



The Kestrel Waters

Randy Thornhorn

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Chosen as Best General Fiction Novel finalist by the 2015 Indie Book Awards. “*An extraordinary work...*” ~ William Peter Blatty “*Captures the tragedy of romantic and familial love better than any story I have ever read.*” ~ Janeiro Bento

Hear the twilight song of Kestrel. He has not always been this night-winged angel. He was once a star, a guitar star so righteous. He was once a lost boy in love.

In The Beginning were two grassroots singers, The Brothers Brass. In The End there is no end to what one wounded girl's heart will give. And no end to what one brother will give for the other.

Raised in Savannah by the sea, together, The Brothers Brass voices chime like heavenly bells. The oldest brother Kestrel falls in love with a girl named Bettilia, a wild child who hides in the treetops—hiding from her bad daddy on a ghostly mountain called Riddle Top.

Soon all the Family Brass falls for Bettilia. She touches Kestrel, she touches everyone. And they touch sweet Bettilia, forever. Then comes that fateful day when Kestrel says "I do" to his dance with the devil—his devil within and without.

The Kestrel Waters is an eerie, heroic, and beautiful Southern Gothic tale of human love, like none you've ever known. An epic fable of an epic family whose hearts are comic, profane, and profoundly true.

“*One of the South's wildest new voices.*” ~ The Oxford American Magazine

The Kestrel Waters Details

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Author : Randy Thornhorn

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From Reader Review The Kestrel Waters for online ebook

Laura Robertson says

Opening the cover of The Kestrel Waters was like stepping off a plane into a vastly different time and place. Despite being unfamiliar-- but not entirely unknown to me, gospel music began to fill my head. Once I began to flow with the Southern cadence that lifted from the pages (was I too Northern to inhale all this Southernness?)-- I was anxiously pulled into this extraordinarily fine tale. The Brothers Brass seemed to share a heartbeat during their youth, yet their responses to love, song, family dysfunction--- and a haunting slew of challenges that came tumbling down from a mountain called Riddle Top-- had their life paths divide like a fork in a river. The depth of every character had me imagining them in detail long after the pages were closed for the night... and Bettilia... nearly other-worldly, was purer in her wrenching strength of heart than any other. This is a book that you will actually miss when you have to close it, until you can steal the next stretch of free time to resume reading. Revival tents, local fairs, freak-shows, and circuses-- the ensemble that exploded from Thornhorn's head left me wishing I could really step off that plane...

Catherine S says

Living in Savannah, there is no fiction here with street names, the mind of its people, or the culture, unlike Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil. An acutely accurate portrait of Savannah and an immersion in southern culture, from the pot liquor of collards, pone cakes, and pool halls to white gloves purchased on Broughton Street, probably at Adler's, "where fashion makes its debut". Refreshing for an author to actually use the real Savannah as a backdrop for a novel and be accurate in that portrayal. A very engaging novel that is hard to put down, with very well defined characters and a suspenseful plot. Read this one before Wicked Temper. But please read everything this author writes. Such talent is rare.

C

Patrisia Sheremeta says

This book kept showing up in my recommendations and in little ads on the right side of my screen. So I finally just downloaded it and gave it a try, and I am so happy I did because it blew mw away. This author has exactly what I love - a unique, sure, and strong voice. He's also a damn good storyteller. I can't wait to read every other book he has - which are all available on Kindle Unlimited by the way.

Laura says

This is not just "boo smoke and gossip" but this is a great and enjoyable read. Tons of these great little sayings through out the book. Read it for yourself to see how they fit together in this engaging tale. This was a group read for November in the group, On the Southern Literary Trail. The Brass Family is dysfunctional but this reader loved each and every one of them. They just make you smile and laugh at the way they interact with each other. Each bring something different to the table. I also fell in love with the supporting characters. The author still brings to light the folklore feel to this story that you as the reader can find in his

short stories and prequel to this book. It's strange, it's scary, it's disturbing, it's sweet, it's tender, it's thoughtful all in one book and it drew me in. In the final parts of the book, I felt like I was reading a horror book or living through a nightmare. It twists your guts! So, is it a tale of love and Devil? Absolutely, give it a try. I wasn't disappointed.

