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Sasha was born to, and has always defined himself by, the secret assassins' Order of the Crimson Scythe. He chose the love of Yarrow L'Estrella and Duncan Purefroy over his duty to his clan, forfeiting his last mission and allowing Prince Garith to live. Now, the order—previously Sasha's family—has branded him a traitor. He's marked, and that means the brethren of the Crimson Scythe won't stop until Sasha is dead.

Garith's twin kingdoms balance on the brink of war and all three men have reasons to help the King, whether loyalty, duty, or the interests of their own lands. Still, Yarrow and Duncan are willing to seek out and destroy the assassins' order to keep Sasha safe. But Sasha isn't sure that's what he wants. None want to admit their energy would be better spent helping Garith keep the kingdom united, or in his war against foreign invaders. All plans and assumptions shatter when it becomes clear that the real warmonger isn't a foreigner, but someone who lives in their midst. Their world teeters on the precipice of change, and Sasha, Duncan, and Yarrow can only hope the links they've forged will hold if Garith's kingdom is torn apart.

Iron and Ether Details

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From Reader Review Iron and Ether for online ebook

Paul says

4.5 STARS

This was great

Lena Grey says

In a perfect world, everyone has their beliefs and is never put in a position to have to compromise them; but none of us live in a world that is perfect. We are constantly having to adjust our attitudes to fit situations, to compromise in order to maintain or forward a cause. In Yarrow's world, in 'Iron and Ether' by Augusta Li, the same principle holds true. Yarrow and his friends and lovers have a lot of priorities that must be readjusted as the demands of the moment change, but the one thing they refuse to change is their love and their need to be together.

Yarrow has grown from an arrogant, fearful, angry boy to a more controlled, more responsible man. He's realizing that he can't go on unleashing his fury in order to feel strong and untouchable. For the first time in his life, he has two men who love and respect him; he's happy. The downside is, he tires more easily and is beginning to fear that without his anger, he will be much less powerful. Yarrow's challenge is going to be learning how to control his power while still maintaining it, learning to divert where it goes and what it affects, rather than just decimating everything in front of him. The mage knows that he has a long way to go, that he still has a lot of emotional problems to overcome; but at least now, he's trying to face them rather than bury them deep inside. This makes a world of difference. This new attitude spills over into his relationship with his lovers, making it easier for him to accept their love, comfort, and protection, bringing this trio closer than ever.

Duncan is as loving and caring as he ever was and his partners are finally able to accept it. He's always going to be idealistic and hope for the best, but his ideals have been tempered by difficult situations he's been in and it creates conflict in his soul. He loves both of his men dearly, but there are things about them that will always cause him distress. He's a warrior through and through, but he's also a fair person. He hates deception, yet his partners, especially Sasha, is nothing if not deceitful and Yarrow, as much as he loves him, is unstable and at times, heretical. Duncan is their rock. As idealistic as he is, his men adore him, and wish he could stay as good as he was when they first met, but he, like the other two, values their relationship more than anything in the world and will do what he has to to preserve it. Although still an exemplary human being, life has stolen away a lot of Duncan's idealism and enthusiasm.

Even though Sasha's loyalty to Duncan and Yarrow has alienated him from his brother assassins, he still feels a strong kinship with them. He's defined himself as an assassin since he was very young. Sasha is proud of his skills which he continues to hone on a regular basis. He enjoys his occupation and has no desire to stop. His association with Duncan and Yarrow has brought many changes to his life, especially in the area of feelings. Loving these men goes against the grain of everything he's been taught. He's constantly trying to balance and justify these emotions with the strict policy of the Brethren which teaches that feelings are weaknesses assassins can not afford to have, yet. Sasha doesn't want to live without them, regardless of the cost. If loving Yarrow and Duncan is a weakness, then he's determined to deal with it because he's not giving up the feelings they arouse in him. He is resigned to finding a way to work around them while remaining

efficient in his job.

