



## The Iron Thorn

*Caitlin Kittredge*

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## **The Iron Thorn** Caitlin Kittredge

In the city of Lovecraft, the Proctors rule and a great Engine turns below the streets, grinding any resistance to their order to dust. The necrovirus is blamed for Lovecraft's epidemic of madness, for the strange and eldritch creatures that roam the streets after dark, and for everything that the city leaders deem Heretical—born of the belief in magic and witchcraft. And for Aoife Grayson, her time is growing shorter by the day.

Aoife Grayson's family is unique, in the worst way—every one of them, including her mother and her elder brother Conrad, has gone mad on their 16th birthday. And now, a ward of the state, and one of the only female students at the School of Engines, she is trying to pretend that her fate can be different.

## **The Iron Thorn Details**

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Author : Caitlin Kittredge

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## From Reader Review The Iron Thorn for online ebook

### Isamlq says

It's a good thing this has a little over 500 pages, otherwise it would have been too much. The author throws in everything! And surprise of surprises, I enjoyed it! I am not saying it was perfect. In fact, there is a specific clump of pages I could have just done without. But all in all, IRON THORN was quite satisfying.

One complaint though: the reader shouldn't be tasked with having to figure out how to say the lead's name. I mean, "**Aoife**". It took me several tries to figure out how to roll my tongue to come up with a believable/right sounding name... and I'm still not sure I was/am saying it right.

Let me just say that the first fifty pages were AWESOME. There is no other way to describe why page after page after page just flew by! To bad the awesomeness stalled around page fifty... only to kick back into gear around p 160!

I really enjoyed the characters in this one. They are, all of them, not as they seem (And I really do mean all of them.) Then there's the world that they live in. I also enjoyed all the twists in it (and there are a lot.) So here goes,

She's a ward of the state. With her mother in a madhouse, she goes to a school where she disagrees with half the things taught (re: Heretics.) In her blood, it is said, lies madness. A madness that drives her away from her mother. A madness that caused her brother to almost kill her. In a few, she turns sixteen when her madness might be triggered. Madness being just the first step to being virally decimated. Those infected devolve. Add on the fact that Her world is one divided between Rationalists and heretics. The former look down on the latter as "those who reject reality and substituted the fantastical lie of magic and conjuring for science and logic..." Cool, right?

The problem is by the time her world and its background had settled enough in my head she started sounding like a drip: (a.) she is like a lot of teenagers has a love/hate thing going on with her mother. (b.) She hates her situation, complains (to herself) about how everyone sees her in a certain light, but does nothing about it! That is, until her absentee brother pops in the picture. (c.) Then there's the way she treated her BFF, Cal and later on Dean(!)

Once they get to where they need to go, things get much better (or different?). One, I was expecting a Leviathan/Behemoth i.e. a lack of romance compensated for by other aspects like action or mystery, but that was not the case here. The change in relationship between the characters took me by surprise. It seemed contrived. As if the author felt something absent and decided to plunk the girl into more trouble... (Let's put them in the impossible situation of having ~~him~~ them like her!) THANKFULLY, that was not the focus of IRON THORN.

I had a Clockwork Angel moment too when Conrad's role became clear. A girl in search of her missing brother in a steampunk-ish novel. Sounding familiar yet? With nothing held against CA, I am thankful (again) that the similarities are superficial! IRON THORN is so much more. It's darker and edgier. So dark in fact, that I could practically hear the moans of those in Doctor Portnoy's care, and the shrieks of those falling from the bridge. So edgy, I could practically imagine the mist around her.

And if steampunk and a missing brother ala-Clockwork Angel aren't enough to convince you, well, why

don't we throw in some Fey. Apparently her life wasn't complicated enough... BUT I loved it! The fey aspect in this one raised the creepy factor up a couple of notches (if that's possible.)

With so many things going on, some might be tempted to chuck it. I would have done so, but after page 160 the story just flows. Reading on, I found myself liking the characters more, curious about what they would do and what would happen to them. So, the length of the book makes sense. Nothing short of 500 could fairly contain all the details in the book. In the end, IRON THORN worked for me. The boring part (pp 50ish-150ish) was mind numbingly boring... but that was offset by the good parts which were absolutely just that~ good!

I am looking forward to the rest of this series.

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### **Miranda says**

Despite some issues I really, really loved this book. The world isn't something I encounter in YA very often: A fantasy/steampunk/clockpunk world set in an alternate 1950s. That, to me, is beyond awesome so right off the bat I was poised to love this book. And I definitely did. I found the world building very thoughtful and well done--a city running on a great Engine that protects them from the things that can cause madness, a world torn by the battle between science and magic (which itself isn't an original idea but here it is pulled off exceedingly well). Kittredge definitely creates a very distant but still recognizable 1950s, where girls and women can hold certain jobs but still be expected to be "nice girls" and find husbands one day. The plot kept me intrigued throughout the book, even the times when the pacing was a bit too slow, though that was rarely a problem. The climax near the end was extremely well written and powerful, and it does offer some exciting possibilities for the next book.