Barbara Vetter says

Randy Thornhorn delivers a masterpiece with THE KESTREL WATERS

Randy Thornhorn The Kestrel Waters

I enjoyed The Kestrel Waters from the first page to the last. I didn't want it to end. The journey (a musical odyssey really) Randy Thornhorn takes you on is vast and transcendent. And it's all so damn ENTERTAINING. His characters: Glenn, Kes, Betillia and especially Daddy Brass, are some of the most enjoyable I have ever had the pleasure to meet. Their story is so richly drawn as they rise and fall, transporting the reader to places before unknown. There are such twists and turns and the real genius of the book lies in the great love story that is at its very heart. Once finished I realized that I would not want to change a word. Not a word. Rarely have I ever said of a book: "I want more!"

Diane Barnes says

So, full disclosure here. I didn't think I was going to like this book at all, in fact, was dreading the read. Didn't sound like "my kind of book" at all, and I figured I'd have to wade through the first part til I felt I had read enough to toss it aside without guilt.

So I guess my first thing here has to be an apology to Randy Thornhorn, because, Boy, was I ever wrong! After the first chapter, which is admittedly confusing and difficult, I was increasingly charmed, then captivated by the Brass family and Bettillia, the little tree girl, who needed them as much as they needed her. This book has so many things that I demand of a good book: completely original characters, sparkling dialogue, fast-paced plot, and the ability to keep me turning pages when I have other things to do. It's hard to put this novel in any one category. It's part folktale, part mystery, part horror story, part love story, and there's a lot of humor thrown into the mix as well. And there's something else that's always nice and puts a book over the top for me. Wisdom. There are truisms and comments all through the book that had me shaking my head in agreement, or going, "Wow, I never thought of that before!"

My very favorite line: "We're all psalm singers. And everybody's got two psalms in them. That song they sing out loud, for others to hear. And the song they sing only to themselves."

Again, my apologies to Randy. You really CAN'T judge a book by it's cover.

Lawyer says

Randy Thornhorn's *The Kestrel Waters*: Gospel Music, Love, Bobnots, Lychs, and Life

Randy Thornhorn, a teller of tales of places you do and don't want to be

*Mama may have, papa may have
But God bless the child that's got his own*

*Them that's got shall get
Them that's not shall lose
So the Bible said and it still is news
Mama may have, papa may have
But God bless the child that's got his own
That's got his own*

*Yes, the strong gets more
While the weak ones fade
Empty pockets don't ever make the grade
Mama may have, papa may have
But God bless the child that's got his own
That's got his own*

*Money, you've got lots of friends
Crowdin' 'round the door
When you're gone and spending ends
They don't come no more*

*Rich relations give, crust of bread and such
You can help yourself
But don't take too much
Mama may have, papa may have
But God bless the child that's got his own
That's got his own*

*God bless the child
God bless the child got his own*

Billie Holliday, Arthur Herzog, Jr., 1941

If you read *The Kestrel Waters: A Tale of Love and Devil*, and I recommend you do, prepare to set your imagination free. Randy Thornhorn has created a work combining elements of the Appalachian tall tale, Southern folklore, gothic literature, that draws together threads of Celtic and Germanic mythology.

Thornhorn strongly believes that Southern literature is one of the true genres of regional story telling that exists in this country today. I happen to agree with him. You'll find many of the markers of that genre in these pages, but much more. There is a strong sense of place and setting here. A strong sense of family, dysfunctional though it may be. There is a definite degree of eccentricity displayed by particular characters. Plot lines meander leisurely. Some of these characteristics drive folks nuts. They don't get it. My wife and I have a saying, "Quirky? We *like* quirky." Think of one of Robert Altman's later films, "Cookie's Fortune," filmed in Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1999, and you have the lighter side of "The Kestrel Waters."

This is the story of the Family Brass. The patriarch is Daddy Malakoff Brass who runs a somewhat shady

business down on the Savannah waterfront. Daddy left the family home, inherited by Mother Georgianna Brass from her father, a naval officer. It's down on Officer's row, a magnificent mansion, that requires a tremendous amount of upkeep.

Are the Brothers Brass in today?

Mama has done her connubial duty producing two sons, Glenn and Kestrel, the title character. And that's enough connubial bliss for Mother Brass. Daddy Brass, a force of nature, larger than life, a man of great appetites, carnal and otherwise, has a peach of a secretary, Miss Plum who attends to his business, personal and private.

