



Irons in the Fire

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Carved out of the collapse of the old Tormalin Empire, Lescar has long been laid to waste by rival dukes, while bordering nations look on with indifference or exploit its misery. However, a mismatched band of exiles and rebels are agreed that the time has come for change.

Irons in the Fire Details

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Author : Juliet E. McKenna

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From Reader Review Irons in the Fire for online ebook

Ruth says

c2009. Political speculative fiction is not really my bag but when done well - it is brilliant. This not so much. To me there were a few plot flaws and some hitches in the plot were solved by means of magic. However, as I could not plot a simple story - this criticism should be taken with a pinch of salt. I couldn't say that I liked any of the characters or even felt any sympathy for them which is really a bit strange - oops - with the exception of Branca, that is. But.....I finished the book, thought about the book so its not all bade. The jury is still out as to whether I will try the next in the series. 5 wftb: rival: mismatched: exiles: revolution: adventure.

Blodeuedd Finland says

I had read 70 pages and realised I was bored. I did not know what I had read, and I had probably skimmed every second page

Jacob says

(Repost from <http://drying-ink.blogspot.com/2010/1...>)

Yes, I have been doing quite a few reviews of McKenna's books recently! This will probably be my last for a while, until I get Blood in the Water - the next book. Irons in the Fire is the start of a new fantasy trilogy, exploring another area of the world of Einarinn: the warring duchies of Lescar. Each Duke desires the throne of this broken country, but the constantly shifting alliances, lead-adulterated coinage, and a peasantry broken by constant levies for the duchies' mercenaries combine to make it an impossible goal for each. It sounds typical, but the worldbuilding is actually fairly extraordinary, with the ever-changing politics of Lescar shown very well, as well as each of their rulers' machinations - and the determination of others to profit from the chaos.

And this is where we meet our protagonists. A band of Lescari exiles, strategies for Lescari freedom are constantly pored over and rejected: and the use of elemental magic in these wars is forbidden by Archmage Planir. But what about Artifice, the magic of the mind? The Archmage has never claimed any authority over that... The setup is slow, as the characters, from very different reaches of life, meet and discard ideas to put and end to this. However, in the book's second half, the action soon speeds up, as Sorgrad and 'Gren - two characters from The Tales of Einarinn - get involved. I can't really spoil it further, but let's just say the plan is simple, but the result exceedingly fun! Although you don't need to have read any of McKenna's previous series, you'll probably get more out of the references, and especially of the Mountainborn's history, if you have. If so, you'll spot the pair early on: they're fairly prominent, and fun characters.

Our other main characters are Tathrin, a scholar currently working for a fur trader, Aremil, a crippled scholar himself, and one of the conspirators from the beginning, and finally, the mistress of Duke Garnot: as well as several other recurring viewpoints, like Duchess Litasse and Karn. Although Aremil fits several stereotypes, though I won't say which, the way in which he's dealt with is constantly surprising and not cliched in the least, Tathrin, meanwhile, adapts surprisingly quickly to his new situation as a co-conspirator, and an outlook on Sorgrad and 'Gen's more... colourfully pragmatic actions!

It's a fun book with a slow start and some surprisingly moving sequences, which I'd recommend, not as light reading, but definitely for those with a bit of time to spare and looking to get into a finished series.

8/10

Ithlilian says

Irons in the Fire is exactly what the jacket says, a group of people get together and begin to plan for a revolution. That's not super interesting, but fantasy doesn't really need anything earth shattering for people to read it. All you need is a medieval setting, some sort of politicians at odds with each other, and a group of heroes. This novel has all that, but that is not enough to make it interesting.

We start off with a brief history and the current state of each of the warring nations. Unless you want to sit down with a pen and paper, take notes, and memorize facts, it really won't mean much to you. I would so much rather have books introduce the pertinent information to us as needed instead of throwing an overload of facts at you in the first ten pages. Let our characters tell us what we need to know instead of some history teacher. Anyway, after the lesson, we start off in the midst of the daily lives of our main characters. They are immediately appealing, and it didn't take much effort for me to get interested in their story. I enjoyed the initial introduction of everyone very much and found myself at page 150 or so before I knew it. Then, seemingly out of no where, we have a band of characters that all trust each other and are ready to overthrow the government. It was a bit of a leap, and there wasn't as much planning as I was expecting, but I was still interested.

My issues occurred around the halfway point. At this point all of the characters are travelling in different directions going about their business, we only occasionally hear from one or two of them, and not much of import is going on. The events of importance are covered by multiple sets of characters as news travels around the kingdom, which makes certain sections seem repetitious. The thing is, this book is kind of boring. It veered away from the characters to focus on the plot which wasn't really all that involved. We are constantly told about what this Duke is thinking about doing to that Duke, and what the other Duke is going to have for lunch, but we never get to see any of that actually happening. The only royal viewpoint we have is more of a summary chapter than a portal to new information, and if I wasn't already so invested in this novel at the halfway point I would have simply quit reading it. There are no interesting threads left tantalizingly on the ground awaiting the author to pick them up and shock us in the next installment, this is quite simply a barely fleshed out group of people loosely planning a revolution and going about the tedious task of achieving the revolution. There was certainly promise here with the strong character based start and a land torn by conflict and hate for so many years, but instead of exploring it fully through the eyes of our various characters, we are left walking from place to place, having boring conversations, learning a new skill here or there, and completely leaving some characters in the dark. I see more of the same in the future installments of this series, and won't be continuing.

