



The Staff and the Blade

Elizabeth Hunter

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Lovers. Warriors. Enemies. Legends.

Damien and Sari. Their union became pivotal in Irin history. But to understand their ending, you must go back to the beginning. A young singer and a hardened warrior meet and mate, but their life is torn apart by violence, betrayal, and grief.

Yet no matter how much pain and anger stain their lives, bonds in the Irin race cannot be abandoned. Damien and Sari will never truly leave each other, because those who are destined cannot be ignored.

The Staff and the Blade is a novel in four parts. It is the fourth book in the Irin Chronicles.

“She hates me as she loves me. Wholly and completely. Sari never does anything by halves.”

The Staff and the Blade Details

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From Reader Review **The Staff and the Blade** for online ebook

BookJunkie777 says

Audiobook & ebook review:

The Staff and The Blade is Damien and Sari's story. The book takes you back to the beginning of their relationship, the reason for their separation and hurt feelings, through Ava's meeting the fabled Irina, and Damien's family. The story is an extraordinary tale of guilt, love, happiness, battles, pain, revenge, and joy. The characters are believable. You'll laugh and cry. Jay Britton did a good job. I turned the speed of the audiobook to 1.25x since the pauses between each sentence wasn't to my liking (personal preference not to be used to dissuade other buyers) I wish however that since Zachary Webber started the series he could have narrated this book too. I'm a listener who devours series and when narrators change halfway through with different voices for the same characters in previous books it's very annoying and dissatisfying (again personal preference that should not be used to dissuade buyers).

Sandra ~ ♥ Cross My Heart ♥ says

Like all the books in the series, simply Amazing! I've had this one tucked away on my Kindle...waiting to savor it like a fine wine. And like all the others, I loved it! These stories always challenge my heart, soul, and mind. I'm left with a feeling of fullness, contentment, and always...a longing for more. Beautifully done, Elizabeth Hunter! A Page Burning Must Read!

ShoSho says

Fantastic! I really hope there will be more books in the series.

Victoria says

Beautifully written!

Ms. Hunter surprised me again with yet another fascinating story. I honestly wasn't looking forward to this novel as much (i know, **Irin Chronicles** is probably my least favorite series of hers), but as soon as I started reading I was truly captivated by Sari and Damien's journey. The last installment was reminiscent of Deborah Harkness's *Shadow of Night* (one of my personal favorites), so I couldn't help but devour this [*The Staff and the Blade*] novel. Grand love, epic battles, gorgeous world-building, and interesting mythology - perfectly combined to captivate any reader.

This novel can possibly be read as a stand-alone, but I much recommend starting from the beginning and getting acquainted with this world and its characters properly.

Highly recommended!

Monadh says

Disclosure: ARC received from the author in exchange for a honest review. Review originally featured on Wicked Scribes

A hauntingly beautiful tale of love, suffering, sacrifice, and ultimately forgiveness that spans centuries.

Ever since Sari and Damien did battle in a meadow in "The Singer" and Damien held back (some) so that Sari could vent her rage on him, I have been dying to read their story. As they both appear as important secondary characters in Malachi and Ava's story it is strongly recommended that new readers start with the first three books of the Irin Chronicles.

Damien is an Irin scribe and a warrior by blood and training. But years of war, killing and doing unspeakable things in the service of the council of his race have left him battle weary and empty. So he retreats to a little community in the Orkneys where he can tend to his manuscripts and fields and otherwise be left in peace. Until Sari, a young but powerful earth singer, is stationed there to help improve the crops. She is fascinated with the taciturn warrior who keeps to himself but as far as she can discover he doesn't seem interested in women in general. But when he sees her work magic for the first time his soul recognizes hers. Sari doesn't believe in fate and soulmates, she wants to forge her own destiny. When Damien is called away on a long mission Sari realizes that she wants to choose him, too, not because it was ordained by fate, but because of who he is.

