



Be First or Be Dead

Nik Krasno

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New friends, sex, drugs and lots of moolah. Michael enjoys his status of one of the richest men on the planet, indulging in every possible pleasure, unaware that those who really dominate the global economy have made their plans.

The realization that he's just a pawn in somebody's grand game may have come too late.

Will Michael survive a showdown with ancient cabal and save his country?

Stand-Alone * Thriller * Action * Noir * Big Biz * Big Balls

Be First or Be Dead Details

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From Reader Review *Be First or Be Dead* for online ebook

Whispering Stories says

Thank you to Nik Krasno for personally sending me a copy of this book following my reviews of the two previous volumes.

Be First or Be Dead continues the story of Mikhail Voratavich and if you enjoyed *Mortal Showdown* you will probably like *Be First or Be Dead* as it continues the themes of financial and political dealing told in Krasno's gutsy style. As with the previous book the lead character moves from country to country in an effort to save not only his fortune but his life.

Krasno's first novel *Rise of an Oligarch* was a brilliant book but sadly I feel that the quality is diminishing as the series continues. *Be First or Be Dead* has a thin underlying story acted out through a series of violent scenes which increase in scale and are not always believable. There are occasions when Krasno appears to conjure up characters and props from nowhere to resolve a situation. As with the previous books there are frequent tales of debauchery which have very little connection with the plot.

Rather oddly the book contains a chapter written by a guest writer Alex Shaw, a British thriller author who has worked in Kiev and the book also makes reference to one of Shaw's characters Aidan Snow. I cannot see that this adds anything to the book other than a bit of co-promotion.

The plot is resolved in the final chapter and we are then left on a cliff hanger which suggests that there could be more in the series. Would that be a good thing? Krasno can tell a good tale but maybe it is time for a new one.

Because of the repeated violence and the slender plot I struggled to finish the book. As a result I can only award *Be First or Be Dead* three stars.

Reviewed by Clive at www.whisperingstories.com

Eldon Farrell says

This is going to be a tough review for me to write as I really did want to enjoy *Be First or Be Dead* much more than I ended up enjoying it.

Let's start off with what worked for me. In my opinion this edition has a really nice cover, which is not too minor a point. Covers are exceedingly important and all too often Indie novels skimp here to their own detriment. So that is a feather in Nik Krasno's cap. And inside the cover I found the parts of the story where the Magnificent Seven were featured to be quite entertaining. The grand conspiracy at play was at once frightening and plausible. The details of the inner workings behind the financial machinations were also well done and left me wishing that these elements had been more extensively featured throughout the book.

Now for what didn't work for me. This novel is missing a very key element of storytelling and that is the hook. I did not read the blurb prior to beginning this book and it wasn't until roughly 20% of the way in that I got even a semblance of a clue as to what the story might be about. As any author can attest to; that is too

long. A reader needs to be hooked far sooner than that and I would suggest that beginning the story with scenes of partying and excess may not be the way to go. I can understand Krasno may be attempting to depict an Oligarch's lifestyle but the beginning of the novel is simply not the place for this.

From there I never really got comfortable with the characters or the overall story. For some reason it all felt disjointed to me. Just when I thought I had a handle on the plot it seemed the thread was dropped never to be discussed again. For instance, Michael is saved from a beating by a stranger who is never heard from again leaving me to question...why include it at all? The dialogue didn't help either. For me, dialogue only works if I can hear the characters speaking it and that is unfortunately not the case here. As an example of what I mean, early on Michael gives a speech to his partying companion about redistributing wealth to the poorer members of society. Michael is an Oligarch and an immoral character as displayed by his actions throughout—I can't imagine him actually advocating this. This opinion is lent more credence throughout the novel by the fact that he never broaches anything close to this topic again. It almost seems like the author is preaching through his character and that seldom works.

Overall I think it was a decent effort that showcased glimpses of the author's talent but due to the shortcomings mentioned I have to rate it 3.5 stars.

