisfy the desires of a baying fan-base without actually anything new to say. Not the case here - James here has used the skills honed on the *Ascendants* series to produce a taut, fast-paced novel, in my opinion, the best of the *Raven* books so far.

There is always the risk for a writer that a book written later in a series can be seen by demanding readers as being of lesser quality, and this will adversely affect the good feeling generated by earlier books. I'm pleased to write that this is not the case here. This is not a book written 'just to satisfy fans', with characters given cameos to satisfy the faithful. Though many will appreciate the return of favourite characters, there is, pleasingly, a new tale to tell that is worth reading. It is perhaps not a book to read without reading the previous novels, though there's enough backplot to do so without too much trouble.

It is a fast read and an engrossing one. I'm pleased to type that the writing is still strong, the characterisations both familiar and memorable, the dialogue and the action as good as ever. It is very much an homage to David Gemmell, with all the attributes of the best of his work.

Reading *Ravensoul* is the literary equivalent of meeting old friends you haven't seen for a long time, and picking things up as if you've never been away from each other. Fans will love this, though the journey is not easy and events rarely simple, as you should expect from a Barclay novel. There were moments here that made my jaw drop, battles that made me wince and moments that were touchingly emotional. There are acts of love and sacrifice here, of faith and redemption. If dealing with death is hard the first time, James here shows you that it can be harder.

The Raven live on. A bittersweet experience, but one well worth it.

Raven! Raven with me!

Luna Ofthenight says

Another triumph for both Barclay and the Raven. This tale I found to be emotive, but again a book I had trouble putting down. Wanting to be absorbed in his world and the battles the Raven faced and torn between not wanting the story to end.

For me that's the mark of an incredible piece of writing.

Neil says

Like many reviewers that I've read, I do not think this was the best of the series. It took me a while to get back into the Raven considering the end of the previous book. That being said, by about 100 pages in I was hooked again and loving another instalment of the Raven. The pace is breathtaking. Knowing Barclay's past, the destiny of every character was in doubt. A satisfying end. Also one of the most emotional of the entire series. Great to read another, if final chapter of the Raven.

Ruby Ridge says

I loved all the Raven books and this is unmistakably a Raven book with its non stop action BUT this was really not the book for the definitive end of the Raven series. I loved the Raven action but just could not warm to the book, I can't really elaborate much more on this without spoilers but read it and if you are a Raven fan you will know what I mean

R says

Quite nice, a typical yet not so typical fantasy. I haven't read the previous 3 books, yet that didn't give me issues following the plot. The characters are very interesting and not the average cliché heroes. The premise is interesting as well, because there is no clear cut victory or secret weapon to oust the enemy, this book details that some battles cannot be won, and one must flee in order to survive.

Debbie says

I adore the Chronicles of, and Legends of the Raven series. They were the first series of books, other than Discworld, that really got me into the fantasy genre.

Without giving away any endings to the stories, I was *very* annoyed with the ending of Demonstorm. So annoyed, in fact, that I'd thrown the book across the room in anger (which resulted in my other half laughing at me, and advising me to read the ending again once I'd calmed down).

So I decided to take my other half's advice, and re-read the ending some days later, and I have to say I did agree with it more the second time around, regardless of how harrowing it was.

I sent an email to James Barclay congratulating him on the Raven series, and asked him why he'd make some decisions that had been made in the last book, to which he'd replied along the lines of he didn't want to be seen as just being able to write Raven stories. Now imagine my surprise when I see Ravensoul announced..

Don't get me wrong, though this review will probably sound negative, I didn't dislike the book. It sparked in me the love I felt for the original books by James Barclay, however I'm marking it down because I just don't feel it was needed. True, it's a nice, fitting ending, but.. I just don't think an additional plot was needed to take the Raven where they ended up.

I love James Barclay's storytelling. I love the horror of the battle. I love the action. I love the emotion. The storyline and characters in this are played out beautifully, and are really moving, but I just don't agree with this book ever being written. I think this book was purely a stop-gap between Demonstorm and Elves (not that I've read Elves yet, but from reading the synopsis, this is what I'm guessing).