There is a special place in my heart for Sai. When we first met this sweet man, he is carefree, happy, and definitely believes in free love. He believes in living for the moment and not worrying about the future. He is good-natured, laid-back, and nonjudgmental. He meets everyone with open arms, has no interest in bureaucracy, and disdains authority of any kind. After his adventure with Yarrow, Sai changes. He becomes moody and despondent. When his friends need him, he's there to help however he can. Sai now acknowledges that he's not separate from the world around him; a problem to one is a problem to all. He becomes his people's leader although the concept is foreign to him and is a beacon of hope. When it comes down to a mission that only Sai can accomplish, he steps up without hesitation.

This is a powerful, almost overwhelming portrayal of the character of the men and women involved. It's written in a lyrical style which challenges the imagination as well as the emotions. To say it is well-written is an understatement. Although it's lengthy, I believe that every word needs to be there. There are many complex side stories, which August ties together seamlessly. He doesn't pull any punches or make any apologies for his characters and their actions. He portrays war just as it is—fierce, bloody, cold, frustrating, and oh so needless in the first place. He doesn't gloss it over, making heroes of her men performing supernatural feats. Even his mage Yarrow has his limits and sometimes fails. There's still much to come in this series and I am looking forward to every word of it.

I recommend this tale to everyone, especially those who are already fans of the series and those who enjoy high magic, political subversion, intrigue, action, passion, intensity, and a realistic portrayal of life and death. Thanks, August, for a heart-rending, intense, and uplifting experience.

NOTE: This book was provided by DSP Publications for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

Elaine White says

** This review is word-for-word as that contained within the Blessed Epoch, Vol. 1 review **

Book 3: Iron and Ether

Length: 46-72%

POV: Yarrow, Duncan, Sasha, Garith, Sai, Thalil

Star rating: ★★★??

I'm beginning to see a definite pattern to this series and how I feel about it. Each one, this included, could have been a 5 star read if not for the silly inconsistencies and niggles that get in the way.

There are added POV's here, again. First we begin with Thalil, within both the Prologue and the main story, which I actually liked because he's a very interesting character and I like him. But we also had Garith's POV which got a little tiresome after a while. We also had Sai's POV, which was interesting, but it took a long time, almost halfway through, for him to pop up and he appeared so unexpectedly. The whole addition of Garith and Sai's POV's felt really inconsistent and not well thought out, as they both appeared out of nowhere and didn't fit into the timeline. I can see that the author was trying to use them as a distraction when really huge things were happening to Yarrow, Duncan and Sasha, but they were used more to delay showing

us the outcome of a huge event and it felt more like filler, at first.

This story focused on the build up to and the actual war against Johmatra, however it failed to captivate me in that way, because there was a huge build up, between the last book and this one, which was resolved in a paragraph. Each time they had to defeat or fight a new wave of Johmatra, it was resolved within a paragraph or two, while the war councils and the preparations took pages and pages. It would have been far more interesting the other way around.

The story began intriguingly, with Yarrow confronting the Goddesses and adamant to expose them. However, I can't help but feel that he needs someone on his side, in a physical way, who knows all of his secrets. Hale or Thalil, or even Fane or his Creature inside his head, would be better than nothing. Though I did like to see him finally getting to see his son, who could be an intriguing assistant to him. I still find it sad that his creature has been lost to time. He's a heathen God older and more powerful than any they know, but only Yarrow knows or acknowledges that he ever existed. The fact that the Goddesses don't know about him or just who Yarrow is and what's inside him is intriguing, but it also makes me wonder just how stupid and blind they really are, not to know or at least recognise the signs that are so obvious.

I love Yarrow, as always, and Sasha gets to shine a little more here, but I still think Duncan is obsolete, an absolute moron who is blind to the obvious and pointless. He adds nothing to the story but doubt, he's always obtuse about the most obvious things and his only real purpose is to provide the 'control' aspect of an experiment: Goddess fearing, true born knight, well respected by nobles and caring what people think. Which is fine, but I don't get why we need him when we're being given all the same things in Garith and Sander. We don't need both. I wasn't surprised in the least, either, that Sasha needed only a sideways glance at Yarrow to know the secret of his son, while Duncan remains oblivious even unto the end of the book.

Again, the ratio of sex is inconsistent. In places there are really big build ups to it with no follow through and in other places we see copious pages of sex that really aren't needed, important or even logical, considering all these character are going through.