Roughseasinthemed says

This is a tough hard novel about money, power, greed and manipulation, to name but a few. Plenty of violence, killing, casual sex and some drugs in the mix too.

I found it difficult to see where the story was going in the first part of the book, and I got lost a few times and needed to backtrack. Some sections felt too fast and busy, others felt slow, especially the (un)ethical and (im)moral discussions favoured by the main character.

The pace does improve and from the middle to the end is a fairly easy read. Krasno has a guest author, Alex Shaw, writing Chapter Two which I thought was an interesting move. Although different in writing style, I enjoyed the inclusion, and would have enjoyed a couple more chapters by Shaw.

What I think is good about the story is the grand and complex concept that Krasno has portrayed here, and while it might be out of most people's personal experience, it seemed sadly believable. Who hasn't heard of stock market manipulations (and insider trading) to make a killing? And military invasions because of political alliances? I also admire Krasno, who comes from the Ukraine, for writing in English. There are some minor errors but I've seen far worse from so-called authors with English as a first language.

I was hovering around 2.5 stars in the early part of the book, but it improves sufficiently and has an unexpected and stunning ending that leaves it with a clear three stars.

Jess says

Be First or Be Dead - Nik Krasno

Thank you to Nik for giving me a free copy of the novel for an honest review.

On hearing the author describe the book as 'completely unromantic', I was intrigued to see whether a novel really could stand alone with a romance subplot. Although there were small elements in there for the most part it did.

At first I found it hard to get in to however as soon as I hit the first twist the book really came alive for me, it was completely unexpected and I needed to know more, from then on the twists kept on coming and there was never a dull moment.

The novel was very detailed, descriptive and easy to follow, as a reader personally I thought that Misha's rendezvous occasionally overshadowed the more poignant and exciting overall plot. However I feel that other readers would have enjoyed reading these kind of fantasy like moments.

The moment I realised the impact the novel had on me was when I read the very final page and twist, I thought 'what'? I still wanted to know more, I was left wanting an extra chapter to answer my questions and despite what had happened that the author could still very well write a sequel.

Although I found it slow to get in to at first overall I really enjoyed the novel.

Tony Parsons says

David "Dave" (Mikhail's BMF, PoA, Jewish) had called Mikhail Vorotavich (narrator, husband/father, aka Michael, Ukrainian oligarch) about a missile that exploded in the area where he was on assignment.

A BBC TV reporter from Kiev (Ukraine Capital) reported 2 rockets had exploded.

The Guards Tank Division (Russian army) had attacked Mariupol.

Michael had business to attend to there.

A Squadron of MiG-35's had entered U.S. Alaska territory but the U.S.A.F. interceptors were too late.

A ballistic rocket that was fired from a Russian Kamchatka air-space unit luckily fell in the ocean by San Francisco CA.

Reports from the U.S. President & the Pentagon were soon expected.

All over Russia & the U.S. PPL were flocking through the grocery store lines to buy basic survival necessities.

NATO was very concerned.

At the Pacha nightclub (Ibiza) Mikhail Vorotavich (oil tycoon), was enjoying his night out with Emil Greenberg (BMF, Juliette's son, U.K. playboy, aristocratic).

They were enjoying snorting coke, liquor & woman.

Aboard Emil's yacht the party & orgy continued into the wee hours.

Why does Masha Vorotavich (Mikhail's wife/mother) & the kids tolerate his lewd & flamboyant behavior, he has no idea.

Mikhail "Misha" (Michael) went to see Emil & Viscountess Juliette Greenberg (Emil's mother, business

partner, Gazdiesel).

There he also met with Antonio Millingeri Sr. (Subliminal Investments S.R.L., conglomerate).

Dubrovnik, Croatia.

Andriana (Arthur's ex-wife, Romania, driver/bodyguard) was assigned by Arthur to keep Mikhail safe.

Goran had been murdered & David was missing.

