



Lady Smoke

Laura Sebastian

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The sequel to the instant *New York Times* bestseller that was "made for fans of Victoria Aveyard and Sabaa Tahir" (*Bustle*), *Lady Smoke* is an epic new fantasy about a throne cruelly stolen and a girl who must fight to take it back for her people.

The Kaiser murdered Theodosia's mother, the Fire Queen, when Theo was only six. He took Theo's country and kept her prisoner, crowning her Ash Princess--a pet to toy with and humiliate for ten long years. That era has ended. The Kaiser thought his prisoner weak and defenseless. He didn't realize that a sharp mind is the deadliest weapon.

Theo no longer wears a crown of ashes. She has taken back her rightful title, and a hostage--Prinz Soren. But her people remain enslaved under the Kaiser's rule, and now she is thousands of miles away from them and her throne.

To get them back, she will need an army. Only, securing an army means she must trust her aunt, the dreaded pirate Dragonsbane. And according to Dragonsbane, an army can only be produced if Theo takes a husband. Something an Astrean Queen has never done.

Theo knows that freedom comes at a price, but she is determined to find a way to save her country without losing herself.

"**A darkly enchanting page-turner** you won't be able to put down." --*Bustle* on *Ash Princess*, Book 1 in the Ash Princess series

Lady Smoke Details

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Author : Laura Sebastian

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Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Lady Smoke for online ebook

Katie.dorny says

3.5 stars rounded down. The first book was mesmerising, this was mediocre.

Here we meet Theo from where we left her, however she just doesn't seem to progress as a character throughout this book at all. She still acts like a petulant teenager even though she is adamant she is a queen. I understand why Dragonsbane treats her the way she does.

I'm also becoming bored of the love triangle. I get it. We all get it. We all know how that's gonna end.

The ending of the book was the most exciting part. The ending of her time travelling I didn't see coming.

The beginning of her return, I also did not see the choices that were made coming. Props to the author for that.

Otherall, it was enjoyable but I'll only be reading the final book to round off the trilogy, than out of sheer excitement for what's coming next.

megs_bookrack says

Your Amazon.com order of "Lady Smoke (Ash Princess)" has shipped!

Tekla says

Spoilers for Lady Smoke hereunder.

"I hope you come to see that a woman can wield power beyond what's between her legs—for your daughter's sake if nothing else."

"There's a reason you can't find the word virginity in Astrean. The concept doesn't exist."

~ ~ ~

These books are addictive. Even flawed, I just couldn't stop reading.

This was so much better than I expected.

Theo became such a complex and rich character. I loved how grey she was in so many areas. Loved her journey into finding who she was and what kind of queen she would become.

As someone who's been reading YA for a long time, I'm so pleased to notice certain changes in the genre. For example the female protagonists have their own agenda now in a way they never did before. We get a lot more representation, a feminist message, less toxic relationships... As someone who appreciates all these changes, I loved this book for all these things.

"I know him and he knows me and the darkest parts of our souls match."

The relationship with Soren was so good. He's still too perfect for my taste but he was a lot better in this book. Loved their relationship development. They shared some really amazing quotes, and the level of intimacy, understanding and acceptance was just exactly what I'm into in a romance.

Heron and Erik.

Hopefully they get more development in the last book. Their banter and filtration was delightful.

Hoa. I really, really loved her. And her scenes with Theo... They moved me.

Art. I loved how her relationship with Theo kept growing and become stronger as the book processed.
FEMALE FRIENDSHIPS HELL YEAH~

But this was also worse than I expected.

The story dragged too much on the "let's find a husband with armies for Theo" plot, which was as bad as I had anticipated. And then rushed through the second half of the book, where admittedly the most interesting things happened.

Not. Enough. Cress. And the little we got was kind of a let down. Sure, her plot still got some of those trails typically chosen for male characters but then the author chose to portrait her as driven by her jealousy over a boy and I just- MEH.

I haaaaate that she kidnapped Soren. She saw her father die by her friend, almost died herself, married the Kaiser, and who knows what else happened to her and she still cares about *a boy*.

Girl I thought you were smarter.

The way the Kaiser died was just so cheap. He's the BIG BAD and he dies like that? I understand now the

villain is Cress and she and Theo are going to have a big fight in the last book. But still, that was pretty mediocre.

Also the guards saw Cress killing the Kaiser and they still followed her orders? So iffy.

