



Tracing the Shadow

Sarah Ash

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Sarah Ash's acclaimed trilogy, the Tears of Artamon, was a stunning blend of sorcery and intrigue, politics and breathtaking imagery. Now this gifted storyteller returns with a tale of a siege between kingdoms, and a battle between heretics and believers—each with their own truths, their own lies, and their own soul-shattering discoveries waiting to be made.

Book One of the Alchemist's Legacy

The kingdom of Francia has purged its magi. But when a young Guerrier rescues an orphaned street waif, little does he know that she is the daughter of a magus who met his end on their pyres—or that she is guarded by an aethyric spirit and driven by the name of the traitor who condemned her father to flames. With the gift of song infused within her, the child's voice will bring her before the most powerful heads of state. And she will craft herself into a weapon...aimed at the heart of the man she despises.

From the alchemist's apprentice whose discovery leads him into a dark partnership to a girl who will become the toast of three nations, a new magic will grant powers and ignite dangers beyond all reckoning.

A timeless tale of adventure, battle, and beauty, this dazzling story spans the realms of the human and the immortal, the schemes of the power hungry, the dreams of lovers, and the resurrection of the fallen in one magnificent epic fantasy.

From the Hardcover edition.

Tracing the Shadow Details

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From Reader Review Tracing the Shadow for online ebook

Kimberly says

It took so long for me to finish this book -- not because it was difficult, but because so many characters were given equal time and weight at the beginning, and it wasn't until I was halfway through that it seemed to have a path. The author's writing seemed to become better and more fluent towards the end, which is a shame. I don't know that I'd purchase the sequel.

Ithlilian says

I was reading Tracing the Shadow, going along just fine until page 200 or so. All of the sudden the main character turned from a whiny apprentice coward, to a magically powerful evil person. I couldn't stand to read pages and pages and pages about a little girl, and in the end that is why I stopped reading. This would have been better if there was more time spent on making consistent believable characters and less time switching viewpoints to cover events that barely even matter. Just tell us what happens with the killing of the boy, don't switch characters for 40 pages to build up to it. Disappointing.

Isana says

This book. This book!

This is one of the most frustrating books I've read in a long time. Don't get me wrong. The story is incredibly interesting and the characters are complex. However, it just around SO MUCH and the handling of time is terrible. The switching between character points of view so often made my head spin and at times I wanted to throw the book at a wall. Also, the romantic relationships in the book . . . Heartache for the reader is one thing but you don't even get to enjoy the relationship before it's ripped apart.

My feelings give this book a two but the story was so fascinating that it gets the extra star.

Lucy Takeda says

I was thinking three stars---until I hit the last chapters. I am a sucker for doomed romances, evidently. This novel involves music, magic, inquisitions, political conflicts, and cults. There are numerous plots intertwined; a young girl, a goddess, a young man that gets involved with a magus, musical/ opera conflicts, royalty, assassinations. Oh, also several romances. I found the link between a person and a powerful hawk from another realm intriguing. I don't tend to like plots where folks can turn into someone else; it strikes me as a cop out. Three quarters through, I was thinking, " I am not going to bother reading any sequels." By the end, I think I will. There is definitely character development and a fairly advanced level of vocabulary. Some of the emotional connections are somewhat simplistic.

James says

A real page-turner, especially if you're already a fan of the 'Tears of Artamon' series. Lovingly written in a world that takes on a life of its own. I always enjoy delving into a book by Sarah Ash, I know it will never disappoint. It was great to see the background to some of the slightly minor characters in her original trilogy.

Rory says

This is a solid fantasy novel. The author tries to create various countries and cultures to base the story around and in doing so never fully develops any of them. She does a good job developing the main characters but there are so many secondary characters that at times I was confused as to which character was a part of which country. If the author has just spent more time at the beginning explaining the politics between the different countries, then the story would have flowed better.

Alicia says

A Fantasy writer that I definitely recommend.

