



The Alchemists of Kush

Minister Faust

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From internationally acclaimed author Minister Faust, increasingly described as one of the best writers of his generation, comes a searing new novel fusing modern realities with ancient yearning, struggle and triumph.

The Alchemists of Kush is the story of two Sudanese “lost boys.” Both lost fathers to civil war and mothers along the path of escape. Both boys were hunted and fell into violence to survive. Both came under the guardianship of mystic madmen who promised to transform them. And both vowed to become leaders who would transform their worlds, or die trying.

One of those lost boys is Raphael Garang, known to the streets of E-Town as the Supreme Raptor.

The other lost boy was Hru-sa-Usir, who lived 7,000 years ago in the Savage Lands of the Lower Nile, and known to the Greeks as Horus, son of Osiris.

AUTHORS PRAISE THE ALCHEMISTS OF KUSH:

“It was only a matter of time before the hip hop culture would invade the literary world. With The Alchemists of Kush, Minister Faust is leading the invasion. His novel is possibly the first hip hop epic. Hip hop has a short attention span on most occasions. The Alchemists of Kush gives it gravitas.”

—Ishmael Reed

Author of Mumbo Jumbo and Juice!

“Minister Faust’s first two books broke new ground in the SF field. His latest, The Alchemists of Kush, not only breaks new ground; with the story-telling skills of a modern jali, the Minister creates new vistas of history, mythology, erudition, uplift, tragedy, triumph, and contemporary community activism. Once you start the first page of this book, you won’t be able to put it down until you’ve finished the last one.”

—Charles R. Saunders

Author of Imaro and Dossouye

“I started The Alchemists of Kush and kept reading until I finished. Minister Faust has the most electrifying and true voice I’ve read in years. The Alchemists of Kush is brilliant.”

—Sparkle Hayter

Author of What’s A Girl Gotta Do? and Naked Brunch

“I loved the story, the mythology, and the characters. I found myself locked into it for hours at a time and couldn’t put it down. Rich in detail ...A great book.”

—Kenneth T. Williams

Playwright of *Thunderstick* and *Three Little Birds*

“A hell of a story. A hell of a book. A hell of a style. A frenetic novel and voice—very enjoyable. Minister Faust knows how to write about male relationships, brotherhoods, and getting into the hearts of men, and about boys turning into men. *The Alchemists of Kush* is a triumph, not just for Minister Faust, but for Edmonton and the community of Kush.”

—Wayne Arthurson

Author of *Final Season* and *Fall from Grace*

“Inspired by a true story and set against an urban backdrop of African immigrant communities in present day Edmonton, Minister Faust weaves a masterful tale around the sacred Book of the Golden Falcon, ten Hermetical scrolls that expound upon the cross pollination of cultural themes and social considerations shared by Original People throughout the African Diaspora.

“The *Alchemists of Kush* is more than a story; it’s a philosophical elixir of Kemetic (Egyptian) folklore, African traditions, urban Sufism, hip hop culture, and Five Percenter pedagogy designed to transmute the challenges of colonialism, assimilation, juvenile delinquency, and moral decay into a universal solvent.

The Alchemists of Kush Details

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Author : Minister Faust

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From Reader Review The Alchemists of Kush for online ebook

Ian Samuels says

Let's be open about this right off the bat: The Alchemists of Kush is, above all else, a novel of ideas. They're specific ideas that emanate from a real-world movement called the Nation of Gods and Earths, which despite its religious-sounding name and Afrocentric vocabulary is about neither religion nor (arguably) nationalism, but rather a secular paradigm of self-cultivation and community activism. The "alchemy" of the novel -- so-called because of its focus on transmuting its students from inert and unconscious lead into self- and communally-aware gold -- is a version of this movement, and Faust uses parallel stories to explore it. One is an allegorical myth with ancient Kemetic (Egyptian) trappings, the other a contemporary coming-of-age story set among immigrant youth in Edmonton.

There are, of course, a lot of ways in which this could have gone wrong; the "novel of ideas" can be, and far too often is, a horribly arid exercise in cheap melodrama, heavy-handed messaging and two-dimensional characterization. Fortunately, Faust evades those traps. Alchemists' characters are three-dimensional and engaging -- even the allegoric-mythic ones -- and their dilemmas, flaws and triumphs are affecting, and sometimes powerfully shocking. In the end, you don't even have to necessarily buy into "alchemy" to understand the agonies and trials of the protagonist, Sudanese "lost boy" Rap Garang, or those of his mythic counterpart Hru or of his guru, Sbai Moon.

