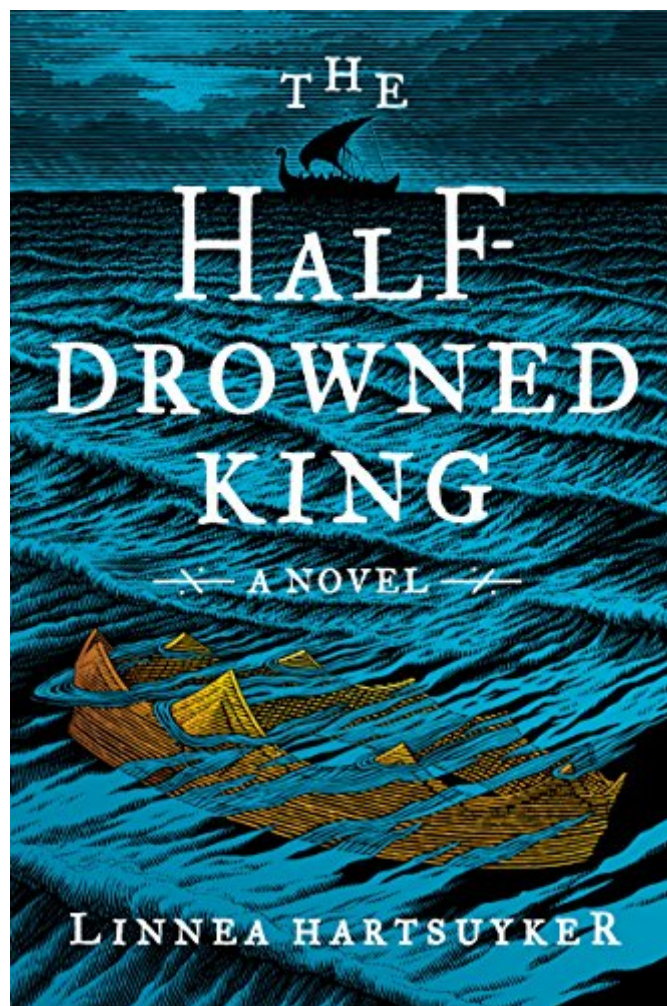


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# The Half-Drowned King: A Novel



## Synopsis

"Linnea Hartsuyker brings myth and legend roaring to life in this superbly good page-turning saga of Viking-era Norway. The book's fiercest magic shines in the characters of Ragnvald and Svanhild, as unforgettable a brother and sister duo as I can remember. Linnea Hartsuyker is an exciting, original voice in historical fiction, and *The Half-Drowned King* is nothing short of mesmerizing." —Paula McLain, bestselling author of *The Paris Wife* and *Circling the Sun*

An exhilarating saga of the Vikings that conjures a brutal, superstitious, and thrilling ninth-century world and the birth of a kingdom—the debut installment in a historical literary trilogy that combines the bold imagination and sweeping narrative power of *Game of Thrones*, *Vikings*, and *Outlander*.

