



# Smoke and Iron

*Rachel Caine*

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**Smoke and Iron** Rachel Caine

To save the Great Library, the unforgettable characters from *Ink and Bone*, *Paper and Fire*, and *Ash and Quill* put themselves in danger in the next thrilling adventure in the *New York Times* bestselling series.

The opening moves of a deadly game have begun. Jess Brightwell has put himself in direct peril, with only his wits and skill to aid him in a game of cat and mouse with the Archivist Magister of the Great Library. With the world catching fire, and words printed on paper the spark that lights rebellion, it falls to smugglers, thieves, and scholars to save a library thousands of years in the making...if they can stay alive long enough to outwit their enemies.

## Smoke and Iron Details

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Author : Rachel Caine

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# From Reader Review Smoke and Iron for online ebook

may ↗ says

3.5 stars

Either I'm getting more critical or this series is lowering in quality just slightly?

This book is the fourth installment in the Great Library series, which is a fantasy series I think is EXTREMELY underrated and has been so much fun to follow. It's got historical yet dystopian vibes, lots of diversity, and a cast of characters you get attached to easily.

But **with each new installment I read, I get a little less engrossed in the series?** It might be because it's quite long; there are five books total and each book has a pretty slow-moving plot. But there's just something less engaging about each book and I can't quite pinpoint it.

*"Is a fire the fault of a man who drops a match, or the one who spilled the oil all over the floor, knew it, and left it there?"*

This series is essentially about a world where the Great Library of Alexandria survived, and it controls and censors what books the citizens of the world can or cannot read. It's become oppressive, and so this band of six kids are trying to change it.

**This book is a story of rebellion and giving the power of choice to every individual.** It's about opening yourself up to knowledge, fighting for what you think is right, and choosing what to believe. At its core, it's a story of overcoming oppressive governments, and I think that's something extremely relevant to today's events.

Despite my inability to get fully engaged in the story and the issues I had with the development of characters (among other things), I still really enjoyed this book. There's **something about this series that makes you care about what happens to the characters** and get excited to know what happens next. The writing isn't anything special, but it's easy to read, and some dry humor finds its way in too.

Unlike the previous books, Smoke and Iron follows four different characters and it's... a little disconcerting. It makes sense why the author chose to write four different POVs—the characters were almost all split up—but **it was just a little... much?** And then at the end, there are three chapters for three new characters and it's just. WHY. It's way too much. I do like multiple POVs because I like seeing into different characters' heads, but there's a line between "just enough" and "too much" and this book crosses it.

With four POVs, you expect to have a lot of character development. Sadly... there is minimal development?

? **JESS** || Jess' chapters were REALLY fun to read, because he was impersonating his twin brother Brendan for the first half or so, who reminds me a lot of Kaz Brekker (but smiles more) and who I ADORE. I don't think Jess changes very much at all, except he does get a little braver?? I guess??? (I'm reaching here.)

? **KHALILA** || I ADORE Khalila!!! I absolutely love her. She's one of my favorite parts of this book, and one of my favorite characters! She's such a strong (female) character—her most powerful tool is her voice, but she's also sweet, caring, passionate, and also, a really great fighter. And I think it's extremely important to see this hijabi Muslim woman in a place of leadership.

? **WOLFE** || Okay, Wolfe and Santi are my favorite gay dads to ever exist, and I just adore their relationship. I'm 99% sure that Wolfe has PTSD (was tortured physically and mentally before the series takes place), and seeing him fighting that—seeing Santi try to help him—was really inspiring, especially as a mentally ill person myself. Didn't really see the need to include his POV though?

? **MORGAN** || Morgan was just NOT a good character in this book. Her only development is from “do I love him?” to “maybe I don't love him” to “I *do* love him” and it's so hilariously RIDICULOUS that this strong, fierce woman has been reduced to an arc like that. And while she had more of a personality in this book than previously, her “I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE NOT GONNA HELP ME” attitude got on my nerves quickly.

