



The Koldun Code

Sophie Masson

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I am in a world deeply strange and strangely deep, a world as different from my old life as it's possible to be, and it feels completely natural.

An unexpected encounter with a handsome stranger in a Russian wood changes the life of 22-year-old traveler Helen Clement forever, catapulting her into a high-stakes world of passion, danger, and mystery. Tested in ways she could never have imagined, she must keep her own integrity in a world where dark forces threaten and ruthlessness and betrayal haunt every day.

Set against a rising tide of magic and the paranormal in a modern Russia where the terrifying past continually leaks into the turbulent present, Trinity is a unique and gripping blend of conspiracy thriller, erotically charged romance and elements of the supernatural, laced with a murderous dose of company politics. With its roots deep in the fertile soil of Russian myth, legend, and history, it is also a fascinating glimpse into an extraordinary, distinctive country and amazingly rich culture.

The Koldun Code Details

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Author : Sophie Masson

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From Reader Review The Koldun Code for online ebook

Kara-karina says

For once, peeps, I had absolutely no complains about Russian-ness of this book apart from couple of minor mistakes and an overuse of patronymics. It was the rest of the plot I had issues with.

First of all, the shelving of this book under romance, sci-fi and fantasy along with the synopsis above is incredibly misleading. This is a pretty straightforward murder mystery with a few slight paranormal elements and a very straight laced (I'd personally question "erotically charged" description) romance. Boohoo! If I knew that beforehand I'd probably stay away as it's not really my staple food.

Secondly, the romance itself is sugary sweet. First love, soulmates and all that... and the ending is extremely unpleasant. It took me back to a similar situation which happened to my best friend weeks before her wedding and I had a horrid, sad flashback. Sorry, it got a bit too personal.

Otherwise, it was a decent if not overly exciting read. The descriptions of the places, culture and food were lovely and very charming, the main characters both positive, nice people whom you truly wished well. There was a certain idealisation of Russia going on, but it can only be a step forward from bears drinking vodka and dancing on Red Square, right?

As to the mystery I might be jaded but I could see the villain from miles away and their revelation and motivations did nothing for me.

This was almost like a Christian romance/murder mystery, and while it wasn't for me I could appreciate the beauty of discovering a new, exciting culture for readers who do enjoy such combination of genres.

Felicity Pulman says

This new page-turner from well-known Australian writer, Sophie Masson, is a departure from her recent novels for children and teenagers which are usually set in France and/or Australia. This is her first novel for adults in quite a while, and it is set in Russia in the present, a country caught in the grip of its painful transition from communism to capitalism, bringing greed, ambition, corruption, and ruthless battles for power in its wake. But this story also invokes the Russia of the past, with its turbulent history and its rich tradition of magic and fantasy, with all of these elements combined in this explosive new mystery / romance from a master story-teller.

Helen Clement, recovering from a disastrous love affair, comes to Russia with her mother to visit her mother's old friend, a university professor who is currently engaged in researching and writing a story about a feral child raised by a bear - a story that seems to have some connection with the psychic direction that Trinity, a well-known and highly-regarded investigative company, has now embarked on, known as the mysterious 'Koldun Code'. Handsome Alexey is the new heir to Trinity, for his father has been murdered, as have two other partners of Trinity. After a chance meeting, Helen joins Alexey in an investigation into their murders, and into what is really going on behind the scenes, joined by a rogue policeman, Maxim, and Alexey's godfather (and key member of the firm) Volkovsky. The growing love and psychic connection between Helen and Alexey is a key element of this story, as Alexey finds new purpose in his life, and Helen learns to trust her heart.

A combination of fantasy, magic, romance and crime, this mystery will keep you guessing until the entirely unexpected conclusion - of this part of the story at least!

Katharine (Ventureadlaxre) says

Katharine is a judge for the Aurealis Awards. This entry is the personal opinion of Katharine herself, and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of any judging panel, the judging coordinator or the Aurealis Awards management team.

To be safe, I won't be recording my thoughts (if I choose to) here until after the AA are over.

Fangs for the Fantasy says

Helen is taking a holiday in Russia with her mother, desperately trying to get some space from her disastrous break up and collapse of her career. She never expected to find a place so alien to her – and she certainly never expected to find the rich and intriguing Alexey

But Alexey has more on his mind than romance – his father and father's 2 business partners have all been murdered within a short space of time. People are whispering about a curse – and not only is the murderer still uncaught, but other forces have their eyes on his father's business, looking to wrest it from his inexperienced and idealistic hands.