Boris had died & now there was a huge funeral.

Mr. Millingeri Jr. (Chariman), told Mikhail that if he returned Salvatore Millingeri (Italian, thug), he would get David back unharmed; other wise he would be whacked.

Mikhail & Arthur were 1st. going to interroagte Salvatore.

David was frantically working to transfer funds, regroup assets, invetments & even some money laundering.

The Magnificent Seven (M7, global business associates) hopefully would not figure out anything in a hurry.

Why did Arthur kidnap Emil Greenberg (Jewish, ½ brother)?

What will happen to Mikhail & newlywed Arthur?

Warning: This book contains extremely graphic adult content, violence, or expletive language &/or uncensored sexually explicit material which is only suitable for mature readers. It may be offensive to some readers.

I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review, only an honest one. All thoughts & opinions are entirely my own.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written fictional historical international political thriller book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great fictional historical international political thriller movie, or better yet a mini TV series. To be continued, I'm not quite sure. A very easy rating of 5 stars.

Thank you for the free Goodreads; Making Connections; Neplokho Publishing; Author; PDF book

Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

Guernsey (isle, prison), Theodor, M7, Koncha-Zaspa (wealthy recreation district) Sanayev (Chechen), Opatija, Croatia, Severodonetsk Jewish, RosKosmos (Russian NASA), Lug group, the Chechens, Pavel (Lug's commander, KIA), Hugo (30, fund mgr., internet gambling owner), Martin (Chairman of CAFO) Cross Atlantic Fiber-Optics Ltd. (CAFO) Opatija (city), Smela, Sicilian assassins, Priscilla (23, maid), Felix Ohio (Chairman of Fomalhaut Space Industries), President Dmitry "Dima" Yaremchuk, Patrick Galigan, Antonio Millingeri Jr., Whatsapp, Richard, Itzik (20+, Israel Sabres), Ron (20+, Israel Sabres), Richard (killed), Lucas Malinesi Jr. (thug), Tanya (mother) Artyom (son), Johnny (brother, fired), Daria (David's sister) Jessica (David's wife) Denis (employee, French Riviera), Huberman Real Estate (CIA interface), Steve (Emil's personal assistant) Romeo (head of the Ukrainian desk, Langley), Vladimir (Russian thug), Oleg (Russian thug), Aidan Snow (Irish, Ukraine) Sergey, Jamal, John (Retired US banker) Zhanna, Dina (22), Natasha, Eclectico (Pacha's DJ), Denis, Puppet Master (KGB chief, Mikhail's former partner, murdered), Inga, Mykola (Nikolay), Yuras, Dimas, Sashas, Greenberg Investment Bank, Arsehook stock, Giselle (KDP Banker, Lichtenstein), Felix "Iron Felix" Dzerzhinsky (founder of CheKa former KGB),

Emlyn Chand 25 (34) Mike & the dog gone Labradoodle The Pet Shop Society, Book #1 6/23 posted 6/23/16 Mike Adams (12, 6th. Grade), goes to Monroe Elementary & likes sports & video games, but does not enjoy homework.

Maddie "Mads" is his twin-sister. Bree is her BFF.

Nicole “Nic” Chang came into mom’s Pet Shop & asked if anyone had seen/found her dog Baxter.

The 3 of them went all over town looking for Baxter.

Later he was found.

The 5 kids formed the Pet Shop Society.

Mike & Maddie were co-president’s, Tyler is the Treasurer, Nicole is the marketing/PR person & Bree is the secretary.

What next for the group?

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A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written childrens 7-11 age book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great childrens dog movie, animated cartoon, or a mini TV series. To be continued. A very easy rating of 5 stars.

