



The Winter of the Witch

Katherine Arden

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Following their adventures in *The Bear and the Nightingale* and *The Girl in the Tower*, Vasya and Morozko return in this stunning conclusion to the bestselling Winternight Trilogy, battling enemies mortal and magical to save both Russias, the seen and the unseen.

Reviewers called Katherine Arden's novels *The Bear and the Nightingale* and *The Girl in the Tower* "lyrical," "emotionally stirring," and "utterly bewitching." The Winternight Trilogy introduced an unforgettable heroine, Vasilisa Petrovna, a girl determined to forge her own path in a world that would rather lock her away. Her gifts and her courage have drawn the attention of Morozko, the winter-king, but it is too soon to know if this connection will prove a blessing or a curse.

Now Moscow has been struck by disaster. Its people are searching for answers—and for someone to blame. Vasya finds herself alone, beset on all sides. The Grand Prince is in a rage, choosing allies that will lead him on a path to war and ruin. A wicked demon returns, stronger than ever and determined to spread chaos. Caught at the center of the conflict is Vasya, who finds the fate of two worlds resting on her shoulders. Her destiny uncertain, Vasya will uncover surprising truths about herself and her history as she desperately tries to save Russia, Morozko, and the magical world she treasures. But she may not be able to save them all.

The Winter of the Witch Details

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From Reader Review *The Winter of the Witch* for online ebook

????? ? says

There are seven wonders in the world, and this book is all of them.

The experience of reading *The Winter of the Witch* is something akin to being surrounded by magic. Yet, those are still such pale, passive words for what this story was. After the wonder and elation of reading this book and flying in so real-seeming a dream, I now feel such an obscure sense of loss, like something essential is inexplicably gone. A sudden absence, creating a space for the too bright, too sharp world to rush into. I reckon this will not be the last time I read this series—I shall return to it again and again, drawn to it by a wistful, melancholy longing for a life I never had, a nostalgia for a time I didn't experience, and a desire to once again hold the characters' hands.

The Winter of the Witch has leapt forward to claim the title of **Best Book I've Read Yet This Year**. And if there's any series, at all, that you would pick up upon my recommendation, let it be this one.

So, what's this book about?

Mosco is afire and the blaze carried with it all the certainty of death.

Vasya had thought that she knew every horror and was beyond surprise. But whatever spark had burned in her was no match for the terror she knew when her own people pursued vengeance upon her and tried to burn her at the stakes—their hatred lit lurid by the fire of Father Konstantin's venom-laced words.

With darkness nipping at her heels and the trees whispering on every side, Vasya escapes by the thinnest of margins into the realm of *Midnight* where she could stay there where nothing outside could touch her, where her precarious, doomed existence is robbed of its sharp edges. But the dead are pouring into the streets of Mosco, held in the thrall of Medved, Morozko's evil twin brother, and the Tartars are threatening to bring Rus' to its knees. At the core of Vasya, rage and determination pulse up like the shock wave of a blast, ripping through her fear. Her loved ones need her. Mosco needs her. Rus' needs her.

The shot-silk shimmer of hope blazes all at once. And Vasya's will can and will blow the strongest door asunder.

"I am a witch," said Vasya. Blood was running down her hand now, spoiling her grip. "I have plucked snowdrops at Midwinter, died at my own choosing, and wept for a nightingale. Now I am beyond prophecy."

I love this book so dearly. My experience of reading it was of wanting to discuss every paragraph I consumed. I felt like a glass filled with splendor and awe. Every page was a treat and my mind was afire with marvel, the lit match setting off fuse after fuse. They are so many things I want to say about this book, they fall like confetti around my head and I struggle at deciding which ones to catch and which to let fall because all I want to do is celebrate the whole it makes without dimming the experience of coming to it fresh.

The Winter of the Witch is everything you want out of a *Winternight* novel. It's a vivacious expansion that builds seamlessly and effortlessly on its predecessor. In language that strikes and caresses, Katherine Arden has written an absolute jewel of a novel where both concept and execution are so good that I resented having to spend time away from reading it. So much that now the absence of the story feels like a hook lodged inside my heart.

The darkness in this book takes on a wilder texture and an even deeper beauty; it floods your senses and presses around you like it has physical weight. Fear seeped into my marrow and danger was a constant fizz in my throat and stomach. I read with the gaze of someone who didn't want to listen, but who had to, who must know the end to the story. Every page was like an ax blow passing close enough to graze the tips from the down of the characters' cheeks, and I felt the narrow stroke of luck every time they've managed to flee, barely unscathed, from yet another peril. A particular event completely smote my heart and filled me with the sense that it was unraveling out of my body. It's honestly as if Arden collects her readers' tears for her charms or something!