The first thing that struck me about this book was the amount of research that has gone into it. From my unfamiliar eye, this author seems to have made the effort to ensure the Russia of the book wasn't just a Russia of bad stereotypes and alien culture – there has been some work into making this real and authentic. I can't say how good a job has been achieved since I am neither Russian nor especially experienced in all things Russian, but I can feel the effort behind it.

I just feel it's a shame that so little has been done with it.

I don't understand why Helen is the protagonist. In fact, take a step back, I don't understand why Helen is in the book at all. All the action, all the story twists, all the mystery and the investigation and everything else? It doesn't involve her. It cannot involve her. It's all completely beyond her experience, affecting people she's only just met and investigating/resolving it requires knowledge she doesn't have, skills she doesn't have and working with/speaking to a lot of people she's only just met, most of which she doesn't even share a common language with.

Rather reasonably, because of that, she doesn't actually do anything. And it is reasonable – even her few interjections about whether Alexey can trust someone or not (for example) come across as ridiculous because she is so outside of her experiences, her skills or her specialities that her intervening would be ludicrous. She doesn't. She can't. She spends the vast majority of this book just following Alexey around and occasionally

taking little breaks to work on the romance (I'd say "develop" the romance but that would be a stunningly generous description of what happened). Honestly, she could be entirely removed from the book and very little of real value would change.

So let's get to that romance – firstly, it also adds very little to the plot. It's an odd tool used to pull Helen (and, therefore, the protagonist) into the story as audience without having to come up with an actual reason for her to be there. Helen and Alexey meet (he nearly runs her over), they arrange a second meeting. Boom. LOVE FOREVER, Alexey (a man receiving death threats) is now happy to have Helen follow him around everywhere, be party to all of his company's secrets and generally be with him every second of the day when business doesn't drag him away (and she is free to roam around his work place/home as you would any near stranger). The romance is tooth-achingly saccharine and quite dated - Helen actually uses the words "Oh, Alexey". She says this more than once; I started picturing everyone in black and white after that. It's also comically speeded up with Helen happily considering moving to Russia and spending the rest of her life there after... a week? Less?

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Leslie Fisher says

*** Received for free as part of Goodreads First Reads ***

I love reading about all things Russian. For that reason, I was really excited to read this book. I thought the descriptions of the places - especially those of Uglich (Yaroslavl Oblast) - were really interesting since I haven't been far outside of Moscow or Saint Petersburg. I'm not a huge romance fan, so the romance between the two main characters seemed a little over-the-top at times, but maybe that's just because I can't relate. I did, however, enjoy the budding romance between the police officer Maxim and the psychic, Anna. Though there are romantic elements in this story, I don't think the "sex scenes" are too graphic, and I would really consider this more of a "Mystery" than anything. The ending is a cliffhanger, and makes me look forward to the next book.

Karen says

TRINITY is Book 1 of the Kuldun Code Trilogy, the second book being not far away if memory serves correct. Set in modern Russia, Sophie Masson has certainly involved a wonderful sense of place and culture in this book:

"They'd left a mild gray London spring morning and emerged into a Moscow afternoon so bright blue that it seemed painted on with a lavish brush. Everything had culture-shocked her, from the sublime to the ordinary: the candy-striped domes of St Basil's cathedral flaunted against the intense sky, Red Square vast as a rolling stone plain, wide streets strung with garlands of lights, weird little railway kiosks like tiny general stores, impassive people whose faces she didn't know how to read. And most of all, the barbed wire look of Cyrillic script fencing her off from any real understanding of what was going on."

The sense of the place, and the look and feel of a stranger in that unknown, untranslated difference is really well done through-out this book. Helen has never been here before, and knows little of the place and the people, although her mother speaks fluent Russian and is used to the culture and the people. The idea that the mythical weaves its way through the people and the place is also believable and contributes overall to the sense of "other" that TRINITY is obviously looking to build.

But within that, and even allowing for a certain leeriness for anything magical, paranormal or fantastical on this reader's part, there are too many holes in other elements in this book to allow the good elements to override the less convincing. Particularly the set up of Helen and Alexey as outsiders, and the building of this supposed intrigue that they solve together, which feels contrived and lacking veritas.

On the one hand Helen, she of the lovelorn, "he done me wrong" sad and lost girl; and on the other Alexey, the young Russian heir to the dark and mysterious business founded by his father. She's sad, withdrawn, docile - he's ethereal, idealistic and somewhat naive. And stinking rich. Of course these two will set eyes on each other, declare their undying love so quickly it's a wonder they've worked out how to spell each other's names, let alone be drawn together in love, business, mystery and the whole darn thing. That's not to say that's never going to happen anywhere, but everything - every single bit of character trait, behaviour, background is screaming "this is what will happen" from the second the mysterious sunglass wearing boy appears.