Thank you for the free instafreebie; EvolvePub; PDF book

Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

TDCbookreviews says

Be First or Be Dead by Nik Krasno is the third installment of the Oligarch series. Although the book can be read on its own, I felt like I was coming in at the middle of the story. I admit that this book is the first book I have read in the series, so it took me a bit to get into the storyline. Misha a Ukrainian business man starts the story off with a major celebration. He is at an all time high, but things quickly turn sour. Misha is framed for starting or possible starting World War III. While trying to survive, Misha has to launch a counter attack on the Magnificent Seven. This book is filled with excitement. I would recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in political thrillers.

Todd Simpson says

Simply Superb. This was such an easy and enjoyable book to read, and so well written. Misha and Emil love to party, and why not being two of the world’s richest men. Spain is a perfect place for them to indulge in women, lots of drugs, and party through the night. Luckily for Misha, Aidan Snow is on hand to help him out, when he has an altercation with a couple of Russian thugs in one of Ibiza’s clubs. Emil invites Misha to Switzerland to meet seven families, who are among the richest in the world, and run two thirds of the global economy. With their funds starting to shrink with investments in the Banking and natural recourse sectors, the families are looking to invest in the high-tech companies. They have a plan to start a war between Russia and the Ukraine, which will weaken the market, and give them the opportunity to purchase shares at a vastly reduced rate. However, Misha is in for a shock when he discovers that the magnificent seven, have set him up. They make it look like he is the instigator for the unrest between Russia and the Ukraine, and the globe meltdown. Now he has a plan on revenge. So he has Arthur purchase a disused bunker in the Ukraine, 45

metres underground. He employs a couple of computer hackers, and sets to work on stealing billions of dollars from Greenberg, to disrupt their plans. He will have to be careful though, as they are purchasing a considerable amount of stock in his own publicly listed companies. Misha has set up his own alliance called the New Millennium Group to take on the Magnificent Seven, and it is sure to be one hell of a fight. This story is certainly an adventure, and is well worth a read.

Alex says

A solid fit into the noir thriller genre with the expected machismo and a bit of light techno-thriller thrown in for good measure. Despite plot holes here and there and a few repetitive asides (sexual escapades and socio-political polemics), the story rockets through realistic financial, political, and military complexities as well as gut-wrenching action. The wry and philosophical first-person observations on human nature of the all-too-human oligarch and Ukrainian patriot, Mikhail Voratavich, are sure to keep you engaged in his over-the-top battle against people even more ruthless and selfish than himself: the poster boy of conspiracy theorists, the Illuminati.

Ralph Jones says

Mr Krasno has produced a mini masterpiece in *Be First*. I absolutely loved the story and characters in equal measure. I had never heard of an oligarch before this book, but am sure they must exist; multi-billionaires who drive and manipulate economies and world affairs to their own ends.

The main character is not only profoundly rich, but also rather sadistic, unforgiving and has an insatiable sexual appetite. (He does have his nice points though). Unfortunately, his world is shaken when a group of even wealthier individuals try to dethrone him along with many of his peers. This results in a predictable bloodbath as each side battles for survival.

Every character is solid. The book is excellently written and flows well. The story is internally consistent and (mostly) plausible. Overall an excellent and fun peek inside the world of the super-rich.

Kent Babin says

This is a high-octane, though-provoking thriller that leaves you exhausted, but with the unshakeable feeling that something was missing.

To start, it is clear that Krasno has an unbounded imagination. He has, for the most part, created a plausible world controlled by a small cabal. A world where old money finally does something about its declining or lack of influence in modern industries. You're left wondering "Could this actually happen?"

Krasno also provides some interesting theories on a wealth accumulation cap as a means of increasing economic activity. And, of course, there is the idea that Russia could be rewarded for taking actions that result in huge stock market losses.

There were a couple of things, however, that turned me off. The first was the lack of consistent voice by the

protagonist, Mischa. There were times when he sounded like a US college frat boy (especially with respect to his almost-comical need of women) and other times when he sounded like a 1950s Oxford economics professor. I felt that I couldn't really ever understand who Mischa actually was.