Just as their relationship seems settled, the "Rending" occurs, the most traumatic event in the history of their people. The society of the Irin is structured in a way that the (male) scribes are the warriors and protectors, while the (female) singers tend home and hearth and maybe follow artistic pursuits. To protect the women they are segregated in so called retreats in the country, while the scribes hunt their enemies in the cities. This proves disastrous as their enemies mount a concentrated large scale attack, drawing the scribes away, leaving the retreats that were believed to be safe unprotected. Mostly Irin women and children lose their lives, with many warriors following their mate, rather than go on without them. Sari survives because she insisted that Damien train her to fight, but she blames Damien, who was the watcher of their community, for what has happened. Damien blames himself, and so he not only carries his own pain, but takes on hers as well. In the aftermath they disagree on how what remains of their society should be restructured: Damien still adheres to the dictates of the council while Sari is building safe havens for the Irina all over the world, where they are free of council mandates. Their rare meetings become so painful that they stop seeing each other altogether, except for in their dreams. Then Ava's mate is killed and Damien decides to take her to Sari's safe haven in order for her to heal and to learn to control her magic. Will Damien and Sari be able to overcome the rift between them that was caused by pain, betrayal, and loss? Will they be able to forgive each other and themselves? And will they be able to fight the calcified structures of their council in order to reform their society?

I loved everything about this book: the love story between Damien and Sari that starts out sweet and poignant and then turns so heart-breaking; the two main protagonists, Sari with her independent spirit and sometimes abrasive demeanor and her kick-ass personality, Damien, who is strong and honorable (and hot), and brave enough to lay his soul bare. I also liked how the characters developed and grew throughout the novel, and how they learnt from their mistakes. And I found it extremely refreshing that their union is one of choice, that they came together out of love and not because of duty or fate or some inescapable mate bond. Then there is the superb world-building with just the right amount of historical and local detail to weave a fascinating tapestry; it serves as the perfect backdrop for this epic tale of the descendants of fallen angels that

fight to keep humanity safe. The overarching plot revisits and continues threads that were developed in the first three books, but also changes some of the premises set up at the beginning of the series: the boundaries between good and evil are starting to get blurred.

The most fascinating aspect for me was the strong gender criticism pervading this book: the structures of Irin society have become very patriarchal, with men making all the decisions and the women being segregated "for their own protection", instead of being taught how to protect themselves. It is precisely this thinking that has led to the worst tragedy in Irin history. The Irina/singers have different magic than the Irin/scribes, but it is just as powerful. Damien, though, always wished for a mate that could match him strength for strength. Hopefully the council can be brought to realize that a more egalitarian approach to the gender question will strengthen their society and not weaken it.

5+ stars from me. I strongly hope Elizabeth Hunter will continue to write stories in this fascinating and darkly compelling world.

Sunny says

4.5 stars. Epic and soul satisfying. More review to come.

Susan Swanson says

I just love this series. I love the characters and the world they inhabit. And this entry in the series does not disappoint. Taking a different approach than the first 3 books, this book jumps back in time to the beginning of the relationship between 2 secondary characters from the series. Diving deeply into the themes of grief and forgiveness, this book paints a relationship over the long term. There is certainly romance and politics and other themes common from the entire series. But this book is somewhat darker and more serious. The main characters have a more contentious relationship. And their struggles to overcome their own demons while staying bound to their mates is at the heart of the story. The emotions are well portrayed and even though the stubbornness of the characters can be frustrating at times, they seem very genuine.

Kate's Corner says

I am going to TRY convey how amazing this book is.

Our journey spans from Orkney to London to Norway to Istanbul and Prague. It was so exciting experiencing these different parts of the world. An upbeat book with fast paced action not once did the book come across as being dull. A world created that is beautiful and wild but filled with violence and danger.

I was intrigued by Sari and Damien and the palpable feelings they had for one another when I read about them in book three, if I remember correctly but from the start it was clear that is an old love where the MC have a lot to overcome.

Damien of Bohemia was a legend content to live in obscurity. Weary from a century of human and Irin bloodshed. He lost so much that he needed two hundred years of solitude to heal. True healing started when his reshon. Where the heaven has sent the other half but Sari doesn't believe in fate. Damien is one of the best Heroes that I have read this year. He came to life on each page. He is moody, mysterious and yet kind and compassionate.

Sari is an earth singer and is being sent to Scotland, Orkney to help the community there with the crops. Sari is unlike any other earth singer Damien has ever meet. He didn't want to be attracted.

Sari is a fantastic heroine and my kind of heroine.

She was honest to the point of rudeness. – So true and so refreshing.

She is strong, compassionate, fierce and Damien's equal.

Sari & Damien's love spans of nearly 800+ years and oh my gosh was there love a beauty to watch how it blossomed and how it was heart wrenching to see it break. The Rending changed everything and the Irin race was divided. The Irina retreated, traps were laid and the death of so many in such a brief time. There was so much loss and heartache. But the book also included joy and happiness. Each word and sentence was emotional. But it is also about forgiveness and grief and moving on.