The love triangle was awful.

She chose Soren but still toyed with Blaise because she didn't want to let him go. Kind of in a "I need everyone to love me" way that didn't sit well with me.

The way she thought of Blaise was as family. Sure, she loved him. But not romantically. So whenever she misled him in some way, or just let him take his own conclusions, it just irked me.

I understand the book is all about being morally grey, or how no one is all good or all bad. But Jesus h Christ, this was annoying.

Next book

I'm so interested in what will happen in the mine, but at the same time I liked the fact that Theo had no real powers and yet she was helping her people and freeing them. There's something very compelling in reading about an ordinary person managing extraordinary things. But if she comes out of the mines now with like super powers, it's going to cheapen it all a bit.

But again, I want to know more about the mines, the gems, the powers... I hope we get more explanations in the next book.

Overall, a really fun read!!

Suzanne says

I really liked Ash Princess but Lady Smoke was much better! This one was intense and you are more invested in the characters and plot so the 500+ pages just fly by. Readers will grow more attached to the characters in this one than they were in the first, but a couple things were predictable. However, the predictability did not take anything away from the story or the enjoyment of the story. Just a very good sequel and that ending...oh my! Cress got to go though. She a bit overdone now...

My quick and simple overall: really satisfying sequel that leaves readers waiting for book three ASAP.

Joshee Kun (???) says

Thank you, Penguin Random House, for giving me a finished copy of this book in exchange for an

honest review.

My mother was the Queen of Peace. But I am not that sort of Queen.

This sequel to *Ash Princess* was worth the wait. I've always loved political fantasies since they typically have enough intrigue to keep the pages flipping. With that in mind, *Lady Smoke* gave me the reading experience that I expected. Even though I didn't completely recall everything that happened in the first book, I didn't have a hard time getting back into Theo's dysfunctional world.

The plot was probably one of the reasons for the latter phenomenon since it was somewhat reminiscent of *The Selection*, one of my favorite YA series. After Theo escaped from the clutches of the evil Kaiser and took refuge in Sta' Crivera, she desperately needed an army to back her up. Unfortunately, the only way to reach that goal was to marry a foreign royal, who would then claim a part of her beloved kingdom. Theo was unwilling to sacrifice her agency to any of her not-so-benevolent suitors, but she had no choice but to entertain their proposals. After all, the fate of Astrea was at stake. When Theo finally selects her future husband, something terrible happens, and she fears that it's the Kaiser's fault.

Although the romantic/political drama was very familiar, I was too engaged to feel bored or jaded. Theo and her friends were always on edge, especially around the king of Sta' Crivera. Their alliance was shaky, so he could sell them out to the Kaiser if he thought that helping them was becoming inconvenient. Moreover, there was a malevolent force in the palace. If Theo didn't manage to find it, she would have to give up on procuring a powerful husband. I loved the irony of her situation. She had outsmarted the Kaiser only to face a similarly cunning enemy.

Theo matured a lot in this book. By visiting one of the camps of her fellow refugees, she realized that there were people who had bigger problems than her. She also discovered the fatal flaw of her supposedly perfect mother. I liked that instead of feeling discouraged, she heeded the call of leadership; she strove to be strong and wise enough to give hope to those who had resigned themselves to poverty and suffering. In light of her tenacity, it was no wonder that she had the affections of Blaise and Prince Soren.

Compared to Theo, the two male leads were not that inspiring. Blaise had a suicidal streak or Messianic complex, while Soren had overrated daddy issues (and he was often a "lad in distress"). Also, the love triangle that they had with Theo bordered on emotional cheating. Still, I appreciated how they never failed to lift Theo's spirit through sincere words of affirmation. Without them, she would've succumbed to her bouts of self-doubt and pessimism.

Dragonsbane, Theo's aunt, was the most complex character. I had some assumptions about her from the very beginning, and most of them turned out to be wrong. For a pirate, she sometimes had a striking sense of honor. Well, it was probably because her daughter (Artemisia) was Theo's close friend. Haha. Anyway, I'll try not to be judgmental toward fictional characters.

With all that said, *Lady Smoke* was an utterly engaging combination of fantasy and politics. The fast pace made the book seem like it had less than 492 pages. I guess it would have been perfect without the overrated love triangle.

Brittany says

4 Stars!!

???

