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Ash



Synopsis

Cinderella retoldIn the wake of her father's death, Ash is left at the mercy of her cruel stepmother. Consumed with grief, her only joy comes by the light of the dying hearth fire, rereading the fairy tales her mother once told her. In her dreams, someday the fairies will steal her away, as they are said to do. When she meets the dark and dangerous fairy Sidhean, she believes that her wish may be granted. The day that Ash meets Kaisa, the King's Huntress, her heart begins to change. Instead of chasing fairies, Ash learns to hunt with Kaisa. Though their friendship is as delicate as a new bloom, it reawakens Ash's capacity for love-and her desire to live. But Sidhean has already claimed Ash for his own, and she must make a choice between fairy tale dreams and true love. Entrancing, empowering, and romantic, Ash is about the connection between life and love, and solitude and death, where transformation can come from even the deepest grief.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here's the deal: I work in a bookstore. As a twenty-something (gay) woman, I more often than not inwardly cringe at the girls who ask me to point them towards new books, and specify that they like things like Twilight. Lo's debut novel, Ash, isn't Twilight. It's the anti-Twilight. And that's exactly why it's so good. Even though it's a retelling of Cinderella, Ash is more a coming-of-age story than a sappy romance. Torn between the memories of her dead parents and the reality of her cruel stepmother, Aisling finds her escape in the woods she loves and the dangerous fairies that live there. Until she meets Kaisa, the King's huntress, Ash lives as an abused servant by day and a

bewitched victim of fairy magic by night. Now, if this was Twilight, Aisling would fall hopelessly in love with some abusive, mystical stalker who she is "inexplicably drawn to" (I swear, that's the exact wording they use for 90% publisher copies of the YA fantasy-romance dreck pumped out today like candy). But this atmospheric and eerie plot leads to a surprising conclusion -- much different than the classic Cinderella -- but ultimately much more convincing! The romance in Ash is less purple prose or a storm of clichés and more poignant and touching -- based on friendship, respect and freedom, not an unhealthy attraction to danger. I couldn't put this one down, and I'm glad I didn't: the ending is utterly satisfying and sweet (spoiler: oh, and gay). As for me, I really enjoy pointing Twilight-addled preteens towards such subversive literature. There's something deliciously ironic with the fact that a healthy, lesbian relationship in teen literature is more controversial than the dozens of abusive, incomprehensible, poorly written "novels" for teens pumped out each day.

As rapidly becomes obvious when you read this, this is a re-telling of the Cinderella story. But it's not quite the one you remember from Disney. Aisling (Ash) is our Cinderella, losing her mother at the age of 13, and her father not long thereafter. There is the traditional step-mother of the original tale, but as depicted here she's not quite an absolutely mean-spirited ogre, but rather truly has a reason for treating Ash as she does. Her step-sisters are still pretty addle-pated, obsessed with their looks and catching a man of means as their ticket to the good life, but here again there's a little more meat placed on the bare bones of this story, as it's not just the prince of the realm that they set their eyes on, but includes the possibility of catching a much older man, considering him to be acceptable merely because he has money, regardless of his character or age, and as such provides some commentary on arranged marriages and the self-imposed bind of people trying to maintain their image and rich lifestyle regardless of the cost. But beyond these minor revisions, there are two major points of departure from the original. The first is the introduction of the fairy elves, a complete culture in their own right, that used to have a fair amount of regular contact with the 'normal' people, and second is the introduction of the King's Huntress, a nice change from the traditional all-male dominated society of most fantasies. These two items provide the focus for Ash's development, first with her attraction to Sidhean of the elves, and second her attraction to the Kaisa, the current Huntress, which is barely acknowledged by Ash at first, but eventually becomes an overriding force in driving the story to its conclusion.

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