Arden's characters are vibrantly drawn figures who scarcely need a villain to bring their strengths and weaknesses to light since they do a perfect job of that themselves. Sasha, Olga and little Marya cut straight to my heart and I wished I could just send them an emotional boogie board to help them keep afloat. Medved's and Konstantin's characters are so riveting as well. I loved how Arden examines, interrogates, and endlessly probes at the tropes used to distinguish heroes, villains and the horrors they wrought. She puts her characters at a crossroads, where they stand facing each other. They're foes, but they hold each other's answers. You get such a tangible sense of the colliding emotion on both opposite sides, and with every page, your understanding sharpens, deepens, coming slowly and then all at once.

"There are no monsters in the world, and no saints. Only infinite shades woven into the same tapestry, light and dark. One man's monster is another man's beloved. The wise know that."

Another aspect of this series that I immensely admired is how Arden handles with great deftness the theme of religion, by demonstrating how it can be a source for comfort and ease for some, and scathingly denouncing how others can be driven by their unquenchable lust for power to wield it to plant the seed of fear and hatred in people's hearts, and sink their clawed hands into their minds.

Now, let's talk about the absolute darling of my heart. Vasya!

Vasya's character development is so masterly executed that the years that stretch between the first book and the last feel so far past, they feel like stories someone else had told me—half-remembered, blurred and unreal. I felt the sting of nostalgia for the savage exuberance of the child Vasya had been, the little girl who had always attacked the world, who wanted to *see* it but did not count the cost... before she learned the power of fear, before life had sapped her innocence and brought on a weary anger, before she discovered that the world was a perilous place for women like her.

There's a tender spot in my heart that is abound with so much love and respect for Vasya. This young woman who had chased the marvelous doom that is freedom to the world's end, whose heart looked upon life and death and things in between without faltering, who pushed through the cold sinking tangle of anger and dismay that her people have shown her and bore their burden in addition to her own. Gosh, I love her more than I can articulate. I'm still shaken by her temerity, by the way she was driven, not by hopelessness but just pure, unfettered stubbornness, not even so much a will to live as a refusal to die. There is so much

ground Vasya had never felt under her hands and feet, there is the entire world, with all its wonders still unseen, and the thought of her not letting the world hold a place hidden from her will keep my heart warmed for many years to come.

“What happened? Love, betrayal, and time,” said Vasya. “What happens to anyone who grows to understand you, Medved? Living happens.”

But what makes the book truly sing—other than the mastery of plot and story structure, the characters and the luxurious prose that intricately entwines scenes from the natural world and the mythic one—is **how it tramples on several minor and major tropes like a boss**. *The Winter of the Witch* is a tremendous triumph on several fronts, but it’s the way the author insists on Vasya’s agency while also allowing her space to experience and navigate first love and intimacy is what latched onto my heart the most.

Morozko and Medved have painted in Vasya’s mind a picture that wraps her in a life she had never tasted or imagined...if only she’d give up everything else. Medved wanted to use her powers like a lighthouse lens, amplifying the intensity of his own gifts. Morozko wanted to protect her from the world, even the part of it that he represents, but Vasya’s world is falling apart while his is continuing on a normal keel and they both know that this is the line past which his power can’t help her. *“If I am mad, I will not be yours. And dead I will not be his,”* she spoke that truth to the Bear and built her life around it.

Vasya can survive without the constant lifeboat of Morozko’s existence supporting her. So she tucked a little piece of his mind into a corner of hers, let go of the echo of a love she could not hold on to...and went on to do extraordinary fucking things.

I genuinely love Vasya and Morozko’s relationship so much. My wizened, hardened heart fractured at the knowledge that they were each other’s person, each other’s place, and how cold and sharp the irony was, because they couldn’t even be in the same place together. I waited two books and a half for their stolen moments in shadowed places where they could be alone, where they were free to kiss and touch and drown and live and burn. I’m not even being hyperbolic when I say that Chapter 17 had me ahhh-ing, and ooh-ing, and sending texts in all caps and screaming in audios to my friend. **This, folks, is how you goddamn write romance.**

“Love is for those who know the griefs of time, for it goes hand in hand with loss. An eternity, so burdened, would be a torment. And yet—” He broke off, drew breath. “Yet what else to call it, this terror and this joy?”

Through three books and years upon years of magic and family and growth, this story has burrowed into my heart and wormed into my consciousness, refusing to surrender its place. Now all I can think about is **how lucky we are to have this series in the world.**

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Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

ALL THE STARS AND MORE.

Russian firebird

Review first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Medieval Russia comes to life in Katherine Arden's WINTERNIGHT TRILOGY, which began in Lesnaya Zemlya, a small village in northern Rus' in *The Bear and the Nightingale* and continued in *The Girl in the Tower*. Vasilisa (Vasya) is a young woman with the rare ability to see and speak with the natural spirits or chyerti of the hearth, stables, and lands and waters of Rus'. Vasya has gained the attention and respect of the winter-king Morozko, god of death, who has helped her along the way as she fought and bound the demonic Bear, traveled from Lesnaya Zemlya to Moscow, and undertook a dangerous masquerade as a boy while fighting to protect Moscow and her family from both an evil sorcerer and the Mongol invaders.