“A queen without a crown, without a throne, without a coronation. What, exactly, do you imagine you're queen of?”

Lady Smoke picks up right where Ash Princess left off. Theo is trying to get everything in order on her travels with Dragons-bane and her fleet. They are all looking for allies to take down the Kaiser and Cress.

Things I Liked:

Theo shows a ton of growth in this book as her character falls in line with the title of Queen. She's starting to come into herself and really see what kind of leader she will make. She has lots of hard decisions to make and she is learning everything as she goes along.

My ship.... oh my ship ITS STILL KICKING!! Things may be a little rocky but Im telling you Im going down with this one!!

The Shadows - They bring so much more to the book! I just love them- Heron, Blaise and Art all protect and handle Theo in their own individual ways. Art doesn't take any crap and is always mouthing off to her, but at the same time has Theo's back no matter what. Heron is quiet - yet he also will stand up to Theo when he is not on board with something. Blaise.... will do anything for Theo even if it means he has to pay with his life. He loves her and is so loyal- as her oldest friend- these two have an unbreakable bond.

The ending... I NEED BOOK 3 now!!!!

What I didn't really like:

Some parts dragged a bit unlike the first book. There was also something major that happens towards the end - and the way it was handled had me scratching my head.. like is this really how this is about to go down?? I needed something bigger after everything Theo went through. I don't want to spoil anything but I personally needed this person to be put through HELL.. And maybe he was a little but not to my satisfaction. It just felt a bit lazy.

Lady Smoke was a really good read. I have seen some people like this one more than Ash Princess. But for me, I find that Lady Smoke suffered a little bit of middle book syndrome. I can't put my finger on what it was, but something was missing. I'm not worried though- I think whatever it was will come back in full force once I read the final book. I still 100% recommend this series!

Gaby (lookingatbooks) says

I DESPERATELY HOPE THEODOSIA USES HER FIRE MAGIC ??

Dannii Elle says

Actual rating 4.5/5 stars.

Theodosia is the last remaining heir of a vanquished country, now owned by its conqueror and the man who kept her a beaten and paraded captive, for almost her entire childhood. But this once Ash Princess is now determined to fulfil her role as Queen Theo, and this queen wants her land back and her people freed.

The Theo the reader was introduced to in the previous series instalment is a very different being to the one that appeared here. Theo's original wishes were almost solely those of self-preservation. This was understandable. But the continued harsh treatment and exposure to the pain of both herself and her people slowly whittled away this softer exterior to reveal an inner-core of strength that disallowed either to become the playthings of another, ever again. No matter the cost. Her resolve has hardened and, with it, my love for her character is complete.

However, I often found adoration for Theo divided, as the other lovable characters, who made up her inner-circle, battled for their rightful place in my heart, too. This band of vicious, little rouges made this story as bad-ass and bloody as they did unbearably sweet, and I bonded with them as truly as they did with one another. Theo, on her own, was enough to make me a passionate advocate for this series but her loyal companions, dogging her journey every step of the way, made this a truly unputdownable and continually fraught yet fascinating read. It is a very rare book that can make me soar through 500 pages in a handful of hours, foregoing a good night's sleep in the process.

As these characters fled from the kaiser who sought to imprison them, the geography of the land was further revealed to the reader. I loved learning more about this world and the unique politics that governed each realm. It seemed the Kaiser was not the only corrupt player and Theo and her crew must once again concern themselves with all the court niceties and underhand political scheming necessary to get their freedom returned to them.

I have so far only waxed lyrical about all the aspects I love about this novel but the aspect I appreciated the absolute most were the feminist vibes that proceeded throughout. Theo is not playing games in this book! She has no qualms about calling out the patriarchal system that advocates for the unequal alignment for the gender of its people. She also calls into question outdated traditions that further bias this inequality, and are accepted due to nothing more than the length of time their practise has been committed to memory.

Sebastian steeped this entire book with the embodiment of female empowerment and I appreciate her so much for doing so. One other such instance is that virginity is not imbued with any social significance and, as such, the word does not even exist in most languages. By providing the reader with a fantastical parallel to such accepted real-world issues it calls into question, in the most thought-provoking of ways, the inequality that exists outside of these pages. This is one feminist novel not to be missed!

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to the author, Laura Sebastian, and the publisher, Macmillan, for this opportunity.

Cesar says

4 stars.