Faust also has a gift for agile, poetic and economical prose; one of the primary pleasures of Alchemists is just watching him put language to work, evoking whole scenes or complicated swells of emotion in a few swift, calligraphic brush-strokes. There's humor and joy aplenty to be found amid the struggles of the contemporary story, and the Kemetic myth is packed with enough vivid, haunting imagery to put a dozen fantasy novels to shame. And artfully woven in through all the other strands, there's even a solid guide to further books, comics and movies touching on similar subjects. It's an impressively multi-layered performance that will, I think, repay many more re-reads.

More information at this link: www.ministerfaust.com.

Craig DiLouie says

Minister Faust's *ALCHEMISTS OF KUSH* is a fantastic read, told so well that after I closed the covers I missed the characters as if they were real people. The book contains two parallel stories (The Book of Then and the Book of Now) about Sudanese "lost boys." Both lost their fathers to war and were separated from their mothers. Each ends up mentored by a man who gives him the means of self transformation. One is a teenager living in Kush, the Northeastern district of modern Edmonton, Canada, where many African immigrants live. The other is Hru, son of Usir and Aset, also known as the Egyptian falcon god Horus, who lived 7,000 years ago along the Nile. The whole is speculative fiction with a social realism objective.

Minister Faust, an artist, author and activist, tells The Book of Now with his singular voice and a huge amount of energy that keeps the story humming. The story is about Raphael Garang, a boy who conquers the demons of his past and gains the ability to change himself, and his journey of self transformation had me turning pages as if it were a thriller. Raphael has a chance encounter with another boy who would become his best friend and a man who would become a mystic mentor, introducing him to a philosophy of self-

transformation called the Alchemy, which the author based on the mystic society Nation of Gods and Earths of the 1960s. This transformation doesn't happen overnight; Raphael has a lot of baggage, and is immature has hell, resulting in him making as many messes himself as are thrust upon him. In many ways, he's his own worst enemy—just like most of us, I think—keeping him from achieving his potential. Minister Faust creates his characters with love, and they interact with a charm that will tickle you, with the narrative swept forward with an energy I can even now hardly believe the author could sustain for so many pages.

The Book of Then buttresses the modern narrative, and this is where the speculative fiction shines as we are introduced to Hru and his trials in the Savage Lands. The stories contain many parallels, and the Alchemy uses the myth of Horus as a mystical text, further tying them together. These parts of the book are told in a leaner, crisper style, in keeping with the voice of myth.

THE ALCHEMISTS OF KUSH is a great book with charming characters, interesting story of self transformation, and enough philosophy and mysticism to keep you thinking long after the book is over. Highly recommended.

Reva Harris says

This book was uneven for me. It has great concepts and a strong narrative, but the pacing and language wasn't quite my cup of tea.

David says

I was trying to think about how to describe this book, and my first thought was “what if Tom Wolfe were black?” That's not right - Wolfe novels follow multiple threads that then intersect later, while this is a pair of steadily unfolding parallel (and related) stories. However, Faust does have a way of getting the male inner voice down on paper in a Wolfian manner, including recognizing the need to depart literal word and sentence reading in favor of the impressions the words leave.

This is a great book: my thoughts keep coming back to it, and I have a feeling I'll be rereading it sometime down the road. Faust describes a world utterly unlike the one in which I live, and yet so clearly on the other side of a cultural one-way-mirror from me, that I find myself transformed (his word) by the alchemy of possibilities.

Highly recommended.

Jenn says

I won a copy of this book.

There are 2 stories being told here. One is in present day, the other is seven-thousand years earlier. Think Science fiction mixed with urban community activism. In the now, two boys find a mentor in their inner city that is willing to teach them how to survive, using their version of alchemy. Minister Faust, it seems, has put much thought into this book and his ideas.

Joseph says

This book is fantastic and inspiring. The short version: read this book.

This book has truly meaningful inspiration, not the cheap, shallow "Way of the Peaceful Warrior" variety. The struggles the main character goes through are real, visceral and painful, and you're there with him the entire way through his stubbornness, mistakes, and true changes. The philosophy draws from Egyptian mythology and African culture which is refreshing and relevant to the Edmonton-neighbourhood where the story is set. It's the kind of book that you want to read again, and that you know you need to read again, because there's depth that goes far beyond the swamps of your spirit.

Andi says

As a middle class white woman, this was a difficult and sometimes painful book to read... but that frankly made it that much more important for me to read it. It's not often that I read fiction from the perspective of a teenage African immigrant. I don't think it's often that *anyone* reads fiction from the perspective of a young African immigrant! But Supreme Raptor introduced me to so much culture I don't have the opportunity to encounter in my daily life, and I really enjoyed that. I also felt deep, deep sympathy for the adults in this book, their struggles, and how they are viewed by their children.