Centuries ago, in a blood-soaked land ruled by legendary gods and warring men, a prophecy foretold of a high king who would come to reign over all of the north. . . . Ragnvald Eysteinnsson, the son and grandson of kings, grew up believing that he would one day take his dead father's place as chief of his family's lands. But, sailing home from a raiding trip to Ireland, the young warrior is betrayed and left for dead by men in the pay of his greedy stepfather, Olaf. Rescued by a fisherman, Ragnvald is determined to have revenge for his stepfather's betrayal, claim his birthright and the woman he loves, and rescue his beloved sister Svanhild. Opportunity may lie with Harald of Vestfold, the strong young Norse warrior rumored to be the prophesied king. Ragnvald pledges his sword to King Harald, a choice that will hold enormous consequence in the years to come. While Ragnvald's duty is to fight—and even die—for his honor, Svanhild must make an advantageous marriage, though her adventurous spirit yearns to see the world. Her stepfather, Olaf, has arranged a husband for her—a hard old man she neither loves nor desires. When the chance to escape Olaf's cruelty comes at the hands of her brother's arch rival, the shrewd young woman is forced to make a heartbreaking choice: family or freedom. Set in a mystical and violent world defined by honor, loyalty, deceit, passion, and courage, *The Half-Drowned King* is an electrifying adventure that breathtakingly illuminates the Viking world and the birth of Scandinavia.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is an absolute and total delight. The story draws the reader in immediately with a pivotal, gripping, life-and-death situation that sets the entirety of the rest of the novel up within the very first chapter and tells the reader a ton about the characters right off the bat. The plot then moves along at a very satisfying pace, with moments of sword-clanging, visceral action juxtaposed flawlessly with quieter moments of introspection and even romance. The characters are believable, well fleshed out and wonderfully human and flawed. As an avid Potterhead, I realized midway through the book that Ragnvald (one of the two main characters) is very much a Slytherin, displaying a slightly different version of himself depending on who his audience is, and yet going about it in a cunning and subtle way. He wants to believe himself a hero, but the fact is he is more of a reluctant plotter, a role he uncomfortably realizes that he is actually pretty good at, once he learns to get out of his own way. Svanhild's conflict is also quite compelling, whether to choose freedom with its subsequent danger and uncertainty, or to choose security with its binding ties. Like Ragnvald, her motivations are complex and it's fascinating to watch her figure it out, and then come to terms with her choices, for better or for worse. Solvi is a fatalistic, scrappy foil for Ragnvald, complete with a wonderfully unsettling backstory. The rest of the supporting cast is memorable, different enough to keep the reader interested in what they are trying to do as alliances and goals shift and shift again. The setting is also spectacularly realized and it's clear from the descriptions that this is a part of the world that is sacred and fundamentally beautiful to the author. Her prose is almost cinematic in its scope, to the point that the reader can almost see the icy waterfalls, hear the barking of the seals, feel the harsh winds of the fjords and smell the damp wood, pine pitch, and wool sails of the Viking

ships. In sum, the Half-Drowned King is a book to sink into, to have it envelop you in a way that few novels can. A fantastic first installment in what is sure to be a thrilling trilogy.

A finely crafted and well balanced adventure story the likes of which are a rarity in fiction today. Without an over reliance on Norse myths, or blood lust, both elements in the story, the author weaves a Nordic tale that moves forward based on the complex motivations of the individual characters without sacrificing action to cliché. Having struggled through an English translation of Sigrid Unset's 'Kristin Lavransdatter'. set several centuries later, I was struck by the consistency in the descriptions of Nordic farm life and the universality of the frustrations of the female protagonists. This book stands as a compliment to Unset's work, an impressive feat given her Nobel status. Do not read this book thinking it is an episode out of Netflix 'Vikings'. This is a considerable book of fiction that should be enjoyed for the finely detailed story and the craft. The second book in this trilogy cannot arrive fast enough!

This is an excellent historical novel about Vikings. Well-written, well-researched and all-around very impressive. The story is quickly paced, yet full of interesting detail and good characterization. My favorite character is Svanhild because her emotional struggle seems the greatest. Her brother Ragnvald is likable, and has his own intriguing struggles, but is colder in facing down his demons, so I couldn't relate to him as much. I think this will improve with the next books. Solvi is also an interesting character, and I hope to see his conflicts of the heart come to a head in future books. The cast of characters is large, so I am glad the author kept her pov characters to around three. It made it easier to follow. This is only the first part of a trilogy, and sets up the plot quite nicely. There is quite a lot of interesting story here, but political intrigue does not interest me as much as character. These characters are strong enough to carry the book for me. And the writing is top-notch.

Okay, yes, I'm her mother. If you love Vikings, historical fiction, or fantasy (or even if you don't), you will immediately be drawn into the world of 9th century Norway in Linnea Hartsuyker's debut novel, The Half-Drowned King. Tightly plotted and described, this is a story based on an Icelandic saga about King Harald, who unified Norway during the 9th century. The main characters are a brother (Ragnvald) and sister (Svanhild) whose ancestral land has been kept by their stepfather since their father's death some years before the action commences. Beginning in chapter one, the action is brisk throughout the novel, and the complex

motivations of the characters evolve as these young adults mature. Svanhild is a feminist who chafes at the strictures that limit her options, though she finds adventure from a perhaps surprising direction. Ragnvald wants to lay claim to his inheritance and get to the bottom of his father's death. Though deeply devoted to each other, the goals of these siblings come into conflict, providing suspense and plot complications. Hartsuyker shows that both villains and heroes have understandable motivations that drive their actions. I eagerly anticipated the opportunity to read this novel, the first of a planned trilogy spanning the lives of the characters and their children. Since my ancestry goes all the way back to King Harald, I was particularly delighted to read such a richly textured description of a world that, though tough, has its own consistency and integrity

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