Turns out Glenn and Kestrel are gifted with voice and instruments. Mother Brass promotes her two sons as gospel singers. They become the Brothers Brass. And they will become hits at gospel jamborees, tent shows, you name it. Picture them as very, very wholesome Everly Brothers who have the natural gospel pitch to their audiences.

The Brass Brothers have a surprising resemblance to the Everly Brothers

But that tag, the Brothers Brass, has a familiar ring. Think the Brothers Grimm.

Because this tale can be rather grim

While there's a bright and sunny side of life, there's a very dark and stormy side, too. It's far away from Savannah. Somewhere in the hills of Appalachia. In this dark world there's a place where you don't belong to be. It's Riddle Top, a mountain, where a fellow named Bob Nottingham rules. Think an *endless* night on Bald Mountain.

A place you don't belong to be

Now, reader, you have a choice here. You may decide, as I did, that Bob Nottingham is the Devil. Or, you may decide he is a twisted, malevolent god.

Frankly the road of Faith has been a rocky one for me. Many times during my long years as a career prosecutor I have often thought it easier to believe in the existence of a Devil than God. Or is it that troublesome question of free will? Does anyone truly know? I don't.

Whatever you decide, reader, this much is true. Bob Nottingham wants to get back whatever he loses. And he will stop at nothing to retrieve his lost treasure. Anything or anyone who stands in his way is forfeit.

Who, or what is it that Bob Nottingham seeks? It is a young girl named Bettilia, child like, but fortunate enough to have escaped from Riddle Top. She loves to sit among the high limbs of trees. My mind immediately went to Rima of Green Mansions by William Henry Hudson.

This is Bettilia to me

The only book Bettilia owns is a child's reader. Tiny in stature, she is great in spirit and the power of love. It will come as no surprise that she and Kestrel fall in love and that she is completely accepted by every member of the Brass family. Bettilia is the epitome of the meaning of love and the willingness to do anything to show that love to those whose circle she enters.

A Devil has his demons, or, if you prefer another term, his thralls. These are strangely sharp featured creatures, seemingly without will, who serve as Bob Nottingham's messengers and spies. In the world of Riddle Top they are known as Lyches. The leap to the image of leaches is not difficult. When one of them appears, Nottingham is not far behind.

It is incredibly difficult to review this novel without revealing too much. However, it should come as no surprise that Kestrel loses Bettilia. The question is will he get her back? Will Kestrel and Bob Nottingham meet on Riddletop? Who will prevail? Love or Devil? There *will* be a reckoning.

I sat down for lunch yesterday with Randy Thornhorn. It was a very interesting conversation. Thornhorn is a native of East Texas. He began writing at the age of fourteen, although he was not writing professionally until his late twenties. The world of Riddle Top is a kingdom that began to take shape in Thornhorn's mind in childhood. Sitting in the dark, in his aunt's living room, as she would be cooking breakfast, the moving shadows became the Lyches that would one day become part of Riddle Top. Yes, Celtic mythology influenced him. As did Germanic. Was he a reader of H.P. Lovecraft? Why, yes. He was. Thornhorn begins writing at 3:15 am. That's the time I was just getting to bed reading this novel. Curse you, Brother Thornhorn!

Will there be a sequel to "The Kestrel Waters?" He's not saying. Will there be other Riddle Top stories? Definitely.

For a read that is definitely a refreshing break from the norm, allow your imagination to take flight. Settle back, remember the magic and power of the tales that entranced you in your youth and rejoice that such stories still exist. If you can't return to the days a book could do that, don't even try. You won't get it.

EXTRAS!

Listen to Music Videos from "The Kestrel Waters."

Renee says

Kestrel Waters is such a great read. I am an avid reader and have certain authors that I follow and now I have a new favorite! Mr. Thornhorn has done an outstanding job of creating a story so good that you do not want to put the book down. I love how this story jumps off the page at you and how you can just picture yourself right there, it is so vivid! This is definitely one of those books that you will read over and over! This type of talent is very rare. Thank you, Mr. Thornhorn!

Leslie Bailey says

A Tour De Force for Mr. Thornhorn!