The Winter of the Witch begins in the aftermath of a huge fire that burned much of Moscow. The distraught people of Moscow are whipped into a rage by Vasya's nemesis, the priest Konstantin, who blames Vasya for the fire (with some justice). Vasya is captured by a mob and nearly burned to death as a witch. Though she escapes, a tragic loss leaves her reeling, and now a terrible price has been paid on her behalf. The Bear is on the loose again, pulling Konstantin into his plans for war and chaos, and Morozko has disappeared into some hidden prison. The vast Tatar armies, the Golden Horde, are still on the move against Moscow, and Vasya has perilous journeys to make through magical midnight lands as she tries to save her country and the humans and spirits that she loves. Vasya has gained in personal strength and magical power from her beginnings in the village of Lesnaya Zemlya, but she still makes some serious mistakes along the way.

In the WINTERNIGHT TRILOGY, Arden has proved herself particularly adept at weaving together folklore and actual history. *The Winter of the Witch* focuses on the events leading up to the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380, but puts a fantastical spin on it. As the country lurches toward war, Vasya is guided into the midnight realm of Polunochnitsa, or Lady Midnight, where she meets not only one of her ancestors ? a famous Russian folklore character in her own right ? but the mythical firebird, Pozhar (whose other form is a golden mare), and a delightfully opinionated mushroom spirit that Vasya called Ded Grib (Grandfather Mushroom). Pozhar and Ded Grib represent the high and the lowly among the chyerti, whom Vasya is trying to protect along with the humans who inhabit Russia. Even Medved, the fearsome Bear who played such a terrifying role in *The Bear and the Nightingale*, becomes more understandable and sympathetic, or at least much more entertaining as a character. It's a nice reminder that even villains have some positive characteristics.

He spoke of Russia. Not of Muscovy, or Tver, or Vladimir, the principalities of the sons of Kiev, but of Russia itself, of its skies and its soil, its people and its pride.

She listened in rapt silence, eyes vast and filled like cups with shadow. "That is what we are fighting for," said Sasha. "Not for Moscow, or even Dmitrii; not for the sake of any of her squabbling princes. But for the land that bore us, man and devil alike."

The tensions between Christianity and the old pagan ways, humans vs. chyerti, are ultimately resolved in a way that I hadn't expected, but that I found profoundly moving, and Arden's writing style is entrancing. *The Winter of the Witch* is not just the coming-of-age story of a girl with magical powers, or a romance, though it has both of those elements; it deals with larger themes, like love of country, individual worth, self-sacrifice,

and cooperation with those who are different. The WINTERNIGHT TRILOGY was a wonderful series from beginning to end, and I give it my highest recommendation.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher through NetGalley for review. Thank you so much!!

Initial update: Five stars! SO, so good!! Amazing wrap-up to this fantasy trilogy set in medieval Russia. I love how this weaves Russian folklore into actual history, and deals with larger themes, like love of country.

Plus it made me cry.

If you haven't read this trilogy yet, I highly recommend it!

Initial post: YES! I finally got the ARC of this last book in this trilogy (which began with *The Bear and the Nightingale*)!! Now can I keep my hands off it for a couple of weeks while I read a few other books in my urgent TBR pile? We'll see ...

Content notes: a fair amount of gritty violence and a non-explicit sex scene.

Hannah says

I adored this beyond measure.

I am a huge fan of this trilogy, have been ever since reading the very first chapter of the first book. I was both super excited and a bit apprehensive before reading this book – but I didn't have to worry because Katherine Arden absolutely sticks the landing here. This book is both a great conclusion to this brilliant series as well as a great book in its own right.

What Arden does better than most authors I read is building an atmosphere so immersive I become lost in her (impeccably researched) world. I found reading this book a very rewarding experience and I am definitely a life-long fan. Drawing on Russian fairy tales and real world figures to build a world uniquely her own, Arden tells a story of a girl and her choices. Whatever happens in this book is always filtered through Vasya's lenses and her destiny and I am in love with this. Vasya is a difficult character but someone I could not help root for. I wanted her to find her place and be happy. She is allowed to be prickly and nurturing, she can be rash and caring, and altogether wonderfully rounded. Her relationship to the Winter King just worked for me in this book (I was not fully on board in the book before) and I really liked the overwhelming tenderness between those two.

I adore how the world becomes more complicated as Vasya grows and the scope increases. Things that seemed very black and white to her in the first book become more ambivalent, people grow while staying true to their characterization, and overall the world becomes ever more believable.

Arden has a very distinct and very beautiful writing style that hints at her influences while being very much her own thing and from the very first chapter I was glad to be back in her capable hands. There is a rhythm to her writing that I find very beautiful and this coupled with a story that wraps up strong makes this a strong contender for my favourite book of this year (I just know it'll make the list).

I received an ARC of this book courtesy of NetGalley and Ebury Publishing in exchange for an honest

review.