George says

I love/hate this book. Love it for the characters and their story arcs. Hate it for the character who's story ended and and yes I know this is a fictional person but this person is out of my life.

writegeist says

While *The Coyote Kings of the Space-Age Bachelor Pad* still holds a special place among my book reading favorites (a fun, rollicking, mystical adventure), *The Alchemists of Kush* has that extra touch: a great big heart. His characters are real, with wonderful quirks and flaws. The relationships Faust presents in *Coyote Kings* are expanded to include the intricacies of human interactions. He is a master of the character arc, showing his characters growing organically as they understand their own limits, find ways to overcome their weakness, and admit to their mistakes. Above all, Faust brings hope even in the most difficult situations.

Adrian Mallabo says

Please do yourself a favor and find the time to read this book. Minister Faust is a friend of mine, but also he's a mentor and the man who got me into writing in the first place. I read this book not knowing what I was going to expect, but by the end of the last page I really felt like I was transported in his world, living amongst

his characters, and sharing in their dark times and triumphs. The man writes prose with an almost rhythmic passion and voice. When I was finished, I sat through lunch in a daze, thinking about everything that had happened in the book.

There's a short quote in here that I really like:

"Track was older than any of them, from 1991, but classics didn't ask permission."

That's awesome.

Nathan says

Expectations are a funny thing. For the sake of this analogy, consider Starbucks as an example. In my mind, speculative fiction, urban fantasy in particular, has been a lot like Starbucks. (I agree there are exceptions, of course, so untwist your chainmail BVDs.) A coffee purist might be quick to dismiss the ubiquitous coffee purveyor; bitter, over-roasted beans, calorie-laden menu, a macchiato that is anything but. However they have mastered two things: training the world to drop a five-spot in a cuppa joe, and meeting expectations. True, they might not be the platonic ideal of COFFEE, but it will be the same when you order it, whether you order it in downtown Seattle or the Great Wall of China. Likewise, it seems that urban fantasy has been largely a brooding loner, predominately Caucasian, confronting supernatural threats of a European nature — not that there's anything wrong with that. Like Starbucks, it fills the need but rarely excites me for long.

Granted, it's a tortured analogy.

So, Mr. Coffee Snob, what does this have to do with this review?

Everything.

The Alchemists of Kush by Minister Faust is no Starbucks. In fact, it blew my expectations clean out of the water, so much so that I hesitate to call the novel speculative fiction at all! This, despite the fact that the bulk of the book is split between two parallel stories with 7,000 years separating them. In one set of alternating chapters, Faust tells us the story of Hru, a boy who survives the destruction of his village only to encounter the Swamp of Death and the forces of the mysterious, and aptly named Destroyer. In the other chapters, we get the story of Raphael "Supreme Raptor" Garang, also an refugee, now living with his mother in Edmonton, Canada, in a neighborhood that contains multiple transplanted African ethnic groups. Both young men get taken under the wing of a spiritual mentor who helps them find their own inner strength, transforming them metaphorically from lead to gold.

While the Book of the Then has all the hallmarks of fantasy, with magic and fantastic beasts, the Book of the Now could be straight up YA fiction with no fantastic elements at all. We fall even further from the folds of speculative fiction when it is suggested that the Book of Then is the basis for the spiritual teachings that the Supreme Raptor receives, acknowledging that story as metaphor and not literal truth. This begs the question, "What is the truth?" And more importantly, in matters of faith, is literal truth more important than the message being taught?

I've talked about the importance of faith elsewhere recently, so this idea was fresh in my mind as I read The Alchemists of Kush. And as the novel is, at its heart, about a spiritual awakening, it felt perfectly timed that

I discovered the book when I did.

The twin stories and characters had me drawn in immediately, and it didn't hurt that there was ample name dropping of favorite musical artists (Gil Scott-Heron among them) and comic book characters (Static and King Peacock). The narrative voice for each section was different enough as well that it helped sell the story within a story. I found myself so invested in the characters that when Supreme Raptor makes bad decisions, I found myself wincing in empathy. And thank you, Mr. Faust for giving us heroes that are real enough that they make bad decisions and have to learn from them.

In fact, without a traditional antagonist in the contemporary timeline (I know, no villain in an urban fantasy? Heresy! Glorious, glorious heresy!), the Supreme Raptor sometimes pulls double duty as his own worst enemy. And while some problems are solved with violence, it is rarely the easy solution it appears to be. More often than not, a calm head needs to prevail, and problems need to be solved with words with hard work to back them up.

That alone would make for a compelling reason to read *The Alchemist of Kush*, but it's by no means the only reason. The characters are rich, their battles hard fought and heartbreaking. And the resulting affirmation of love, community, pride, responsibility, and family makes this the caliber of book I would love to see as required reading at the high-school level.