I think another issue that kept me from being as engaged with this book was that it was... slow. It took me 6 days to read, when it should've taken me about half that time. The plot was really slow to get started, though—I'll give it credit—**there were plenty of events that kept me interested**. Still, I struggled to get into it and that's one of the main things that affected my reading experience.

Also, the ending was rushed. There was no time to wrap up one HUGE event that happened in the second-to-last chapter. And while I'm excited to see what happens in the next book, **it's hard to imagine what can possibly keep me interested** after all the huge events that happened in Smoke and Iron.

*“[...] we will bring our light back to a world we left in darkness.”*

**:: rep ::** hijabi Muslim Saudi Arabian female MC, gay male MC with coded PTSD, aromantic-asexual-coded female side character, multi-gender-attracted aromantic-spectrum-coded female side character, Spanish male side character, gay male side character, side character with coded PTSD

**:: content warnings ::** war violence, death (by gunshot, stabbing, cutting of throat), torture [in prison], blood

*Thank you to Berkley Publishing Group and Netgalley for a review copy in exchange for an honest review! This did not affect my opinion in any way. All quotes are from an advanced copy and may differ in final publication.*

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**Steven says**

Thanks to Netgalley and Berkley for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review!

This might be the best yet in the series, and I think it was definitely my favorite of the series so far. We come off of the cliffhanger of the next book with everyone in limbo, and the author uses her mighty pen to move and shift all of our players like pieces on a chess board, forcing them towards the huge clash that is destined to happen soon.

We get to read POVs from multiple characters in this one. Usually when that kind of a change happens in a series, I am a little thrown by the change, but in this one, it flows and works perfectly with the story. We get to see all the little cogs of the story turning and moving and pushing the story forward.

I just wish I had waited to catch up on this series until the last one was coming out much sooner, because the wait is going to kill me!

Pick this series up. It's a lot of fun, really well-written, full of great characters and mystery and action and romance, and you won't regret it.

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## **C.G. Drews says**

**So I really absolutely adore this series and this was another excellent one.** Also my current emotional state is:

scREEEAMMMINGGG  
sCREEEaaamINgggGGGGGGG  
SCREEEEEEEEEEAMINGggggggg

Which is nice. Wholesome. Everything is fine.

Also before we go on, I had the epic honour of being on the blog tour! So stop by here if you want a snippet of the book and some epic pictures.!! ?

**Now this is going to come as a shock to you but...I FREAKING LOVED THIS BOOK.**

The Great Library series is just one of my favourites (the covers are also so beautiful my eyeballs ran off and married them) and I should talk about it more because it's inventive, unique, heartwrenching, full of family and friendship, the plots can get super schemey (which is the BEST kind of plot) and at the end of it all = it is about book appreciation. BOOK APPRECIATION. **There is nothing that's going to make me fall in love faster than an entire series devoted to people who would die for books. I mean, same.**

**Since we're at the 4th book in the series, the stakes are HIGH.**

The last book ended in a wicked cliffhanger (!! ) and this one just throws us back into the thick of it. Our book-loving-protection-squad are all split up and traumatised. And being, ya know, tortured. But rebellion is HERE. I lovelovelove how everyone's lives were on the line and I didn't feel like everyone was safe — which is super good. Although there was WAY more threats of terror than actually having it follow through. What can I say. I am a little dark. ˘\_(?)\_˘ I think we could've had a little more terror on-page to make things seem more real. But I still FREAKING LOVED IT.

**Jess, Khalila, Wolfe and Morgan all narrate this time!** I did miss not seeing as much of Jess, but everyone was so split up so this worked super well. Also Khalila's narration was the utter best. I looove her so much.

## LIST OF THINGS TO NOTE

? There is basic 100ft line of people wanting to smack Brendan and Jess into the middle of next week due to their schemes.

? Dario offers to do dirty work until he realises he can't wear his tailored beautiful clothes. Then he retracts.

? KHALILA RULES AND SHOOTS BADIES AND PRAYS FOR YOUR SOUL AND IS SWEET AND KIND AND WILL ALSO END YOU. I FREAKING LOVE HER.