Once they do pair up however, the reason for Helen's existence in the whole book becomes increasingly vague. Given her tendency to mope about you can't help but wonder what she's doing there at all, especially as her role as sappy outsider means she's not really empowered to actually get involved or do a lot. Not helped by her spending a lot of time hanging around waiting whilst Alexey's off doing secret men's business of some kind. But then both of them are strangely passive, as is the whole "sudden love of their lives thing". It's all a bit syrupy, sappy gazing and mooning and generally being all... well bleagghhh. Which was not particularly realistic or convincing given the speed of the attraction and the supposed tense times in which they exist.

Having said all of that, if you stick with it, the later part of the book does improve. The pace picks up, there's less hanging around waiting, and the central characters seem to be slightly less wishy washy. Even the magical / folkloric aspects take a higher profile, providing more context and sense to the entire thing. TRINITY is probably a book for fans of paranormal / magic and romance with a bit of intrigue, rather than crime fiction fans alone. It's definitely going to be one of those books that really works for some readers, and does not at all for others.

<http://www.austcrimfiction.org/review...>

Michelle Cameron says

I was so fascinated by how magic and psychics and the like are such a huge (and accepted) part of Russian society. Sophie has woven a truly intriguing story that is all the more appealing for it's basis in fact – I loved the characters, particularly Maxim. There was a real darkness in parts that only added to the suspense and thrills - I can't wait to read The False Prince next year to see what happens next! I'm already theorising!

Liz says

Started out great! Russian setting, a bit of paranormal; I was very intrigued... then the pace slowed down and it settled into a more conventional murder mystery. At that point Helen seemed to hang around waiting for things to happen quite a lot, and the romance didn't seem very likely. Beautiful setting construction - now I want to visit Russia - but plot and character didn't quite match.

Linda Gavino says

I chose this book because of the gorgeous cover image. Yes, I judged it by its cover.

There are two things wrong with this book, in my opinion. The first is over-explanation, and the second is inconsistent dialogue. Unfortunately, I felt myself losing interest and starting to skim near the end of the first chapter because everything (from history to language to feelings) was explained in great detail without any action or important event to give it interest. Also the dialogue didn't always seem natural. Sometimes it felt more like a person having a discussion with themselves rather than many distinct characters interacting.

And yet Sophie Masson writes with a lyrical beauty that cannot be denied. There are some truly beautiful descriptions in this novel, and the attention to language and folkloric motifs is amazing. I learned quite a bit about Russian language and mythology and that alone was enough for me to keep going. The mystery is compelling, and I loved how eery some scenes were.

I would recommend this novel to readers looking for a romantic mystery with paranormal elements.

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Wendy James says

The Koldun Code has all the elements of the very best romantic thrillers : an utterly gripping, suspenseful plot that's complex without being too complicated, a highly atmospheric setting, and a cast of memorable characters – a hero and heroine who you come to care about deeply, villains who surprise. What makes this novel even more extraordinary is the Russian setting and the clever blend of history, legend and mythology. And then there are the hints of the supernatural that give the narrative a darker edge - and kept this reader's heart pounding most pleasurably!

One of the things I really admire about *The Koldun Code* is that – as with all of Masson's writing – it's accessible and enjoyable to all: teenagers and adults of every age will love this book. I can think of only a few writers who have this knack – the great Mary Stewart, Tolkien, and our own wonderful Ruth Park – but Masson has it in spades.

Bring on *Trinity Part Two*!

Sonja says

Well, I guess this was an interesting book. But there were a lot of times where I was tempted to quit reading it because I just didn't care about it, so **2.5 stars**. Of course I did finish it. Oddly enough it was the fictionally perfect Alexey that kept me in it. He really was just obscenely perfect. Which was very sweet at times and a little overbearing at others.

I would not consider this paranormal. At all. Sure there is talk of psychics and sorcerers and the like, but really? Not much that I would consider all that out there. It's all about the mystery of the three partners who controlled Trinity dying, who is actually behind the attacks on the offices, and what exactly is the Koldun Code. I care little for mysteries. I went to read this because it was listed as paranormal and sounded like it would be interesting...