You can find this review and other thoughts on books on my blog.

kath | novelandfolk says

You know that feeling when you find a book that speaks to some deep part of your soul and you just want to shout:

‘THIS is why I read!’?

This folkloric trilogy has become that for me, reminding me of all the reasons why I love literature.

It’s not a secret that I loved the first two books in this deep-winter tale with the burning fire of a thousand suns. So you can imagine how much I needed this book in my hands, and also how stressful a thing it is to embark into the last instalment of a beloved series. The final book can make or break your opinion of the story as a whole. Am I jaded? Okay, maybe a little. I’ve been let down countless times by second and third book syndrome.

But I am thrilled to say that not only was it a most satisfying conclusion, but it exceeded my every hope. It was utter perfection from the first page until the last and I may go so far as to say it could be the strongest book of the three.

Just as with *The Girl in the Tower*, we pick up where the previous story ended and right out of the gate we are put through some very harrowing scenes. Goodness, they put me through a lot of anxiety. The stakes are so much higher this time around and from those first moments onward I could not look away - the story barrels onward at a relentless pace. And now we finally see the full scope that Arden intended. The culmination of everything she was building towards in the perfectly paced slow burn of *The Bear and the Nightingale*, and the riotous action of *The Girl in the Tower*. It feels seamless how it has all come together and I’m just so giddy with delight.

Our girl, Vasya, is no longer a just a plucky, naive child. From the ashes of the Moscow fire she has risen into a woman with incredible new strength in more ways than one. But of course she remains wonderfully flawed - her character has even more dimension than ever. Arden has shown how much she really knows her characters because they have truly carried this story and made it heart-wrenching in all the best ways. She can make you feel for even the most minor supporting characters with just a few lines.

I think Studio Ghibli fans will appreciate the whimsical details in this one. Think magical midnight roads, loveable forest spirits (hello new favourite sidekick character), man-beasts - but written for grownups. And yet this tale will bring out the childlike wonder in even the most grown up of grownups. It’s delightfully subversive too- it upends the age old tropes of princes winning maidens, of monsters being slain. So many mischievous plot twists I did NOT expect.

I was also not prepared at all for these feelings. I am still filled to the brim with them. This book broke me, then slowly pieced me back together until I whooped with triumphant glee at the very end. And there is a certain PART that made me all asdkjfklsjfs. You’ll know it when you get there. Just you wait.

As much as I'm dying to discuss the finer details, I really can't spoil the fun. I know - I KNOW - we're all waiting to hear if a certain Winter King makes a reappearance. All I can say is the scent of cold water and pine will forever make me swoon.

I gave this book a big, loving, emotionally exhausted hug when it was over. The ending was perfect and that is a rare thing so it probably shouldn't be tampered with. BUT. I love these characters so damn much, my heart is crying for more more *more* of their adventures.

And that's it. I can now wholeheartedly say: this, **this** is my favourite series of all time. If I could persuade you to read one thing, let this be it. You may just love it as much as I do.

Amalia Gavea says

“Yesterday she saved your life, slew a wicked magician, set fire to Moscow and then saved it all in a single night. Do you think she will consent to disappear, for the price of a dowry- for any price? Do you know my sister?”

It is seldom that the third book of a trilogy ends up being the finest. However, this is exactly what happened with *The Winter of the Witch*. The final installment of a saga created with absolute beauty and dark grace by Katherine Arden is one to remember and cherish, in a trilogy that defied all genres and labels, making its way to be a classic. I firmly believe that The Winternight Trilogy will keep company to generations of readers who will fall in love with the wealth of the Russian culture, the myths, the legends, the traditions.

“But she saw the devils, despite the dark. There were silhouetted atop roofs and walls: domoviye and dvoroviye and banniki, the faint house-spirits of Moscow. They were there, but what could they do but watch? Chyerti are formed by the currants of human life; they ride them, but they do not interfere.”

Three things are the ones that make the trilogy perfect: a supreme heroine, the exquisite descriptions of the Russian landscape and the theme of the never-ending battle between the old world and the new, the pagan beliefs and the Christian religion. All these elements are done to perfection in the 3rd book. As Vasya fights for survival, justice and balance, she undertakes a long journey to a harsh, mystical haunting realm. Arden's writing is extraordinarily beautiful as we are wondering in the land of Midnight or the scorching Moscow summer. The scenery changes and changes and along with it Vasya is transformed. The glorious city, the realms of magic, everything is a part of a greater world and everything is a link in a chain that must not break because a dangerous foe is approaching, a horde that doesn't care for the old and the new, desiring to establish its own dynasty.