All the characters came to life. I felt with them every step of the way. With Ms. Hunter's writing, I was welcomed into their world. I was sucked in and I had no chance of fighting it. Damien and Sari are so different from one another and that is why they are so good together.

One thing did bother me Sari was being too stubborn and not bending she didn't have to break but at least bend. But not enough to dock a star.

I can only recommend this series and maybe I am totally biased but it is worth it. Trust me. Famous last words. I have loved this author's work since B & Gio. Each book has gotten better.

I was positive that Ms. Hunter couldn't have been able to pull it off. As their love was woven around Ava and Malachi. I should never have doubted you. I quite frankly find it hard to wrap my mind around it as the couple is captured in the past, with a crossover into Ava's story and to the future the after of revealing a thousand stars.

There are layers upon layers of complexity that even if you read it again and again you would still find something gripping and fascinating. Experiencing the characters emotions and not being bored.

There was humor to break up the tense interactions now sometimes some authors can't get that balance right but it worked here and it worked well.

I don't usually compare authors but if I had to then Ms. Hunter would be on par with Nalini Singh.

Ren says

4 stars

After I read the first trilogy of Irin Chronicles (The Scribe, The Singer and The Secret), didn't take me too long to read the next, The Staff and the Blade. Despite the description that said its consist of 4 stand alone novella, The Staff and The Blade can't be read as a stand alone. Since the MCs, Damien and Sari are important characters, their story told in the first three book, and this book will explain their background story. From the first they met, how they become estranged couple and unite again under unpredictable circumstances, and how they cope with the final battle that happen in the end of The Secret.

DREAMS told how Damien and Sari met and become a mate. This novella is just your standard paranormal romance story. Boy feel weary after war and war, his soul tormented. Boy meet this peculiar girl, and he feel that his dark soul brighten under her light. Girl want the boy. They mate afterward. Pretty simple story, though. The scene when Damien and Sari mate and bond their souls for eternity is my favorite.

GHOSTS....is hard to read. Readers will know in the first trilogy about The Rending. How Damien failed his men and his family, by lost Sari's twin, Tala. How Tala's mate, Gabriel hate Damien so much. How Sari lost their child, and with the rest of Irina survivor decide to exile themselves, therefore make the Irin scribe suffer for centuries, not able to mate and also wallow in their failure. And how Damien and Sari become estranged. Unable to forgive each other and themselves. We know that its happen, we know that its unavoidable. That's why reading Ghosts is so painful.

MEMORIES happen in the same timeline with The Singer, when Damien bring Ava to Sari's haven in Oslo. The prologue is also hard to read, because it's deal with the aftermath of the Rending. How Damien and Sari become estranged for 200 years but still try to make contact and dream-walking, until Damien choose to walk away is amazed me. Memories is about forgiveness, about healing, about Damien and Sari try to make amend with their past. Not as hard and painful to read like Ghosts, but still the angst wrenched my heart. There was a saying, the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. Hate means that person still care, even in a negative way. Indifference is hurt. Damien feel that he deserve Sari's wrath and rage, he prefer she to be angry to him, rather that silence. For married couple- especially me-, this novella will connect in so many way. The foundation of marriage (or mating bond, or union), is not just love. Not just sex. Not just commitment. But also communication. Read about Sari's silence and indifference toward Damien can be so frustrating. But I like that Damien is a guy that didn't want to give up. Memories is my favorite novella in this book.

VISIONS is a little bit abrupt for my taste. Hunter write the effect of the final battle to both Sari and Damien, but especially Sari. How their fundamental way of Irin change in so many way, left not just them to feel unbalanced, but the rest of the Irin and Irina society. Visions is about what is waiting for Damien and Sari in the future and the conclusion of the story. While the story feel rushed and the end is abrupt, I can said that I feel satisfied with the ending. Both Damien and Sari need a little peace, and how Hunter write about child, a topic that still sensitive for both MCs is quite right.

Overall I enjoy this book. I like both Sari and Damien as characters, and I think that theirs are better character than Malachi and Ava. Beside second chances also my favorite trope. The Staff and the Blade is a must read, if you had read the first trilogy of Irin Chronicles and I can't wait to read the next book, The Silence, Leo and Kyra's story.