Lady Smoke has exceeded my expectations. Usually, in a trilogy, there's always the chance where the second book suffers from Second Book Syndrome. To me, Lady Smoke was a pretty damn good installment to the Ash Princess trilogy.

Mind you, this will not be for everyone as I will explain further, but for a second book, I was really impressed by how the story progressed as well as the stakes that were involved.

Lady Smoke takes place right after the events of Ash Princess where Theodosia escapes her homeland and is trying to form an alliance with another country in hopes of taking back Astrea and defeat the Kaiser. The only problem is, she has to take on a husband, something a queen has never done in Astrea.

Earlier, I mentioned that this won't be for everyone. While I did like Lady Smoke, I can see how this won't be everyone's cup of tea. I wouldn't call this a political story because while there is mention of arranged marriage and armies, the politics are not as prevalent. And there is a love triangle which I'll admit, did bother me somewhat. So keep that in mind when going into the story.

Lady Smoke delves more into the idea of doing whatever it takes to do what is right even if it means giving up your pride and accepting help. Or, use that pride to make sense of the situation and still do the right thing.

Theo is put on a pedestal where she has to make very important choices that will determine the fate of Astrea and its people. But having to choose a partner means forsaking what Theo believes in. And this is where I like her more as a character. She only became a queen and she still has a lot of learning and growing up to do. Others may respect her like a queen, but she has to work on acting like one. The novel does take on a feminist approach and I applaud Theo for standing up for not only her country but for herself.

The story itself is unapologetically true in the aspect of refugees and how they are treated. This isn't a spoiler since in the first book there is mention of refugee camps in different countries. And when Theo visits a camp in a country she is temporarily staying in, she is taken aback by how the treatment of refugees. You want to look away but the reality of it is very shocking. Not to mention this is something that is still happening in our world. I'm glad this was brought up so it can give readers an insight into the subject.

The reason this got a 4-star rating is because of one thing: The love triangle.

I am not against love triangles or the idea of them. If done right, I can enjoy it. My main issue with this love triangle is that it feels unnecessary and forced. It was unnecessary because it didn't add anything to the story. It might have given us more insight into Blaise and Soren, but it felt redundant in the grand scheme of Theo trying to take back her country. Not to mention Blaise is a boring love interest. I'm all for Soren.

The love triangle was also forced because it didn't need to be there. I get that Blaise and Theo were close to each other, but his feelings for her aren't as genuine. It's like he was only there just to be a love interest. He does have some growth here in Lady Smoke, but he didn't need to be a love interest.

Verdict

Lady Smoke is a good follow up to Ash Princess. It's not perfect, but the story and Theo do make up for it by showing us what Theo has to do in harsh times as well as diving into how cruel the world can be. I'm really looking forward to the final book.

Thanks for reading my review!

-Cesar

Rae says

You can find this review and others on the blog here:

<http://vicariouslyvoraciously.com/rev...>

WARNING: This Review Contains Mild Spoilers for Ash Princess.

It's always the true test of a series if the second book can live up to the expectation that you were left with when you finished the first book. Will it have the same voice? Will the characters grow with the story? What will happen? Do you even care what happens next? And when you do finally get your hands on a copy of that book you've been waiting on for months, or weeks, or even days (because let's be honest, no one likes to wait...) but regardless of how long you've waited you still want it to bring you back to that feeling you were left with that has had your mind constantly reminding you, hey remember that book?? Because those are the books that are the good ones, the ones that keep us wondering what happens next? So after I finished Ash Princess last year and my mind of course couldn't let me forget how I needed to find out what happens, I knew that Lady Smoke was going to be an easy decision to pick up and start reading it asap. And let me tell you, I was not let down! The wait was worth it. The voice is in fact, the same. The characters do grow with the story. And we do find out what happens next. I do care what happens in this story. At this point, I'm so involved with these characters and what they are doing that you might as well just sign me up for the third book now.. I'm hooked and I'm not afraid to admit it!

Lady Smoke begins right where Ash Princess ends, on the ship owned by none other than pirate Dragonsbane who also happens to be Theo's aunt and Artemesia's mother. Now that Queen Theodosia has escaped with her life, her shadows, and prince Soren as her prisoner, the next step is to build an army to finally put an end to the Kaiser and all he stands for. But Dragonsbane has other plans in mind and they don't exactly line up with what Theo wants for her future. The question is, what is Theo willing to give up for her country? And how far will she go to save those who have been enslaved for too long?