? Brendan. BRENDAN. Since he and Jess are swapping places he ends up writing Jess this letter that is basically: "I have to read books to pretend to be you. I hate reading. Pls let this be over before I end you and then myself and then the entire world."

? #DramaQueenBrightwells

? I love Jess and Brendan and how they backstab each other occasionally but won't let anyone else do it.

Also whenever someone says, "Ah family bonds!" They both laugh and laugh and laugh. Their dad would sell them for a peanut.

? (Sad we didn't get more of Brendan in this book, though. THE SLYTHERIN TO JESS' RAVENCLAW. I love him so so much!! My Slytherin son.)

? Glain just hits people and like, I feel this.

? THERE IS A DRAGON.

? We go way more into depth about the Obscurists and Morgan's corrupt power which was so interesting!

? As always the diversity is on point, with the leading characters being of all races, Khalila being a practising Muslim, one of the main couples being queer, and everything so respectful and amazing!

Wolfe and Santi still steal the show every time they're on page.

? It raises the stakes way way too high at the end — AND I JUST WANT TO SAY I'M SCREAMING A BIT OK.

? ALRIGHT FINE. A LOT. I'M SCREAMING A LOTTTTT.

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## Carrie says

Yes folks it's that time of year again, time for my annual rant and rave for Rachel Caine's young adult fantasy The Great Library series. For the past four years I have raved about how much I just love this series but I've also had to rant away that yet again I now have yet another year to wait until the next book and oh what a long wait it will be. Last year's rant was a bit more memorable since I'd thought the series was going to be a trilogy but found out we had another cliffhanger and had been expanded to five books. I'm a little calmer this year after book four but still..... such a long wait!

So.... I suppose I should be actually reviewing the book by now, huh? Honestly there's not much to say at this point except what are you waiting for?? Read this series!! Ok, ok, I suppose I should add a little more info. The series is one that definitely needs to be enjoyed from the beginning as it continues onward from book to book and one would be lost jumping into the middle. The world in the books revolves around The Great Library that controls the books of the world and uses alchemy to distribute the books. Those working for the library track down anyone with any in their possession and confiscate the materials since ownership of books is expressly forbidden and anyone violating this law could even be sentenced to death.

Jess Brightwell is our lead character who came from a family that was involved in the black market for books. Jess had been raised to be a runner, delivering the books to those willing to pay the price and risk ownership but then Jess had been sent to the library by his father to become a spy from the inside. He got involved in the training only to find himself mixed up in the secrets of the library and with the group of friends he had met they began their battle against the Archivist Magister of the Great Library.

The world Rachel Caine created at the beginning of this story was a wonderful one filled with magic and so much more. But as the books have gone on things have been expanded more and more and with each book I'm still amazed at the story and the progress the characters make. At this point in the series the characters have been separated giving another layer as the point of view changes with the action going on in each location which gave it a faster feel than the last which I'd thought had slowed a little. After finishing this round though I am already making plans for next year to reread from the beginning to enjoy all of the books together so as you can guess I would definitely recommend to any fantasy fans out there to check out The Great Library series!

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more review please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

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### **Nicole (Read Eat Sleep Repeat) says**

I have been quite impatiently waiting for Smoke and Iron since finishing Ash and Quill over a year ago. And the wait was well worth it!

I'm going to keep this short and sweet to avoid spoilers for any books in this series. This particular installment was highly entertaining, with a fast paced plot that moved along at a nice clip from start to finish. It alternated between each character's perspective every few chapters, which not only helped to pull the story tight from all angles, but also added depth and complexity to characters that were previously not as fleshed out. And the settings and world building that were already impressive continued to expand and develop here.

While I have a keen fondness for Ink and Bone, the first book in The Great Library series, for introducing me to this incredibly interesting and magical world, I think this is the best book of the bunch to date. I can't wait to see what Caine does in the last book to round out this series!

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### **Anna's Herding Cats says**

Oh my gosh! I thought this was just going to be a trilogy! The excitement! It's ridiculous! lol

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### **Robin (Bridge Four) says**

Information is power, I'm a firm believe in that. The Great Library is a world where knowledge is held by a system, in this case The Great Library in Alexandria, and they chose what information is acceptable for the world at large. Printed books on paper are considered contraband and if you are caught with one it could mean your life.