Final verdict, highly recommended.

Daniel Roy says

Disclaimer: Although I became fan of his novels long before meeting him, I'm a good friend of the author, and have read this novel as an advanced reader in the summer of 2010. That being said, I believe an honest review is more useful than a blanket endorsement in the name of friendship, so here is my review, as honest as I can make it.

"*Alchemists of Kush*" is an odd beast, and I mean this in the best manner possible. It's a rare novel that almost totally discards the tropes of the urban fantasy and young adult genres, and distinctly walks to the beat of its own drum. And what an enticing beat it is! This is a story without an antagonist, or should I say, where the main character is his own worst enemy. It's wonderfully self-aware, reads like a sermon at times and a hip hop song at others, and is infused with a heady dose of wisdom and humor.

At its core, "*Alchemists of Kush*" plays it part fable, part hopeful tale of a positive street culture that emerges out of a downtrodden community in Edmonton and overtakes despair and division. After so many tales of youth violence and crime, of African immigrants and Muslims being depicted with the rough brushstroke of stereotypes, it's refreshing to read a tale that gathers the urban youth of Kush, and weaves into their lives the power to better themselves and construct a better world. It's delightful to see young Black Canadians, young Muslims, stand proud in fiction, laugh and love and struggle for justice.

Minister Faust's writing is the sharpest of his three novels in this one. His writing was always infused with a great humanity and a sense of rhythm, but here it shines with hip hop joy. No words are wasted, and his metaphors are crisp, often surprising, always inventive. The Minister's passion is apparent in every word, and you can sense that he has articulated a lot of his own hopes and opinions into a story he cares deeply about. In some ways, "*Alchemists of Kush*" is the Minister's sermon to the disenfranchised youth of the world.

Are there imperfections? Yes, sure. I didn't like the "Then" story as much as the ones taking place in modern times, though I don't know if that's the fault of the "Then", or a statement on how much I liked the "Now". Ultimately, I found the past storyline was resolved too quickly, and didn't truly connect with the modern-day tale. Also, there are times when I wished Raphael was a bit more self-aware, and stopped undermining himself; but it sure got me hooked, and his character arc was ultimately very satisfying.

But beyond all this, I was left with the profound impression that I had read something unique, both in its genre, its overall point, its construction and the sharpness of its prose. It's a strong argument in favor of self-publishing, despite the troves of poorly-edited near-fanfic messes out there: here is a novel of immense originality, with a purpose and a message, which would have been forgotten under yet another vampire teenage love story if it hadn't been for the courage of an established author to walk his own path, and not diminish his artistic vision.

Here's hoping young men and women, African immigrants or not, whether in Edmonton or elsewhere, pick it up, take notice, and begin the transmutation of lead into gold. Transformed!

Bradley West says

This was my first reading of any of the works by Minister Faust - what an incredible introduction it was! - his work braids together history, pop culture, spirituality, choose- your- own-adventure and narrative story telling.

This is a book you can read over and over again; each time finding something different.

As a fan of ancient cultures, I loved how Minister Faust brought out aspects and elements of ancient Kush (what Western Cultures call Numbia) and the its influences or impacts on the developments of the culture referred to now, as Egypt and the surround countries and empires in the African continent.

One of my teachers in high school would say " history is written by the winners..." - that our texts come out of the product a particular world view, which in our case...is heavily influences by a Western Euro centric lens - we don't realise how much those lens impact what we see, until we are presented with different stories....and internally resist them as not being "true", for no other reason, than they are different to what we have been told up to this point.

This book, does a classically delightful and incisive job, of extracting tales we may be familiar with [Egyptian gods, goddesses, etc] and merging those into every day stories that we encounter but have little understanding of [the history of the 55 plus countries that make up the African continent...; diaspora communities; the impacts or trauma that can be inflicted refugees in their journey to where it is they are today.]

As someone who values diverse voices and underrepresented communities, I loved learning about the interactions of various religious [Islam, Christian, Non-Christian] and ethnic groups in Edmonton and how those aspects impact their cultural interactions with each other and themselves.

I loved seeing positive representations of queer characters [a gay male couple] who are seen as pillars of their community while intersecting with members of communities not historically "seen" for being overly welcoming to sexual diversity [such as hip hop culture; Islamic communities,traditional cultured African communities] and observing how individuals see and judge the content of the person's character....and not simply the person they are loving.

Funny; engaging; easy to read and thought provoking.
Highly recommended.

Adrien Labelle says

Something that you read as an exercise of style, and a very good one. Besides that well... I had a hard time sticking to it.

Nadine says

Oh how I enjoyed this book while my son napped on my stomach.
