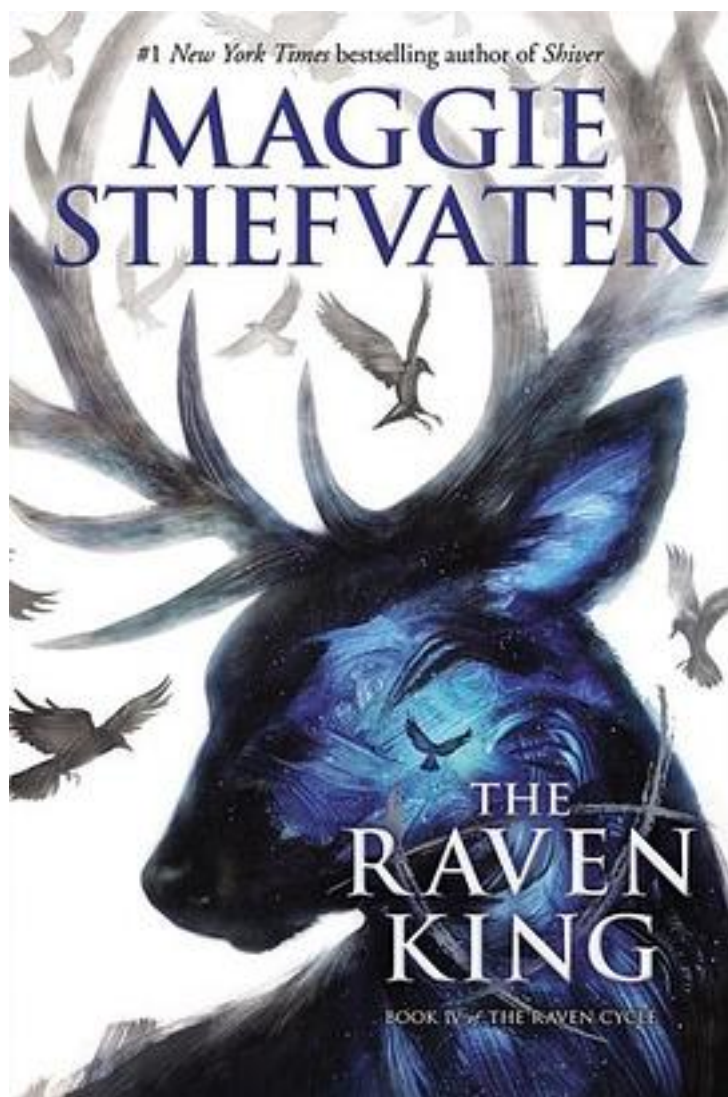


The Raven King



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著者:Tanner, Marcus

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Seizing the Hungarian throne at the age of fifteen, Matthias Corvinus, 'the Raven King', was an effervescent presence on the fifteenth-century stage. A successful warrior and munificent art patron, he sought to leave as symbols of his strategic and humanist ambitions a strong, unified country, splendid palaces, and the most magnificent library in Christendom. But Hungary, invaded by the Ottoman Empire after Matthias' death in 1490, yielded its treasures and the exquisite library, witness to a golden cultural age, was dispersed across Europe. The quest to recover this collection of sumptuously illuminated manuscripts provoked and tantalised generations of princes, cardinals, collectors and scholars, and imbued Hungarians with the mythical conviction that the restoration of the lost library would seal their country's rebirth. In this thrilling and absorbing account, drawing on a wealth of original sources in several languages, Marcus Tanner charts the odyssey of the Raven King and his magnificent bequest, uncovering the remarkable story of a life and library almost lost to history.

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