Arden gives us princesses and princes, knights and priests. Wise women, artists, animals touched by magic. Demons and spirits of nature. The entire Russian folklore lives in the pages of the book and it never looked more beautiful, more mystical, more threatening. Marya Morevna, the Baba Yaga, the Firebird and the chyerti, the domovoi and the upyr in a particularly powerful, shocking chapter. Polunochnitsa and her dark domain, the Midday demon, the horses of legends, the women graced (or cursed) with the Sight. These are the pawns of the fight between the living and what they can't see, the world they can't believe in. The division that feeds their need to destroy what they fear because they are unable to understand.

“I am a witch”, said Vasya. Blood was running down her hand now, spoiling her grip. “I have plucked snowdrops at Midwinter, died at my own choosing, and wept for a nightingale. Now I am beyond

prophecy.” She caught his knife on the crosspiece of hers, hilt to hilt. “I have crossed three times nine realms to find you, my lord. And I find you at play, forgetful.”

I cannot begin to tell you how much I adore the relationship between Vasya and Morozov and here their dynamic is more electrifying than ever. Is it strange and dark and possibly twisted? Well, it may be and this is exactly what makes me love them so much. They are my favourite literary couple, after Heathcliff and Catherine, and yes, I know I am weird. Vasya continues to remain one of my favourite female protagonists, not only because of her bravery and determination but mostly because Arden chose to make her as real as she could given the premise of the story. She doesn't refrain from fear and insecurity and despair or even one or two questionable decisions and this is how you create a believable, relatable main character in a fantasy setting. Strange as it may sound, though, the character I was always anxious to meet in a chapter was Konstantin. He is desperate and lost and all sorts of confused and you cannot help but be hypnotized by his presence. His chemistry with Vasya is explosive.

So, I am sad to leave the Winternight universe. A trilogy created through haunting sceneries, an exceptional cast of characters, impeccable dialogue and endless respect to the immortal heritage of the Russian tradition, Katherine Arden, thank you for three marvelous journeys.

“Men fear what they do not understand”, murmured the Bear. “They hurt you. They beat you, spat on you, put you in the fire. Men will suck all the wilderness out of the world, until there is no place for a witch0girl to hide. They will burn you and your kind.”

Many thanks to Penguin Random House UK and NetGalley for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

My reviews can also be found on <https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com/>

Melanie says

ARC given to me by my amazingly kind friend, who I don't deserve, but who has made my entire year - Lilly at Lair of Books!

1.) The Bear and the Nightingale ★★★★★

2.) The Girl in the Tower ★★★★★

“I have plucked snowdrops at Midwinter, died at my own choosing, and wept for a nightingale. Now I am beyond prophecy.”

This is a hard review for me to write, because I think my heart doesn't want to admit that this series is finally over. But it is, and this concluding book was everything I wanted. I cried, I felt gutted, I got my heart broken, but somehow Katherine Arden healed the pieces back together.

Where do I even begin to tell you what this story is about without spoiling anything with a review about the final book. This is a book about the bonds of family, blood and found, and doing whatever it takes to protect the ones you love. This is a book about religion and the beautiful and terrible things people are willing to do in the name of it. This is a book about all the different pieces that make a person, and how it is okay to love

them all even if others won't. But this is ultimately a book about a girl becoming the hero of her own story every single time, no matter who or what tries to block her path.

“There are no monsters in the world, and no saints. Only infinite shades woven into the same tapestry, light and dark.”

But I suppose *The Bear and the Nightingale* is a Russian inspired fantasy that stars a family living on the edge of the unforgiving Russian wilderness. And our main character grew up on fairy tales, but always hungered for more. And she soon realizes that maybe there was some truth in those tales, and she encounters a frost-demon named Morozko who makes magic a reality before her very eyes.

This story picks up right after the events of *The Girl in the Tower* in Moscow, and Konstantin Nikonovich's vengeance knows no bounds. And a bear demon named Medved is happy to aid with the chaos in any way they possibly can. We also get to see Marya, Olga, Sasha, and Dmitrii on very different journeys through this pain and heartbreak. But we also get to see Vasya learn new things about herself and her ancestors, while even venturing into a new land unlike any other. And I truly think this concluding novel was damn close to perfection.

“You denied both the winter-king and his brother, didn't you? You made yourself a third power in their war.”

Following Vasya, seeing her go to battle for Russia, go to battle for her family, go to battle for herself, has been a journey like none other that I've ever experienced while reading. Katherine Arden pulls from a lot of historical events and themes, but I'm convinced that this equal parts harrowing and heartening fairytale that she crafted is the real timeline that happened. I'll be completely honest, this is a hard review to write, and not because it's the last book in a series, but because I am in awe of what a damn masterpiece this entire story is. It doesn't even feel real that I have this story in my hands, that I get to read it, I get to love it, I get to experience this beautiful tale that feels so whimsical but so real. The actual blessings.

“Magic is forgetting the world was ever other than as you willed it.”

Overall, this is just one of my favorite trilogies of all time, and I think it always will be. This story just truly has every element that I'm in love with in literature; lyrical writing, winter setting, fae folks of all varieties, strong sibling bonds, heart wrenching romance, and girls becoming the hero of their story. Katherine Arden and this trilogy is a gift from a higher power and I can't wait to see what she does next.