Similarly, the story has an inconsistency of detail. Sometimes we're shown scenes in full detail that aren't needed and sometimes we're not shown something that is skimmed over, which I want to know more about. The war with Johmatra is a prime example. We saw more detail of Sai rescuing Emiri from the land of Johmatra than we did of his heroic battle to beat them in battle.

Overall, I loved Thalil and his plotting, Yarrow was still a brilliant character not used to his full potential and his grieving made me cry. The plot was a lot better than that of book 2, but it returned to the problems of book 1, by having too many sub-plots all apparently winding together to make up a larger plot, by adding in Garith, Sai and Thalil's plot arcs haphazardly and without POV consistency. I did love that we got to see a little more of Denna, who is vicious, brilliant, ruthless and cunning. But it still took until the second half for the story to become more consistent, more interesting and connect all the dots.

~

Favourite Quote

““Then I will lead the Crimson Scythe, you will rule Windwake, and Yarrow can...do whatever it is he feels destined to do.”

“Ride the great wyrm asleep in Estrella Lake,” the mage said, looking up at the ceiling, eyes far away. “Raise a great white fortress atop Starmont and look down over all the world. Make a war against...against those

who would keep mankind on its knees. Liberate the world from tyranny and champion truth.”
“Not much, then,” Duncan said. “Accomplished before lunchtime.””

~

Pixie Mmgoodbookreviews says

4 1/2 Hearts

Review written for MM Good Book Reviews

This story is part of a series and must be read in order. Sasha has always completed his orders from the Order of the Crimson Scythe, but when he choose the love of Yarrow and Duncan and let Prince Garith live he was marked and is now hunted by those he called family. Yarrow and Duncan are determined to put a stop to the Crimson Scythe in any way they can to make them leave Sasha alone but the outcome is not what they expected. As Sasha, Yarrow and Duncan plan against the Crimson Scythe Garith has far more worrying concerns as the Thirteen Goddesses priestess turn against him and foreign invaders make war on his kingdom shores.

Holy crap! This series is really beginning to heat up and throw us curve balls all over the place and making us wonder what on Earth could be coming next. As I write this review I wonder what I could tell you that wouldn't ruin the fun of discovery and I have to admit that it is pretty little. If you have been following this epic journey with me then you will know that anything is possible in Yarrow, Duncan and Sasha's world and if you haven't then you really need to do yourself a favor and go get the previous books Ash and Echoes and Ice and Embers.

The blurb really does describe this book pretty well but it leaves out a lot of surprises that leave you open mouthed, and all I can say is I wonder what Augusta Li has in stock for Duncan because Sasha's was a doozy. While I won't go into the precise details (*read the book*) or really even the vague details (*read the book*) :-) I will just cover what is in the blurb. Sasha, Duncan and Yarrow make plans to get the Crimson Scythe to back off, they have Corbin (mage assassin) assisting to locate the leaders but it is much harder to locate them than originally thought. Garith is facing heavy opposition from the priestesses and when war comes to his shore he has to make harsh decisions, he also becomes much closer with his bodyguard Sander on a journey to slay a beast in the hopes of saving his queen and child.

Hmmm what else can I tell you... well, we see Sai (Yarrow's Emiri friend) who plays a pivotal role in this adventure, we have surprises and shocks, gauntlets being thrown down and stomped on. We see allegiances developing and friendships forged, we have love that is stronger than the will of the gods and we have a burning need for the truth that is festering. There are scenes of epic battle, epic bloodbaths, epic magic and epic sex but with Yarrow, Duncan and Sasha can you really say you are surprised?

I have to recommend this story if you love high fantasy, epic storylines, fantastic characters, love and loss, hard times and lives lost, glimpses of happiness and hope and an ending that lets you know there is still more to come.

Maarja says

I thought this was the last book in the series, but there are some big issues unresolved here, so hopefully the author will finish the next part soon...

Augusta Li says

Update 9.29.13. 25% off with discount code TwitterSept29 for about the next 24 hours at DSP.

Kathryn West says

Liked it until end. Ending seemed a bit weak and anti climatic. Expected Yarrow to take on the Thirteen!

Fadia Pierre says

The secondary character in this book is whom I connected with. Saei, is it possible to be devasted by the choices that an author made for a character. It's hard to fall in love with them and witness the series of event which leads to their tragedy. I read this book sometime ago and still find my mind going back to Saei and keeping vigil for him.