Douglas Meeks says

Well let me start by disagreeing with the line in the synopsis that says "The Staff and the Blade is a four part stand-alone book". I cannot see anyone really enjoying this book to its fullest without a lot of prior knowledge from previous books in this series. Since the last book was a bit over a year ago I had to move some brain cells around to remember certain things and the action skips over events that took place in previous books so I do not see this book as any type of "stand alone" other than the love story is self contained, much of the rest of the book is detailing things that happened in previous books but were not part of those plots or it skips certain events completely that were detailed in previous books.

OK, now let me mention that this book is laid out a bit different in that it is 4 parts (or 4 books as the author refers to them) that tell a story that covers centuries, mainly revolving around an epic romance between Damien and Sari. It covers a love story that begins with passion and love, almost destroyed by tragedy and decades of separation and regret before we get to a most satisfying ending.

If you have read the other books in the series you know some of what is coming and you are so involved that you wish you could prevent some of it but are swept away by the history that has already been shared in previous books and is touched upon lightly in places and horrible detail in others.

You will be caught up in the emotion and scope of this romance and epic story as it slides across centuries while telling not only the evolving love story but also the evolving history of the Erin/Erina race.

Bottom Line: It has been more than a year since I read The Secret and there was a lot of things from that book you needed to know so read it first if you have not already. This is an amazing story and I can see why it took over a year for her to get it done, it covers a LOT of Erin history and tells a love story that is tempered by passion, love and tragedy. As always when I finish one of her books I am breathless and wishing there were more pages to read but it does have a satisfying conclusion and I hope we get to see a bit more of these characters in future books. So I give it 5 Stars without any reservations since you have a love story, adventure, tragedy, revenge, battles, sex, and overall an epic story you will remember long after you read the last page. What more could you want .

Colleen Vanderlinden says

Amazing, heart-wrenching story, beautifully written.

Longer review to come.

Kara-karina says

"Someday you will love a man, and the fire of it will be a violent, dangerous thing."

If memory serves me well, this is a forth book by Elizabeth Hunter I've rated so high, and it was exquisite, one of her finest.

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Elizabeth Hunter says

First time in Kindle Unlimited!

So excited to announce that the entire Irin Chronicles series is in Kindle Unlimited for the next few months. I don't put much in KU, so if you're a KU reader, grab it while you can!

→ Amazon: <http://amzn.to/2aHGk17>

The Staff and the Blade is now LIVE! I hope you grab your copy and enjoy Damien and Sari's story and the continuation of the Irin Chronicles world. It's a look at the past and a giant step into the future.

I'll also be turning on the "Ask the Author" feature on my dashboard now! So those of you with questions (about any book, but especially the Irin ones this week) can head over to my profile and ask away. I look forward to answering.

Excerpt:

“You’re calling me naive?”

“Yes.” She leaned forward. “You may be older than me, but you’re still the noble Irin warrior of ages past.

This world is not black and white. It never has been.”

“You think I don’t know that?”

“You think every scribe has a conscience and a code of honor because you do.”

He looked away from her.

“Not every scribe is noble. Not every Irin wants the Irina back. Not every one of your brothers would sacrifice himself to protect me or any of my sisters.”

“I know I’m no saint. None of us are.”

“No, you’re honorable. And decent. And good.”

“Sari—”

“And I love that about you,” she continued, even as her throat started to close. “I love your honor. I love your decency. But Damien, the world is not like that. It’s a hard, cruel place with countless shades of grey. People are selfish and weak. We do things...” She choked. “We do horrible things because we think it’s the only way to survive.”

Damien turned back to her. “There is nothing you can do that would make me love you less, Sari.”

She gave him a bitter smile. “That’s because you don’t know what I’ve done.”

~

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Meg at says

We all want someone to love us when we’re difficult to love.

We want someone who stands by us when no matter what we do, what we say...

...How far we go.

Damien and Sari have lived through the absolute worst life can throw at us. They have seen loved ones lost, their families ripped asunder, and their very world fracture.

And yet... love remains.

There are few contemporary authors that have the ability to not only sweep us into a story, but into a world we could believe exists congruently outside our doors. I read Ms. Hunter's books and could easily believe in the song of the Irina, or in the cultural complications of vampire society.

She presents rich characters, meaty plots and colorful worlds in which we want to immerse ourselves. I

cannot recommend her books, including this one, enough. They are what we would love all books to be.

Kristopher says

Good book

Really good read to continue the series can't wait for the next boo this year. I really like these books