The second was the reason Mischa gets embroiled in all the trouble in the first place. I felt it was rushed and I even had to go back and read the scene again to make sure I understood what was going on.

Regarding the guest chapter, I would like to have seen the chapter written from Aiden Snow's perspective. And it would've been nice to have more than one chapter so you felt like Snow was involved more in the story.

Overall, it's an interesting look into a world most of us know little about. I was definitely entertained for the hours that I spent reading, and I came away with some interesting perspectives on a few of the "what if?" questions facing today's world.

Vicky says

Our narcissistic oligarch, Misha Vorotavich, is back and this time he has reached his dream of becoming number one on Forbes list of the richest person in the world. But being at the top is not easy, and Misha must take on a group of wealthy individuals known as the Magnificent Seven in an all-out war of the filthy rich for which the odds are not in his favor. Of course, this doesn't stop Misha as he uses every trick in the book to defeat his enemies.

Misha's story begins with some down time on the Island of Ibiza with his newly found—rolling in the dough friend, Emil Greenberg, with beautiful women and plenty of drugs. Unfortunately, Misha's fun-filled time with Emil ends badly as Misha finds that Emil is anything but his friend. Misha is framed by Emil and the Magnificent Seven for starting a conflict between Russia and the Ukraine to take advantage of financial opportunities brought on by the hostilities. It turns out that the Magnificent Seven aren't happy just being extremely wealthy but want to be even wealthier by destroying Misha and potentially causing World War III. The rest of the story revolves around Misha running for his life and striking a counter attack on the Magnificent Seven with an ending that is truly exciting.

Overall, with all the excitement and Misha's financial antics for which he uses to battle with the super rich, I have to say that *Be First or Be Dead* is a fun read and I feel it is worthy of a 4-star review. However, as I was reading most of the novel, I almost gave it 3-stars. In my previous review of the series, I complained about the lack of any strong female characters as most of the women are portrayed as being overly gorgeous airheads that see Misha as some godlike stud—granted this is coming from Misha's point of view—or they are characterized as being old, homely and catty. The passage with Misha's fun-filled tryst on Ibiza is definitely for all the guys out there, as I had to roll my eyes a few times as Misha's acts of depravity seemed to go on much longer than what was needed to get the point across. As I continued my read of *Be First or Be Dead*, I was frustrated with the fact that one of the few good female characters, Adriana, who is the ex-wife of Misha's henchman, Arthur, and a kick-butt kind of a gal, was considered to be an ugly-duckling by Misha. Another potentially good female character that was attractive but as resourceful as Adriana was considered by Misha to be a contender for a bit of hanky-panky, but he backs away only because Arthur has eyes for her. I was about to come to the end of *Be First or Be Dead* and ready to hand out my 3-star review when I came upon the ending. Krasno came through for me, as Misha has finally met a true female adversary with a cliffhanger that has surely piqued my interest.

Though technically *Be First or Be Dead* could be read as a standalone, I do, however, suggest reading the first two novels of the series, *Rise of the Oligarch* and *Mortal Showdown* first as it gives a clearer picture of what makes Mikhail 'Misha' Vorotavich tick.

If you are interested in learning more about the The Oligarch Series check it out on my blog **A-Thrill-A-Week**

Ian Miller says

The book starts with a warning regarding language and very soon starts with drunken sex, although the sex is not described, so it is not erotic or pornographic. The book follows Mikhail (Misha) Vorotavitch, a Ukrainian oligarch, as he finds that seven fellow oligarchs want everything he has. We have an action story with well-described action scenes, although at times the reader might well question how, with what is against him, Misha could conceivably survive. Equally, the seven seem ridiculously omniscient. Even the CIA with access to a SEAL team could not put the operations this seven mount within the time limits. One might also question, as these adventures go over a lot of Europe, what the European authorities are doing about so much of their stuff being blown up or bullet ridden. My personal view is authorities such the Swiss would be extremely irritated by these antics. Even in the Ukraine, surely somebody would notice and object to the stealing of major excavation equipment, and the continual flow of Euclid-style dump trucks getting rid of the rubble.