I've liked the premise of the series since Ink and Bone, however the series lost a little momentum for me with the next two books in the series. But, I think that we are back on track and I enjoyed Smoke and Iron possibly the most so far.

This is told from multiple PoVs at the characters are all scattered in different places. All are in great danger,

just some a little more than others. I sometimes struggle when this is the case, waiting for characters to find each other again. But each separate story was so engaging that I didn't have any issues with it.

I like that the women of this series are smart and strong all in their own ways. Khalila is smart and brave willing to try just about anything to save the version of the library she thinks it should be. I enjoyed how she found her way into being a leader of the team.

*“You have the gift, you know.”*

*“What gift?”*

*“Silence,” he said. “You let people think. And yet, you also lead from silence. I’ve met a few like you.”*

Morgan can be a little grating to me at times but she is just as brave and determined at Khalilia to save the Obscurests like her who have been locked away all their lives. It took great courage to go back into the Black Tower to try and destroy the Library from the inside. Even Glain, who seems like she is just a brute on the outside is a woman who is strong both in her convictions and fierce protection of her friends.

Wolfe and Santi are a favorite couple of mine. I like how their relationship gives just enough romance to this for me. Santi is a wonderful protector and I adore how fiercely he loves Wolfe. They are a couple for the ages.

As always there were some unexpected deaths and one hit a little harder than the others. This is not a safe world and I never expect everyone to make it out alive. At least not with power crazy tyrants running loose and automatons on the prowl.

One more book to go to wrap up the series and it is set up to be a doozy from the ending of this. So if you like libraries, automatons and a little bit of magic, this could be the series for you.

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## **Evgnossia O'Hara says**

I just saw on authors instagram page that the 4th book in the Great Library Series comes out on 3rd July, 2018!!! I thought it would be a trilogy but the excitement is real ?

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## **Andrea says**

I still love this series! I'm kind of on the fence about whether or not everything could've been wrapped up in this volume, but I guess it will depend on what happens in the next book. I enjoyed the multiple perspectives, but at the end pretty much everyone had a perspective and that was kind of overkill.

Wolfe's perspective in this was probably the least useful. I think his could've easily been cut out so that Morgan's, Jess's and Khalila's perspectives could've been expanded. And it really pains me to say that because I love Wolfe. I wish there had been more about him trying to heal from his past or really anything of substance. He had one function and it wasn't that great.



I loved the perspective from Khalila, my home girl is going to be key for the Library to survive and I cannot wait to see her run this. Khalila proved time and time again that she's intelligent and incredibly determined. In this book she truly shows what she's capable of as a leader. Morgan was okay in this book. She had a small side drama internally about Jess which was kind of annoying, but I loved seeing what she did with the other Obscurists.

Then we have my boy Jess. Oh I love him. Jess starts off in this book by impersonating his twin Brendan and god it was freaking great. We see that Jess can play the cool and apathetic brother if he so chooses. Jess is still pulling strings in this book and organizing his own chess board. I still love his scheming. However, the next book will probably need scheming and sweet talking (I'm looking at you Khalila love) as the board has been set and the pieces are primed to fall.

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### **Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says**

What would be like if the Great Library of Alexandria had never burned down? Would all the amazing knowledge that was stored there and now is gone have enriched the world? Just imagine what a different world we could live in today. That is what Rachel Caine has done with The Great Library series. She created a world where the library never burned down and is now a presence in every major city in the world, controlling knowledge. Through alchemy, the library can deliver any of the content in the library directly to anyone. However, it's forbidden to own books. Anyone threatening the power of the Great Library is put down.

**READ THE REST OF THE REVIEW OVER AT FRESH FICTION!**

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### **Melindam says**

Loved this new instalment to The Great Library series and as always it left me wanting to read the next book right away.

This series is simply fascinating. Rachel Caine really knows how to spin a yarn and her characters are both delightfully intriguing and imperfect.

More thoughts & feels after the summer holidays.