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The quotes above were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

Content and trigger warnings for talk of death during childbirth, graphic animal death, graphic torture, graphic violence, sexual assault (unwanted touching), threat of rape, death, murder, blood depictions, slavery, captivity, and war themes.

Lucy Langford says

5*****

"I have plucked snowdrops at Midwinter, died at my own choosing, and wept for a nightingale. Now I am beyond prophecy."

Enchanting !

More action packed than the other two books but still maintains all of its magical elements and folklore. This book picks up straight after book 2 so we get to learn what happens of Vasya, Morozko, The Bear, Vasya's family and Father Constantine, as well as many others. This book introduces us to more magical folklore, see Vasya use her magical skills, we get to travel to enchanted places through Midnight and meet Baba Yaga.

I love Vasya as a character and she will forever be one of my most favourite and most impactful heroines I have ever come across in literature. I would love to be like her- she's a very inspirational female character to follow. She is absolutely smart, fierce, independent, devoted, passionate and brave. She wants a life of magic instead of traditional gender roles that others are trying to box her in to. We also get to see more Vasya and Morozko and see how their interactions develop.

I purely enjoyed this final instalment and it was a fantastic way of finishing the series. (I am now just forever going to reread over them as they were so good!).

I am obsessed with the winternight trilogy and now that I've finished it I am at a loss as to what to do - I'm very sad that it is over, but it is one of the best series I have ever read. Katherine Arden has made me fall in love with the world she created and the characters she shared with us.

Nastassja says

Review is posted here on my blog

Real rating: 4.5 stars

Who is to say, in the end, that the three guardians of Russia are not a witch, a frost-demon, and a chaos-spirit? I find it fitting.

-Katherine Arden, The Winter of the Witch

I am sitting in front of a window, watching snow slowly drifting down from the sky, covering the ground with the carpet of pristine white. Frost and cold. I am thinking about the fairy-tales from faraway memory that, once upon a time, made me shiver with dread and excitement. Such a distant memory, but so warm. This is how my childhood tastes like. **Katherine Arden is a sea-witch with an ancient Russian soul.** With her enchanting words, she made me long for my childhood fairy-tales. And this is how true magic feels like.

Doubtless, *The Winter of the Witch* is **the most fascinating book of the trilogy**. You know why? Because it is filled to the brim with fairy-tale creatures, frost-demons, firebirds and nature. The kind of nature where mysterious magical things happen, the ones you want to be a witness to. And you don't have to be Russian to feel them. You just have to keep your eyes open.

So much happens in the span of 400 pages: human cruelty, death, magical adventure, love, treason, war, and, then, peace. And still, it was not enough! I want more of *Midnight travels*; I want to see faraway lands and realms and times. All is possible in the *Winternight*. And maybe one day, we'll encounter more of Vasya's travels. I wish...

Vasya is the heroine you cannot stop admiring. Such a growth from book 1! She transformed from a barefoot child into a grown fierce woman any creature would be honored to follow. She is brave, she is loyal - she is a true hero everyone needed.

"I am a witch. I have plucked snowdrops at Midwinter, died at my own choosing, and wept for a nightingale. Now I am beyond prophecy."

And **Morozko!** What a hero! He is not your typical knight in shining armor; he is **complex and tormented by his own demons** - he *is* the winter-demon. He is ancient and, at times, he feels distant, but he was there for Vasya, he wanted to be more human because of her. How could my heart not beat faster when Morozko was near? *How* could I not melt every time Vasya and Morozko were together? It's just beyond my strength to fight these two.

"Love is for those who know the griefs of time, for it goes hand in hand with loss. An eternity, so burdened, would be a torment. And yet—" He broke off, drew breath. "Yet what else to call it, this terror and this joy?"

I need a frost-demon of my own. I think I'll make it my life goal to find one. Besides, I live in a country where winter lasts up to 5 months, so I might wander in the forest sometime, and look for the hero of my story.

Apart from the magic and incredibly reliable characters, can we talk about the historical aspect and cultural accuracy? In all my reviews to the trilogy I seem to be unable to stop praise *Katherine Arden* for the hard work of researching, more than that - living in the world she has created, because **only when you are in something with the whole of your heart, can you create something so beautiful and endearing**. To take the old and almost forgotten pagan culture and merge it masterly into the context of the - no less old and controversial - historical events, seamlessly merge the two, thus creating a wonderful story that conquers hearts of thousands of readers all over the world. Pure magic, if you ask me.

And if you were wondering, yes, *paganism* still exists, otherwise, how would I be able to run naked in the rain and make bloody sacrifices occasionally?

An amazing journey has come to an end. I am sad. Part of my heart stays with these books and will come back to them over and over again. But for now, **can I just ask a Firebird to take me away to faraway lands of witches, frost-demons and chaos-spirits?**

Note: all quotes are taken from the uncorrected ebook copy and are subjected to change in the final version of the book.