Tracing the Shadow, Sarah Ash's first book in the Alchymist's Legacy, is a fast-paced adventure with magic, romantic love (both unrequited and fulfilled), religious & political intrigue, and friendships that transcend familial ties. There are a number of main characters who stem from the world of Francia. My favorite among them is Jagu de Rustephan, a young musician turned warrior monk who is in love with the beautiful and talented soprano Celestine. Both are haunted by horrifying events in their childhoods having to do with magic. Both believe that they are destined to defeat the magus believed to be one of the greatest traitors and enemies of Francia: Kaspar Linnaeus.

One of the major themes in this book is trust--who can one trust; after a while I found myself distrusting all of the motives of the characters.

Sarah Ash has an interesting way of providing short & quick "scenes" flipping back and forth between the many main characters much like a movie might have. This became annoying at times for me as I wished for more from the "scene" than was given.

Overall, a great fantasy novel--I can't wait for the next book in the series. I might have to read some other books of hers to tide me over.

Erik says

This is a pre-companion book to Ash's first trilogy "Tears of Artamon", where the second book in the duology will be a true companion novel (just different characters), and this first book setting that second one up. As is often true for Ash, her books take some time to get into, and the writing isn't necessarily fabulous... but the stories are pretty good. This book follows the same vein. It is the first of the duology, so it isn't surprising that there are still a handful of un-answered questions, but not too many. The book does a good job of tying things up very nicely for a complete first book.

Ingrid says

I just finished reading TTS. This book is set in the same world as the Tears of Artamon. One of the things I love about Sarah Ash is that she really explains the characters of her novels and thus explains the choices that they make. None of her characters are ever one dimensional, they all have depth and even as they make mistakes and suffer from various personal flaws there is a rational behind it all. And behind it all are the themes of religious freedom, politics and greed.

Forgotten Realms Queen says

I had already read Sarah Ash's Tears of Artamon trilogy, so the second I saw this book i said to myself "mine!" and went home with it the same day expecting a wonderful start to a brand new series by an excellent author.

But I was wrong. This is not the wonderful start to a brand new series by an excellent author, but rather the wonderful start to the PREQUEL story line of the Tears of Artamon trilogy by an excellent author.

In the Tears of Artamon we are introduced to the Drakhoul 'daemons', a magus by the name of Kasper Linneius, Emperer Eugene of Tielen as well as Tielen's warring neighbours the Francians.

In Tracing the Shadow, we see the origins of all the above. Sarah Ash tells us how the daemons came about, how the war between Tielen and Francia essentially started, as well as the story of the magus Kasper Linneius through engaging and imaginative characters that cannot help but pull at your heart a little bit.

I was not able to put this book down once I picked it up. And I know that anyone else wanting to start a new fantasy series or a new, excellent author would not be remiss in picking anything up by this author.

Melanie says

I expect much better world-building in adult fantasy. I repeatedly checked to see if this wasn't YA. It's not often you can say a book would've been better with an additional 200-300 pages.

I thought it would intrigue me enough to hate-read the next book but the end was so...bad that I don't care to.

Would not recommend.

Brendan says

You definitely need to read the Tears of Artamon before picking up this book, but once you do it's a great addition to the series. It feels like Wicked does to The Wizard of Oz - you get to see another side of all of the events, learn more about a few of the characters, and meet some new ones. The book follows some very likable characters through some harrowing experiences, and it's fun to read about.

Kendall says

Sarah Ash never disappoints me, and this book is no exception. I loved the politics, the twisting plot, and the characters felt so real to me.

Dy says

I like sword and sorcery and have no issues with complex world building, but this was too hard to follow. The names of the two main male characters were so similar that every time she switched between them I had to stop and think, "Which one is he, again?"

Gave up at page 186 -- It wasn't interesting enough to grab me. The characters were hard to differentiate. The lack of a clear protagonist is realistic - there are two sides to every story - but makes for unsatisfying reading; I found myself not wanting to root for any of them.

The last is the main reason I abandoned this book. The characters left me cold and life is too short for books you don't enjoy.

Deb says

Another failed-to-engage book. It has all the hallmarks of a typical fantasy plot, and I wanted to like it, but I wasn't sucked in after a handful of chapters. Life's too short to plod through books you don't really want to read.