Alexey is the young son of the last partner to die who inherits Trinity. Helen has come to Russia to escape her life falling apart. It's love at first sight. Ridiculously so. They're proclaiming their love for one another and planning to be together forever after just about a week. Which actually felt like it had been a lot longer while reading about it. Alexey has plans to revamp the company in a better light and brings Helen along for the ride. She's pretty clueless about everything and doesn't speak the language but, hey, I might follow a guy like that around too so who am I to judge? Alexey's godfather and a cop on leave are also around a lot and following leads on the various crazy things that happen or are found out. Don't forget to throw in a story about kids being raised by bears either. The ending throws one twist after another after another at you, which the first one *was* pretty nuts. (view spoiler) But we find out who did what and why, and the story ends in a way that, personally, I would have been content to leave it as such. I most likely will not read the rest of this series.

And I want to mention one thing. The word "oh" was used **WAY WAY WAY** too much throughout this book.

I know pretty much nothing about Russia or the culture, but it seems that a lot of work went into this book to make it as true as real. One thing that kind of was frustrating though is how they do the name thing there. It's easy enough to understand, that's not my problem. But do they always say a person's full name over and over in a conversation? Do they always say their name as opposed to saying "you" or just leaving it out entirely? I mean, if you're talking to somebody on the phone, I'm pretty sure they know you're talking to them and you don't need to keep saying their name. It's probably my American speech working against me here, but it just seemed repetitive.

Copy provided by publisher via Netgalley.

Melissa says

A great thriller that I enjoyed as well as my teenager. The books that can be read by different generations are pure gold in my book. This book is just that. My daughter and I enjoyed the thriller aspect of this and didn't want to stop reading it. Cant wait to read the next book.

I was given this book in exchange for an honest review via Netgalley.

Amanda Bridgeman says

This was an enjoyable read, that at its heart, is a good mystery.

Talitha (Victorian Soul) says

Disclaimer: I received a free copy via Netgalley, that in no way influenced my opinion. This critique is my honest take.

I'll be referring to the individual book as Trinity, because that's how Netgalley titled it, for some reason here it's different.

I have to say this is the first book I've obtained to review that I've seriously considered DNFing- the beginning just rubbed me the wrong way. This book has main characters that kind of have a 'love at first sight' connection: it isn't instalove, per se, but something close to instant emotional bond. As a plot-motivated reader, I was more interested in the mysterious deaths of the Trinity leaders than I was the romance, and usually I don't mind romance- it just wasn't my type of romance.

Another thing I noticed in the beginning were the strange conversation patterns between the two lovers- I've never been to Russia, but in America, when you say "Oh, Alexey," in a conversation, it begets images of black and white movies or soft-focus-lens soap operas. With the heroine swooning in a full-skirted dress, in the hero's arms. And soft violin music swirling in the background. Those are the images that came to mind that made me want to DNF.

Although I considered DNFing due to the characters not being my type- I read on (past 30%) and became more invested in the plot once it actually thickened. All three of Trinity's previous leaders had been mysteriously killed in ways that defied the laws of nature, but Alexey takes up the mantle of leader to help keep the loyal employees at their jobs despite the obvious danger. Usually I find fault with the heroes of romance-infused books, but this time there was nothing not to like- but Helen and his insta-connection never made sense to me, and I couldn't see what really *zinged* them together.

Helen reminded me of a heroine (who will remain anonymous) from an uber-popular series for the first half of the book. She seemed very open to love despite having come to Russia to escape memories of an awful relationship, and fell for Alexey hard. I understand the merits of their relationship, I just don't understand why she would place her trust so easily in the mysterious Alexey's hands after that bad a breakup. She isn't the strongest heroine, but I can see changes for the better in her by the end of the book.

It should be noted I learned a bit about Russian folklore by reading this, a treat in any novel set in a foreign country. Bears seemed to feature strongly, for reasons not divulged until the end. Many of the twists the story took I did not predict, which also makes this a more interesting read.

Trinity may start slowly, but the last fifty percent flew by with no conscious effort on my part. The ending, while not a cliffhanger, does to some extent leave you hanging and wanting more. If you're looking for a

paranormal-infused romantic thriller set in Russia, this may be the book for you.

Be advised that some aspects, including the short quote I referenced may have been changed in the final version, due to the version I received being a review copy.

As posted on my blog:

<http://victoriansoulcritiques.blogspot...>

Felicity Pulman says

This new page-turner from well-known Australian writer, Sophie Masson, is a departure from her recent novels for children and teenagers which are usually set in France and/or Australia. This is her first novel for adults in quite a while, and it is set in Russia in the present, a country caught in the grip of its painful transition from communism to capitalism, bringing greed, ambition, corruption, and ruthless battles for power in its wake. But this story also invokes the Russia of the past, with its turbulent history and its rich tradition of magic and fantasy, with all of these elements combined in this explosive new mystery / romance from a master story-teller.

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