I liked that in this book we see more of the damage that the Kaiser has done. We see how vast his cruelty has spread and how he has his claws in everywhere spreading his hate. It makes him out to be even more despicable than you could possibly imagine him to be at first. This puts things on a grander scale for us and for our characters, because now its not just little ol Theo trying to escape a castle. Now we are dealing with entire countries who live in fear and poverty because they have been conquered by the Kalovaxians and it will take a lot more than one small crew of barely adults to help save them all. But that doesn't stop our MC. She is determined to do whatever it takes and still try and hold on to what she values while freeing her people and all those who have been crushed by the Kaiser she hates so much. I also can respect Theo because even through it all Soren is resigned to be her captive, knowing its true how his father has created so much death and destruction, and he is willing to shoulder it all for his love for Theo, but she won't let him wallow in self pity. She stands by him and trusts him even though she is told not to at every turn. There is something to be said for her tenacity and her will to see the good in people through all the bad that to me makes her the Queen they all say she isn't.

The love triangle does continue in this book as it was in the first. With a little more angst and tension, but to

be honest, if I was in Theo's position I wouldn't know who to choose either! I feel like one boy represents her past, and the other her future. But both of them hold an important role in Theo's life and she can't do without either of them. And then to add to the mix, the idea of an arranged marriage for a kingdom's army to help aid in her war with the Kaiser... She is just a mess of romance problems that I wouldn't with on my worst enemy. I feel bad for the poor girl, she definitely has her work cut out for her. But I will say that even through all the craziness, it is well done. You don't feel like she is making selfish decisions, but just dealing with the cards she's been dealt and trying to make the best of one awful situation after the next.

There was a lot more in terms of action in this book too since now the Kaiser knows he's been had. And he plans to get his revenge, and the heads of Theo and Soren, dead or alive. With a few crazy twists that I wasn't expecting, it all comes to an epic battle and of course a cliffhanger to keep us crazy about this book until we can finally find out what happens in the last of the trilogy. I really enjoyed this one, I won't say it was better than the first but it was definitely just as good as. I find myself liking how I can get into these books and fly through them in a matter of a couple days and still feel like I read something worth while and exciting. I love a good romance with my books and these have kept my heart pitter patter, butterflies and all. I want these characters to succeed. I do care what happens! And I can't wait for the next installment!

Melanie says

1.) Ash Princess ★★★★★

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Cindy ☆? Savage Queen ? says

9/28/18

...an army can only be produced if Theo takes a husband.

via GIPHY

But seriously, like wtf why!?! There had better be a good reason, like this better not just be a convenient plot device used only to make the heroine to choose between two boys.

8/4/18

Loving the cover!

Based on the title I feel like we're going to get a lot more Cress, and honestly I am not sure I want that ?

Alaina says

It was good.. but god dammit - I hate love triangles.

Okay, I keep changing my mind on this freaking book rating. I can't decide to put a 3 or 4 star... so it'll be a

freaking 3.5. Like I mentioned above, *Lady Smoke* was a good book. I have the audio version, which definitely makes it a bit easier for myself when working such long drastic hours. Now this book starts where the previous book, *Ash Princess* left us.

However, I feel like the characters didn't really do anything in this book but when something actually exciting did.. it just felt a bit anti-climactic for me? Again, this could just be me. Then there's that freaking love triangle and I just couldn't stop eye rolling. I hate those things and I wish books would stop freaking using them. They are just frustrating to read about and at one point I just stop caring about the characters.

The one thing that saved this book was the ending. I loved it and now I have so many questions forming in my mind. I have no idea when the third book is going to be an actual thing.. but I really need it now! I need answers ASAP!

helena says

The Princess of Ash is dead. Long live the Queen.

WHAT AN AMAZING BOOK, YOU GUYS!!!!!! oh my god. oh my god.

i simply couldn't put down. every chapter was a delight to read. all of them felt interesting and well-written, nothing every feels like a filler here and i absolutely love it. the characters were amazing, the romance was good, the intrigues were awesome, the battles were consistent. amazing! just amazing! i was hooked the entire time!

just read it.

Natalie ? says

2.5 ?

I don't know, what it was, but I didn't enjoy it as much as the first book. Although I still liked it :)