By Leslie Bailey

I received a copy of The Kestrel Waters and once I began reading it I was hooked! I could not put it down! There was a magical, mystical feel about it and I adored the way Mr. Thornhorn made his characters so real.....so alive on the pages of his book. I enjoyed it so much that I downloaded "Wicked Temper" and spent another delightful day in the world of this amazing author's mind. Read these books. Enjoy the way that his words paint the most delicious pictures in your mind. Read and celebrate a new exciting voice for now and forever!

Bookdragon Sean says

I have won this copy as a giveaway on goodreads.

Update: I never received a copy; therefore, I didn't read it or write a review.

Chris Crane says

I love this book. Mr.Thornhorn's language is a wonderful dance. My minds ear keeps ringing to the tantalizing rhythm of the vivid people and places of the Brass universe. Give me more!

Liz says

The author of The Kestrel Waters, Randy Thornhorn, has a style that is unique and addictive. I have read some of his other works, I be The Christis, the Kid Beheaded, and Wicked Temper. It would be disappointing to read this author and not be immersed in the rich, archaic, and almost biblical language that does so much to create the world his characters live in. In the Kestrel Waters that world, for the majority of the story, is Savannah GA in the late sixties. Although, to me it seems a parallel world to the one I'm familiar with. In this world the characters are more vibrant, the prose more lyrical, the written music more audible and the laws of nature more transient.

The colorful and musical Brass family are highly dysfunctional (who's family isn't?), but also undeniably loving and supportive of each other. The Brothers Brass lives change forever the minute they hear Bettelia's sweet voice from high up in a tree. Kes's journey now becomes a slow train ride that begins in the light of love and takes a dark detour. We all have both light and dark and all it takes is push one direction or the other.

I believe there are evil people and evil places, I think Mr. Thornhorn feels the same. One hopes that evil will

never turn its depraved eye toward us or our loved ones as once it does we are lucky to escape. Through no fault but fate brave little Bettelia has been born to Riddletop Mountain and chosen by the devil, but she will sacrifice everything to protect her new family.

Read the book you will understand! I intend to read it again!!

John Kelly says

"Kestrel Waters" fits squarely in the genre of Magical Realism. More Cormac McCarthy than García Márquez, the novel explores issues of race, class and religious fundamentalism in a very real South that is persistent in the world of today. The dramatic arc of the story builds through elements of uniquely Southern mythology that underpin and sustain religious fundamentalism as well as racial and class divisions, through a climax where reality ultimately intersects with the supernatural.

I wasn't sure I was going to be drawn into a story about itinerant gospel singers in the deep South, but Thornhorn manages to paint love, loss, the Devil and human imperfection with such vivid creativity that I found myself consuming this story in a single sitting. Then I went back and read it again. And again. Ask yourself when was the last time you read a novel three times in a row, for the sheer pleasure of it. Then pick up a copy for yourself.

R.W. Ridley says

Here's what you should know about Randy Thornhorn. He dives deep as a writer and creates a lyrical wonderland as a storyteller. He has the talent to blend a kind of mystical back drop with gritty southern realism that I didn't think was possible. He did that with *Wicked Temper*, the first book I read written by him, and he did it again with *Kestrel Waters*, the second book I read by him. And I will read a third and fourth and onward until his pen stops bleeding or fingers stop tapping. He's a writer you read obsessively, compulsively – pick your adverb of need.

In *Kestrel Waters* you have a tale of bluegrass playing brothers, the Brothers Brass. The way Mr. Thornhorn draws us into this musical fantasy is seamless from the opening pages. It's incredibly easy to see them spontaneously and feverishly playing a tune on a train ride to their next gig. Using their southern charm to chat up pretty girls and looking for trouble. This is a love story at its core, and the reader is taken their experiencing the passion, appetites and misfortune that such a "nail to the head" provides the oldest brother, Kestrel. It's a story of family ties and sacrifices that are at once beautiful and tragic.

If I had to pick one thing that sets this author apart from other southern storytellers (beyond his ability to mix of fantasy and realism), it would be the masterful way the sprinkles backwoods dialect into meaningful dialogue. You almost get the sense that you're learning a long lost language, one that is simple and alluring.

Once again, my hat is off to Mr. Thornhorn. Here's hoping he gets the recognition he deserves.

Heidi says

The Kestrel Waters was a fantastic trip into the deep and wicked South! Rich with texture and imagery, one can get lost in the imagination of author Thornhorn, and that is a good thing! Touching and moving, with heart and soul; mesmerizing and poetic (and did I say wicked?)