Debra says

"There is nothing but power in this world. People are divided into those who have it and those who have it not. Which will you be....."

There is a lot of power in the final book of the Winternight Trilogy. This book starts off where *The Girl in the Tower* ends. If you have not read the first two books in the series, it is imperative that you read them first otherwise you will not know what is going on in this book.

I am not even going to attempt to give a synopsis of the book. There is just so much going on, but I will say that I appreciate how Arden has one book flow into the next. I also love that these books are based on Russian fairy-tales/folklore and history. I am not a big fan of fantasy, but this series worked for me. Although, *The Bear and the Nightingale* was my favorite, this one served as a very nice conclusion. It is darker, there is more danger, lives are lost (some are just gut wrenching), battles are fought and won, there is romance (finally!), and Vasya really comes into her own (and her power). Plus, we get re-acquainted with favorite characters from the series (Solovey and Morozko for me), plus there are villains. I will admit, even though he is a villain, I couldn't help but like and snicker at the Bear a.k.a Medved. Then there are the new characters and realms/worlds, such as Midnight, which was a nice addition to the story and serves to give Vasya more knowledge about her family.

"There are no monsters in the world, and no saints. Only infinite shades woven into the same tapestry, light and dark. One man's monster is another man's beloved. The wise know that."

There is a lot going on in this book and at times, the action felt drawn out. At times, I wanted it to move a little faster. A plus, in this book, is the vivid descriptions. We are dealing with a real place (Russia) but also with another world, magic, magical creatures, etc. so it helped tremendously that Arden gave the reader detailed descriptions. I found it was easy to visualize the book as I read.

I believe most fans of this series will like how the trilogy ends. I like that Vasya made her own decisions and stood by them. She remained a strong female character throughout the series and ended strong.

3.5 stars rounded up

Thank you to Random House Publishing - Ballantine and NetGalley who provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. The thoughts and opinions expressed in this review are my own.

Paromjit says

Katherine Arden completes the wonder that is the stellar Winternight trilogy, and leaves me in pieces, distraught with a deep sense of loss that this is the end. This is epic storytelling as it begins with the ashes of Moskva and a traumatised people susceptible to the charismatic priest Konstantin, a man overcome by a maelstrom of feelings, with fear of Vasya dominating. Branded a witch and pariah, Vasya is to be tested beyond human endurance, acquiring a fire within, wracked with grief and loss. Immersed in magic within the

vast enchanted lands of Midnight, she travels exhausted and broken, becoming aware of her family history and legacy, making her the heir to her unforgiving great grandmother, but Vasya has much to learn. The winter king, the death god Morozko, has sacrificed himself for Vasya, but at a terrible price as the spirit of chaos, the bear, is unleashed on a Moscow already on its knees, as the diminished power of the chyerti leaves its open to the further incoming bloodlust, death and destruction.

The Grand Prince of Moskva, Dmitrii, Vasya's cousin is besieged by dangers from all sides, the rising power of Konstantin, now discarding all remnants of his Christian faith for a devil's bargain with the bear in return for power. The Tatars with vast forces of fighting men, under the leadership of Mamai, seek silver from Dmitrii, with plans to decimate and conquer Rus through war, if the silver is unforthcoming. Terrified for her family and Rus, Vasya seeks Morozko, unprepared for what she finds. In this dark fairytale, Vasya comes of age, becomes a woman, becoming aware of her abilities, exercising her magic and rallying to become the third force of power as many chyerti, and Pozhar, the firebird, form an alliance with her. Magic, however, is a gift and a curse, rich in its temptations, but exposing her to an all consuming madness that threatens all that ties her to her family, Rus, humanity, and love. To fight the forces that threaten Rus and her family, Vasya ventures into unthinkable territory, making common cause with the spirit of chaos, revealing they share more more than she has foreseen. Only unity can offer the miniscule hope of winning the David and Goliath battles that loom, offering a future for co-existence between Christian, Pagan and the Grand Prince, and the foundation for an independent Rus.

War rallies disparate parties but inevitably horror, loss and grief are its repercussions, and nothing Vasya can do can prevent the gravest of loss as her grief overflows. The waters of death and the waters of life offer some much needed amelioration as a close spirit joyfully returns. Katherine Arden has taken the framework of actual Russian history, and weaves a spellbinding tale of Vasya, a young woman unwilling to accept convention on the role of women, challenging the path of either marriage or the convent, the only options available. Arden's storytelling is atmospheric, vital, vibrant and unforgettable. It is outstanding, feminist, conjoining the mortal with the immortal, and located in the rich mythology and legends of Russian folklore. I don't know what Arden will do next, but I guarantee whatever it is, I will be reading it without fail. What can I say?? Just read this. Many thanks to Random House Ebury for an ARC.