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### **? Kimberly says**

#### **Spoiler Free and Vague Thoughts**

*Smoke and Iron* was suspenseful with nail-biting developments, new automations and great loss. We've got Jess, posing as Brendon his twin, Morgan is back in the Dark Tower a place she swore she'd never return to and Wolfe being held prisoner in the dungeon. The rest of our crew is aboard a ship manned by Ani. All have a part to play in the game to undermine and remove the archivist from power. Ahhhh.... it was all so stressful!

The story moved from POV to POV, some Jess, some from Wolfe and others from Khalia. The ebb and flow keep me engaged. I tried to savor the story by setting it down and just digesting things for a day, but the last sixty percent I devoured in a single sitting.

### Things I loved:

Wolfe and Santi's relationship. (swoon)

Dario who completely won me over.

Thomas the brave.

Khalia who continues to impress me. I see great things in her future.

Jess who is clever, foolish, and inspires his friends to greatness even as they want to kill him. LOL

When I close my eyes, these characters are the actors and actresses from the Harry Potter movies. Wolfe is Snape, Thomas is Neville, Dario is Malfoy, Jess is Harry, Morgan is Luna, and Khalia is Hermione. All have traits that from the beginning reminded me of Rowling's characters and while there are vast differences, I think readers will agree they come to care for these characters in much the same way.

Caine must have poured her soul into this installment. It had everything an epic fantasy needs. We saw fantastic battles, plot twists, and death. Now I've heard readers say this ended in a cliffhanger and while things are not completely resolved I felt differently. After a good cry, the ending left me satisfied and for once I didn't close the book while screaming.

If friendship, strong characters and epic world-building tickle your fancy I recommend you devour the Great Library series. The next and final book is yet to come. This review was originally posted at Caffeinated Reviewer

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### Helena ☆ FC says

**4 books in** and I'm still *head-over-heels* for this series. I absolutely adore it! Having said that, Rachel Caine has consistently been able to **wreck me** at the end of each instalment...and this one is no exception. I AM **DISTRAUGHT!!!** I can't even...**AGHHH!**

This book picked up right after the cliffhanger in Ash and Quill, and it was *full-speed ahead* for the duration of the novel. There are so many plots, deceptions, manipulations, and conspiracies as our favourite characters struggle to get the upper-hand in the fight against the Archivist. Strategy is **KEY** in this instalment, and I **LOVED** it. I find it fascinating to watch the events unfold as we see the consequences of everyone's decisions. And we finally got multiple POVs, aside from Jess'! (I was especially excited for Wolfe's, he he)

**Jess** is *my baby* and I relate to him so much. <3 (view spoiler)

*"Not having a book at hand was a punishment worse than death."*

**Wolfe and Santi** were the *grumpy, but lovable*, gay dads who were so protective of their kids.

*"Their children – and he would always think of them as their children; he'd given up on everything else – were late returning, and that was almost certainly not good news."*

**Khalila** finally grew into the *fantastic leader* that I knew she was always destined to be. She knew exactly what everyone's strengths were and used them to strategise quite successfully.

*“Without Santi, they would not find the strength. Without Jess, no inspiration. Without Thomas, there was no real future. Without Glain, no protection. Without Morgan, no audacity. Without Wolfe, no challenge to do better, **be** better. Without Dario, no subtlety.”*

Needless to say, I'm *highly anticipating* the final showdown in Book 5...and I'll be eagerly waiting for its release in 2019! Why such a long wait?!!! **WHY?!!!** :(

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**ilsa** ↗ says

love when authors just destroy everything happy in your life  
:))))))))))  
deciding between 4 or 5 stars but it was e p i c

also I LITERALLY Just realised mY ARC is signed \*screaming\*

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**Phrynne** says

This series continues to improve and Smoke and Iron was for me a fast, action packed read.

A huge amount happened in the course of this story and relationships faltered and changed. At the start of the series I did not feel invested in any of the characters but that has changed totally. You have to be careful who you become attached to though because the author is not scared of killing off quite prominent people!

Smoke and Iron finishes in a very open ended way with major events still hanging in the balance. I am ready for book 5!

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