Claudia says

ok. this story was good but for me not as good as the other two books.

Yarrow was a bit frustrating and I was a bit disappointed with his choices and his absences
nevertheless a real good series

high fantasy at his best

Nana says

I love MM and I love sword and sorcery fantasy. There are many books that satisfy both criteria, and yet I still struggle to find books I want to read. So many of fantasy books are about good vs evil, and that doesn't sit well with my love for amoral characters. I'm glad that I finally decided to read this one.

I loved Sasha and the world Augusta Li created. Loved it that the characters did not suddenly change their perception of themselves just because they fell in love. Admittedly, I'm still not a big fan of menage, but I came to care deeply about what would happen to the three heroes, and the author has woven a complex and intriguing tale. A unique world and an ingenious solution to Sasha's problem.

I am a happy girl and sure to read the next book in the series.

Koeur says

<https://koeur.wordpress.com/2015/09/2...>

Publisher: DSP

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Genre: Fantasy/Gay

Rating: 1.2/5

Publisher Description: Sasha was born to, and has always defined himself by, the secret assassins' Order of the Crimson Scythe. He chose the love of Yarrow L'Estrella and Duncan Purefroy over his duty to his clan, forfeiting his last mission and allowing Prince Garith to live.

Review: What the description does not reveal is how steeped in gay this novel is. It begins with a demi-god dipping his toes in blood while getting serviced by a man-boy. Fast forward and every sentence is about the three man lovers boinking each other on the road to meet/stop the assassins guild from taking out Sasha. Women are clearly despised as Yarrow lays into a hapless girl who is in an arranged marriage with Duncan. Other epithets are loosely arranged throughout the novel as to the what the gay musketeers feel about the opposite sex.

The prose is a bit stilted and the range of the unexpected that we are supposed to accept verges on the absurd. For example: Gay-Robin has a fight with a goddess, calls her a bitch, releases a lake worm from bondage (who is now his friend), whom he will ride into battle. Mmmm-k.

Read this while fishing out lice from your hair.

Becky Condit says

Please leave comments on Pattycake's 5 sweet pea review at <http://mrsconditreadsbooks.com/index....>

"The future always promised bloodshed, conflict, loss, and pain. But as Yarrow braided his fingers into Sasha's and Duncan's and lifted their hands to kiss the back of each, he thought: not yet. Not yet."

Iron and Ether is Book Three of the Blessed Epoch series written by Augusta Li. This book seamlessly carries on the sweeping saga started in Ash and Echoes, and continued in Ice and Embers. Each book can be read as a standalone, but reading the whole series in order will give you a much better appreciation of just how enthralling and gripping this series is. The blurb gives a basic look at the bare bones of the book, but you really need to read the story for yourself to savor the full flavor of this richly detailed feast.

With a seamlessly smooth and gripping plot flow that pulls you in from the first page, this plot AND character driven story follows Yarrow, Duncan, and Sasha as, together and separately, they struggle to overcome almost overwhelming odds and obstacles to keep each other safe from their many enemies. Each man must look within themselves to find the strength to grow and adapt to the life-altering changes sweeping their world. The one constant in their lives is the love they feel for each other, and the lengths that each will go to to keep the others safe. The backstory does an absolutely fabulous job of laying a solid foundation for the storyline, leaving no gaps or plot holes to throw you off track. The greed, political intrigue, plots, counter plots, thirst for power, wars, battles, and magic paint a very vivid portrait of life and death in this fascinating series.

Augusta Li's writing style is eloquent, beautifully original, and laser sharp. Her world building is wonderfully and totally convincing, with diverse, three dimensional characters who have the same hopes and dreams as anyone living in the so-called "real" world. The sex is totally hot without being over-the-top, and the love between the three MCs is tender, passionate, and enduring. The book has a HFN ending that leads me to believe that there might be even more books to look forward to in the future. I absolutely LOVED reading this book and have thoroughly enjoyed the whole series to date. If you're looking for an enthralling tale that will sweep you away into another world of wonder and adventure, then I can DEFINITELY recommend this book and series to you.
