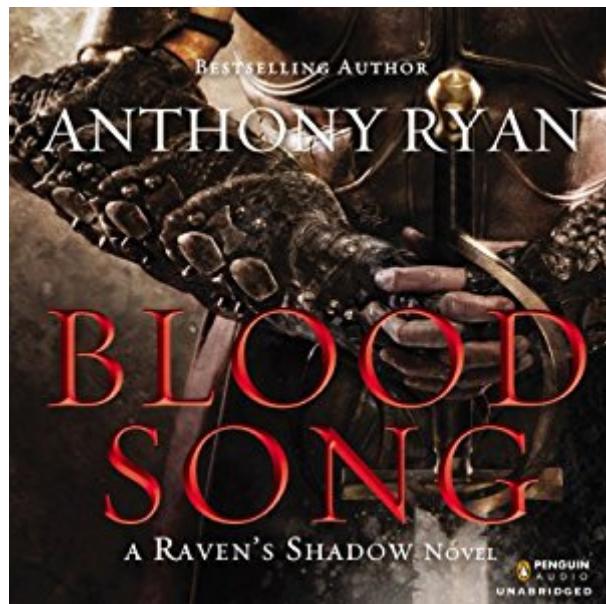


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# Blood Song: Raven's Shadow, Book 1



## **Synopsis**

From "a new master storyteller" comes the beginning of an epic fantasy saga of blood, honor, and destiny.... The Sixth Order wields the sword of justice and smites the enemies of the Faith and the Realm. Vaelin Al Sorna was only a child of 10 when his father left him at the iron gate of the Sixth Order. The Brothers of the Sixth Order are devoted to battle, and Vaelin will be trained and hardened to the austere, celibate, and dangerous life of a Warrior of the Faith. He has no family now save the Order. Vaelin's father was Battle Lord to King Janus, ruler of the unified realm. Vaelin's rage at being deprived of his birthright and dropped at the doorstep of the Sixth Order like a foundling knows no bounds. He cherishes the memory of his mother, and what he will come to learn of her at the Order will confound him. His father, too, has motives that Vaelin will come to understand. But one truth overpowers all the rest: Vaelin Al Sorna is destined for a future he has yet to comprehend. A future that will alter not only the realm, but the world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book is in a class of its own. Engaging, fast-paced, an epic that doesn't bog you down with a hundred different point of views or side story arcs. The story itself follows that of Vaelin Al Sorna, a scared young boy who grows up to be a natural born leader and strategist, feared and respected throughout the world. He reminded me of Inda from the Sherwood Smith books, destined from birth to be of great import to the realm, bonded to his brothers through shared hardships, denied satisfaction and relief to fulfill his duty. Cunning and intelligent, with enough compassion to walk the line between warrior and murderer, he fights with ruthless efficiency to make a difference, to try and

do the right thing when all it seems his actions accomplish is more suffering, all the while battling his own inner demons and self-doubt. There are some strong themes present, of growing up and of lost innocence, of sacrifice and of betraying your morals and beliefs. The structure of the book was reminiscent of "The Name of the Wind" in that it's told from the perspective of a scribe/historian chronicling the deeds of our protagonist as he narrates his tale in the present. This device does not detract from the story and break the immersion, rather it serves to set the scene for each consecutive portion of Vaelin's life, bringing the events that take place full circle; it does not in fact reveal the plot, but only adds to the suspense. The world-building was solid. Never did I lack for any visual representation of the lands discussed, magical/religious/cultural systems mentioned, or felt confused about how things came to be. The fact that this enormous tome could be purchased for the price of a soda astounds me. With such a high degree of writing and storytelling that kept me enraptured almost a full day and a half, I'd have expected it to have cost at least ten times as much and come with a number of literary awards attached. It really is one of those books I'll probably remember for the rest of my life.

So I just spent the entire day (starting at 10:00 am and now it's 2:00 am) reading this book and it completely blew me away!! I'm not very good at writing comprehensive reviews, so I'll just highlight two things that I really loved about this book that I think is missing from a lot of other really good fantasy works (the ingredients that make it go beyond five stars). 1) I really hate the endless pages of self-loathing that many fantasy authors feel compelled to write whenever heroes need to kill. It's a very important point to carry across that killing, even in the name of "good", is sometimes necessary, but never without an incalculable price. Necessity cannot alchemize an evil act into something other. The heavy handed way in which this is usually done in fantasy fiction is when the hero rails ceaselessly against their own actions, decrying themselves as monsters, at which point they are embraced by some love interest who tells them that they are really a good person after all. It just always seemed to me that such self loathing is unbecoming in a hero since it's purely a selfish feeling that doesn't help anyone else. I can usually put up with this for like 20 pages but when it becomes a recurring theme, I get really annoyed. There's none of this in this book. I'm not sure exactly how the author managed to convey it, but there's a certain sense of dignity about Vaelin that tells you that he feels the weight of the lives he's taken without him resorting to whining (so he actually whines for about 2 paragraphs before he essentially gets slapped and told to stop feeling sorry for himself). 2) The author has a real gift for introducing plot details that take a while to understand (adding flavor to the story along the way) but which are satisfactorily resolved in the end

(very few loose ends here). My favorite was the story of the "Witch's Bastard" which we are introduced to halfway in the book. At first, I had no idea what the story was supposed to mean in the context of the plot, but I think by the end, I could make a pretty good guess, and trying to interpret the story really allowed me to see everything that happened in a new light (very cool!). Please, please get this book. It was absolutely awesome! Best fantasy I've read in the past five years.

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