Rosemary says

This is the first in a trilogy, and I want to defer final judgment. That said, it is one of the most honest and complex explications of the problems with revolution I have seen.

I think as long as magic doesn't become too much of a *deus ex machina* for me, then I should be able to stick with it. I wish the heroes were a little less whiny, but otherwise, I like it well enough.

We'll see what the second volume holds. (Though I really wish it was available on Nook, and not just on Kindle, as an e-book.)

D.w. says

I liked this book. There were some things that stood out. The cover was intriguing enough for me to flip it over and read the back material. I like politically motivated matter so this became a reason to acquire it.

I started to read it nearly after I bought it, and I have quite a backlog of other books to read. So that was intriguing. It begins with an analysis travelogue of the area of McKenna's world and this is almost irrelevant to the story you do read. You do need some background material, but our main characters do seem to cover all of it as we start reading the story.

What is wrong with this book is three things. Too many repetitions of which Duke does what to whom and why, all the politics of this divided realm kept straight by McKenna but I found that I did not need to do so to enjoy it. The sense of time is the next, where letters travel faster than people. Rumors reach the spymasters all across the world so quickly that they need not use letters. And that things that are completely secret are not when the spymaster needs to know a thing.

That part is just wrong. A secret known by two is something that can't be found out by your extraneous spy who should be focusing on bigger issues. I can imagine a spy telling their boss that they had enough time to pursue a little piece of information, or the spymasters (There are 2) that they have so much time in their day that they can get the littlest piece of information from who knows what source and it turns out to be pivotal.

The last is the Aetheric magic system, which is fine except for one thing. They need to bring in extra practitioners so they can communicate, but then they have one connection where they don't. The first is just able to happen. If that is the case then they don't need anyone else and a whole subplot makes no sense. Which a whole subplot makes no sense. Never explained well, overused a great deal.

Aside from those issues this would be a better read. Even to being a reread, depending on how the series finishes up.

Len Evans Jr says

As I began reading this series, I experienced something unexpected... For the first time I found myself 50% through the first book of a series by Ms. McKenna and she had not "hooked" me yet. I believe that this was due only to the fact that 1)that first half is spent introducing a large number of characters we have never seen before; not to mention laying the back story for what is truly an epic trilogy... So whatever you do DO NOT start reading and give up 20% in... cuz the moment certain hugely imperfect totally human familiar faces show up (and the action heats up) the author has you strapped in and the rest is quite the wild ride; including a few twists I did not see coming. By the start of book 2 I was so totally entranced by the depth of so many of the new characters not too mention learning so much more of those returning ones. I think Ms. McKenna has so perfected her skill at creating characters that are neither good nor bad that most of them end up somewhere around brown rather than black, white or even gray... I felt that even the most vile individuals we encounter; except for one or two.. not only had multiple traits that made them almost look like they were redeemable at times... Truly she wrote all by a few so human that I felt true regret for most all when justice caught up with them. Civil war is never clean; emotions run high and atrocities are generally committed on

both sides; and if one side does begin on the moral high ground; their struggle soon becomes as much about fighting to maintain some part of it as well as fighting the actually enemy. I felt like the progression of the war and the aftermath was realistic not to mention a few major twist that felt so right yet so unexpected in a book like this. My introduction to Ms. McKenna's work was finding hardback copies of Tales of the Einarinn 1-4 in one visit to the bookstore; devouring them in less than 3 days and then immediately searching store to store till I found the 5th. She did not disappoint when I next explored the Compass series either.. the moving word-pictures she created thought out were so detailed, rich and complete I not only came to know the new friends in depth; but truly would recognize every major character's face & every location traveled to; if somehow I was magically dumped inside the book. Sometimes authors of fantasy novels get so hung up with the "Fantastic" and the good vs. evil aspects of their stories that the good guys & bad guys end up 2-dimensional more images of one another. I prefer characters like Livak and most every other we have come to love; not only are they not perfect they generally have no illusions of ever attaining that state. Every character could very easily be someone you may pass on the sidewalk any day in some city on our planet. I purchased and read this entire trilogy as ebooks quality was top notch, with a layout and even the map images were clear and easily readable. (I hate trying to visualize any book with a lot of traveling in the story if I don't have a good foundation of where and how far apart locations are)

Emma Deplores Goodreads Censorship says

I really like the idea of this book. Strange Horizons has a great review of the trilogy, and also Kate Elliott liked it (if author blurbs can be believed). So it sounded great and, while I was aware that almost nobody has read it, I put this down to the fact that most female fantasy authors are obscure, regardless of the quality of their books. (But maybe not *this* obscure.)

So I bought the book, since my library doesn't have it, and I've tried reading it a couple times, but the way the characters act and relate to each other is just so bland and stereotypical that I can't see any humanity in it. The best I can put it is to say it feels based on other, mediocre fantasy books rather than on real life. Kind of like the way I used to write about human behavior when I was a young teen and my inspiration came from video games.

So: anybody want to convince me that it's worth continuing to read?