Nevertheless it is fast-moving, and it paints a rather awful picture of honesty in Ukraine. It also paints a bleak picture of the corrupting power of big money. The character of Misha is well-drawn, although it seems he is in transition between a greedy ruthless oligarch, and a more liberal person. I found this uneven, and I felt it was as much the author speaking in the more liberal parts. Given that Krasno is not a native English speaker, the book is surprisingly well-written, although Chapter 2 is described as being written by Alex Shaw. The technical ending is clever, given that the situation appears impossible, but after that there is a further very abrupt "clip-on ending" that I did not see the point of. This is a very entertaining read, although not for the prudish, or those who object to foul language.

K.R. Reese says

Well, this is an interesting read! A little political for my taste, but it was definitely enjoyable! Highly recommended to anyone who enjoys thrillers!

Al "Tank" says

Our old, selfish friend, Misha is on top of the world. He's super rich and on the top of the heap. But then his world of self-indulgence collapses around him as Russia attacks Ukraine and his "buddies" (business partners) turn out to be a cabal of other super-rich asses who turn on him without any warning. Now he's on the run while his empire is being picked apart by his new enemies.

It's a quite a ride and a real rush to tag along with Misha and his allies as they try to survive and save their ass-ets.

I learned a lot more about what's going on in that part of the world. When I started this series, I knew almost nothing, but now, when I see parts of this story in the news headlines, I have a better understanding of what's going on (and more interest).

What a ride!

E.P. says

4.5 stars, rounded up to 5.

Just when things look like they're starting to go well for Ukrainian *businessman* (cough) Misha Vorotavich, Russia begins a full-on invasion of Ukraine, and Misha finds himself the scapegoat on both sides for all Ukraine's problems. Misha has to act, but what is he going to do--go along with the cartel inciting violence in order to snap up shares cheaply, or try to rescue his beloved Ukraine from itself?

Now in his forties, Misha is starting to think a little more seriously about the consequences of his actions, but that doesn't mean he stops cheating on his wife with random girls he meets in clubs, it just means he feels the occasional pang of guilt afterwards. I think he'd make a great reformed anti-hero in a sort of Raskolnikovian fashion, but first he'll need to suffer first. He seems to be making the first steps down that path, so we'll see how he develops if the series continues. As it is, he treats everyone around him, especially women, as objects to manipulate, which is probably a very accurate depiction of an oligarch's character, but not very endearing. He does have a strong Slavic sense for the absurdly humorous or the humorously absurd, which infuses the entire book and lifts it out of the gloom and doom that could have otherwise taken it over. I'm not sure how well Western readers will "get" it, but it is strongly reminiscent of the blank-faced, tongue-in-cheek humor of Gary Shteyngart's "Absurdistan" or "A Russian Debutante's Handbook."

The best aspect of the book for me is the depiction of the incredible mess that Ukraine and Russia have found themselves in as the result of decades of poor economic policies, with the disastrous post-Soviet efforts at privatization taking front and center. Western writers have a hard time even grasping the nature of the issue, offering superficial fixes and moralistic platitudes instead, but through Misha we see just how f*****d up the situation is, and how Westerners who try to reform things just end up getting sucked into the corruption instead. Misha isn't really a deep thinker, but he does spend a while discussing the pros and cons of capitalism vs. communism with the other characters, and ends up proposing a kind of enlightened, socialist feudalism as the best alternative. Marx may be spinning in his grave, but Misha may be right that this is the best option Ukraine has for fixing things. In the short term, Misha settles for taking control via violence, in a series of gripping action scenes.

The concept of a "guest star" appearance by another author is new to me, but it works well here, and the guest star chapter is a well done addition and introduces a new character, the enigmatic Aidan Stone. What role Aidan will play in the story as it unfolds will presumably be revealed in future installments...

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.