Candace Robinson says

Do-do-do-do-do ... so I fought back and forth with this book the whole read. I was bored a lot during the first 40%, then things got interesting, then I got bored again, then things were magnanimous. But, Frost Demon, you make every scene you are in worth reading. I seriously think I would have enjoyed it more if he had his own POV. Like we get POVs from a lot of others, but never my boy! Whyyyyyyyyy notttttttt??????????

At times my issues came with Vasya. I felt sometimes she needed more emotions? I guess? Sometimes, or a lot of the time, I can be a robotic person so I do get that. Also, when it came to Morozko, I would have preferred more of a team effort when it came to certain things. A lot of the time these days, as I've said before, authors are making the girls so bad ass and then the guy seems like a pathetic weakling. I want a team effort—equality—not the guy saying, "let's go hide in a corner," and then the girl is all like, "I'm going to go win this war!" I don't get it... Yet there were some perfect scenes between Vasya and Morozko that were so good and swooooooon!

When it came to the Winter of the Witch, not sure if the right word is political or if the book felt like it had more of an agenda, but when it came to that stuff, I was just like come on already! I want more of the

magical feel I first felt! But don't worry, there are some gorgeous scenes, too.

Anyway, the book was beautifully written. I just miss the whimsical/fairy tale feel of the first book and the intriguing feeling I had while reading the second book. Also Konstantin, the creep, is still crazy! His character is so interesting at times, but I also want to smack him for his insane thoughts. I will say that the Bear is probably one of my new favorite characters—ever. And Sasha I still love more than anything. Overall I did like the way it came to an end, but can a certain character get their own book now???

Leah says

1-12-19 So I've sung this trilogy's praises since *THE BEAR AND THE NIGHTINGALE* and I will continue to declare my love for these books.

Where do I start? I was bawling my eyes out in the first 30 pages and couldn't stop for a good twenty minutes. The action scenes are engaging. The writing still moves with the dreamy beauty of a fairy tale. We learn more about Vasya's legacy, which is just as mystical as readers of the series imagined.

And yet I had some minor quibbles. I had some issues with Vasya this time around. Some of her choices, done on whims, have major consequences that are, for lack of a better word, aggravating. She has grown a lot since, but in this book, she seems more immature compared to when we first met her. The major choices just seemed un-Vasya. And the frost demon is almost a non-entity in the book. Granted, he is a fleeting presence in the first two books, but in here, he vanishes for a major portion of the story. However, the scenes between him and Vasya still have that sparkling chemistry, and there is one moment that had me internally screaming with joy. I have a huge crush on him and that love is never going away.

I still love this series and see a lot of possibilities with spin offs (seriously, can we get a book about Morozko, please and thank you), I will treasure the series as it is.

5-19-18: The publisher pushed the release date back to 2019... my...precious! :(

I want this book like Gollum wants the One Ring.

jessica says

it has been said that those who do not believe in magic will never find it, and this book is physical proof that magic does exist.

every page, every word, every letter made its way into my heart, which began to beat in a steady and strong rhythm of "*i believe, i believe, i believe.*"

this story, this trilogy, has woven itself into the very fabric of soul and will forever be a part of me. a truly captivating tale that has made me fall in love with reading all over again.

and as i have come to the conclusion of this wonderful story, i have realised what a joy and privilege it is to have such magic in my life.

? 5 stars

Miranda Reads says

A truly satisfying end to a splendid series.

Review to come

Emily May says

"Beware the forest," she added, following Vasya to the door. "It does not take kindly to strangers."

It's over ?. But it was most definitely a beautiful and fitting ending.

I've owned this book since it released on January 8, but I've been reluctant to start it. Partly because it was the final book, and partly because I was worried it wouldn't be as good as I'd been hoping it would be. But Arden didn't let me down. This finale was every bit as gorgeous and magical as the first two books.

My reviews for this series are starting to feel repetitive at this point, but I absolutely have to talk about the **atmosphere**. For me, it's what makes this trilogy so wonderful. The Winter of the Witch follows its predecessors by being a book of quiet whispers and cold breezes. It's that timeless fairy tale quality that I love so much.

But don't get me wrong-- there's plenty of action, too. In fact, this book starts pretty much in the thick of it with Vasya being chased down by the followers of the nefarious priest Konstantin. With Medved causing havoc left and right, and Vasya venturing into beautifully-imagined supernatural realms, this could be the most action-packed book of the series.

One of the things I like most about these books - and this one in particular - is how much Vasya grows as a character. I think it is one of the most interesting and convincing character arcs I've ever read about. She ages and gains hard-earned wisdom so naturally over the course of the three novels, and I feel strangely like I've grown up with her after following her story for the last few years.

As always, the fantastical is weaved in with the historical. Much is based on real historical events - such as the rapidly approaching Battle of Kulikovo - but, of course, a lot has been embellished too. I'm at least fairly certain that the frost demon Morozko wasn't falling into a complicated romance with a woman called Vasya in 14th century Russia, more's the pity.

Also: apparently frost demons are sexy. Who knew?

