

The Ravenmaster: My Life with the Ravens at the Tower of London

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The first behind-the-scenes account of life with the legendary ravens at the world's eeriest monument

The ravens at the Tower of London are of mighty importance: rumor has it that if a raven from the Tower should ever leave, the city will fall.

The title of Ravenmaster, therefore, is a serious title indeed, and after decades of serving the Queen, Yeoman Warder Christopher Skaife took on the added responsibility of caring for the infamous ravens. In *The Ravenmaster*, he lets us in on his life as he feeds his birds raw meat and biscuits soaked in blood, buys their food at Smithfield Market, and ensures that these unusual, misunderstood, and utterly brilliant corvids are healthy, happy, and ready to captivate the four million tourists who flock to the Tower every year.

A rewarding, intimate, and inspiring partnership has developed between the ravens and their charismatic and charming human, the Ravenmaster, who shares the folklore, history, and superstitions surrounding the ravens and the Tower. Shining a light on the behavior of the birds, their pecking order and social structure, and the tricks they play on us, Skaife shows who the Tower's true guardians really are—and the result is a compelling and irreverent narrative that will surprise and enchant.

Christopher Skaife is Yeoman Warder (Beefeater) and Ravenmaster at the Tower of London. He has served in the British Army for twenty-four years, during which time he became a machine-gun specialist as well as an expert in survival and interrogation resistance. He has been featured on the History Channel, PBS, the BBC, BuzzFeed, Slate, and more. He lives at the Tower with his wife and, of course, the ravens.

"Packed with insight and anecdote, [*The Ravenmaster*] brings the Tower ravens to vivid life, each bird with a personality of its own. I've been fortunate enough to tour the Tower and meet the ravens a few times in years past; after reading this book, I cannot wait to go back." -George R.R. Martin

"Skaife . . . is an unending fount of raven lore - not just myths and stories, but habits, personalities and discoveries he's made over his years on the job." -Petra Mayer, NPR

"A beguiling, fascinating, and highly amusing account of the strangely magical birds . . . There's joy in *The Ravenmaster*, as well as tragedy, obsession, and a rare tenderness toward Skaife's avian charges . . . Skaife is doing us, I think, a small political service by introducing us to the quirks and histories of every bird in his care; he is letting us love them in a way that makes them more than mere symbols . . . Marvelous." -Helen MacDonald, *The Atlantic*

"A wonderfully personal account of life with the ravens . . . A natural storyteller, Skaife writes with affection and insight about these powerful, unpredictable and highly intelligent birds." -PD Smith, *The Guardian*

"Skaife is a jaunty, top-shelf storyteller. Not only has he got a flair for the basic tower story,

and the history and mystery of the ravens, but he can swing off piste, like a jazz improvisation, to fill in the story with scads of local color." -Peter Lewis, The Boston Globe

"This is an utterly fascinating book about one of those subjects you never thought you'd be interested in until, well, you were . . . Skaife is a very good storyteller . . . A splendid and constantly surprising book." -David Pitt, Booklist [starred review]

"The London book of the year . . . A funny and informative account of life with the royal ravens at the Tower of London . . . [Skaife] is a born storyteller." -Ian Thomson, Evening Standard

"Balancing fascinating tidbits (a raven's need for order and routine) with macabre details (blood-soaked dog biscuits and ghostly sightings), [Skaife] titillates as he educates, rehabilitating the gloomy reputation of the raven. Skaife's conversational style and disarming candor make this a rollicking tale fit for nearly any armchair adventurer." - Publisher's Weekly

"For those seeking the secrets of the Tower of London without actually being imprisoned there, this is just the thing." -Kirkus

"A delightful read from a masterful-and very funny-storyteller. Skaife the Ravenmaster knows birds in a way that humans rarely do. He gives us an intimate insider's view of the seven big, powerful, boisterous ravens who rule his life, who tease him mercilessly and teach him well, who play KerPlunk, who plan and execute elaborate ploys for stealing sandwiches, who guard the Tower of London and its visitors (and only occasionally terrorize them), who are-as he says with characteristic insight-much like us, brave, silly, ruthless, charming, unpredictable, brilliant, lovable, and complex." -Jennifer Ackerman, author of the New York Times bestselling *The Genius of Birds*.

"I will never forget the first time I saw Chris Skaife, in full Yeoman Warder regalia, feed one of his beloved ravens a chick carcass. The group of nearby French tourists were horrified, but I looked on in wonder at the sheer size and power of the Tower ravens. Chris adores his birds with every fiber of his being. His knowledge and love for the ravens flies off of the page in *The Ravenmaster*." -Caitlin Doughty, author of *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*

"Skaife is both a raven master and a master storyteller. Compulsively readable-I devoured the book in a single sitting!" -Lindsey Fitzharris, author of *The Butchering Art*

"The Ravenmaster will enable the public see ravens not simply as a memorial to days of yore, but every bit as much a part of history as monarchs and politicians. Christopher Skaife's tales contain not only comedy but also tragedy, frustration, love, hubris, fear, foolishness, compassion and uncertainty. Keeping the ravens requires constant negotiation with them, in which, as Skaife repeatedly observes, we learn not only about corvids but also our own role as human beings." -Boria Sax, author of *The City of Ravens*

Other Books

Anything is Possible. Amgash, Illinois, bukan hanya kota tempat Lucy Barton tumbuh dewasa. Bersama saudara kandung, sepupu, dan teman, Lucy tinggal dan merasakan kejamnya hidup di pinggiran kota tersebut. Kini mereka sudah menjalani hidup masing-masing: Dottie si pemilik penginapan B&B, Pete si pembersih sekolah, Patty si guru konseling, dan Lucy sendiri menjadi penulis. Setelah dewasa, takdir mempertemukan para tokoh ini kembali, sekaligus membuka kembali perihnya luka lama. Saat kecil hidup mereka miskin, setelah dewasa, kisah mereka sangat memilukan. Tetapi mereka terus menjalani hidup, karena Apa Pun Mungkin Terjadi

Anything is Possible.
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