The characters all have strong voices, though the strongest of them was probably Dean's. His dialogue never felt forced or strained, in fact it was probably the smoothest and more consistent voice in the book. Cal, Aoife's best and only friend, started off as a very nice character, but he slowly turned into a kind of stereotype of the typical '50s male; chauvinistic and sexist, expecting Aoife to conform to societal standards. He stays this way pretty much throughout the entire novel, to the point where I honestly started wondering why he was even there. He was serving little to no purpose except as a tool of creating some conflict for Aoife while the rest of the plot waited to be introduced. While at least Kittredge shows that his opinions and views of women were unreasonable, it got to the point where I just rolled my eyes whenever he showed up on the page. However Kittredge completely turns this on its head near the end of the book in a way that honestly made me put down the book and laugh with joy. It's honestly brilliant and is a major part of why I love this book.

I was afraid, at first, that the traveling trio of Dean, Aoife and Cal would turn out to be a love triangle. It swung dangerously close to that mark briefly, but then it reins itself back in and, honestly, there was never any doubt in my mind who Aoife preferred. Aoife never stopped to think "hey, maybe I do like Cal as more than a friend" and when presented with the idea by another character, she waves it off. No, Cal was always her best and only friend, her confidant, but I never got the impression she saw it going further than that, probably because of her necrovirus. The way this turned out was so pleasing, because I am sick of the love triangles in YA, especially love triangles where it's obvious who the girl is going to be with in the end.

Speaking of romance, Dean and Aoife were rather sweet. Dean respects her and her agency, which is always a big plus in my book. While there were a few scenes that made me discontent, over all they're a sweet

couple that work in YA. However I do think that, if there are going to be three books in this series, Kittredge could have taken the time to develop their relationship a bit more. The entire book takes place a little over a week or so, and yet she and Dean are kissing by the middle of it. Perhaps there's a reason for this that will be revealed later but for now, it doesn't sit well with me.

There was one main complaint I had during the novel and that was, besides Aoife, there weren't many female characters. And the women Aoife does meet during her journey--hell, even before she starts traveling--she doesn't view very kindly. She's seldom outright rude to them, but her opinion of them is always very low. If they're rightfully scared of something unearthly, she thinks them hysterical and silly. If they're showing even a bit of kindness or interest in Cal or Dean, she gets territorial and possessive. There's even a scene in the book where, after Cal sees Dean and Aoife kiss and throws a snitfit, and Aoife has to go after him to make sure he doesn't run off to the Proctors in revenge, Dean mentions a girl he got into a fight over, and Aoife just stops and asks, "Was she pretty?" Um, hello, this is not the time. You need to go stop your former best friend from turning you all in.

Then I started to wonder why this bothered me so much, since, after all, the era is an alternate 1950s. Women are still taught to be critical and unkind towards each other even today; surely it was the same back then, too, if not worse? And then I realized: Well, duh, it's because almost every YA book out there holds the same attitude towards teenage girls and their relationships with each other. Only it's worse because the young adult books I've read that represent and normalize this attitude are set in modern times, when we really should know better by now, and should be calling this stuff out as unreasonable and, worse, destructive. After that I was much more forgiving of Aoife's attitude towards the few female characters in the novel, even if it still grated. There is a chance in the next book that Aoife will change her way, as another female character joins the main cast, and I hope that same character gets more screen time and development than she did in this book. I sincerely hope so.

All in all I truly loved *The Iron Thorn*, even with its flaws. The characters were strong and three dimensional, the worldbuilding was extremely well done, and the cliffhanger at the end--yes, there is a cliffhanger--will keep me eagerly awaiting the next book in the series.

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### **Rhiannon Ryder says**

Epic was my disappointment in *The Iron Thorn*, it was by turns boring, convoluted and confusing. I felt no real pull to any of the characters, and only loosely understood what was going on most of the time. All very bad traits in a book, but horrible traits in a book which you're hoping to entertain you for a four and half hour flight.

For starters, the blurb is not really truthful. I thought I was getting a steampunk book with madness. Not so much. *The Iron Thorn* is really a fairy book, with a touch of steampunk, and some dabbling in madness. How do those three things fit together you ask? Such a good question! Not very well, would have to be my answer. At no point did I feel Kittredge took her seemingly endless supply of disparate story threads and worked them together to form a whole. More like they were pulled into a messy knot, and left to be sorted out in the next book.

One of the greatest issues I took with this story was how things tended to cycle back in repeats of a situation,

with no advancement of the plot or development of characters. For instance, Tremaine, a sinister member of the Folk, kept cropping up and threatening but each of his appearances were just more of the same without any new reveals. What is especially strange about Tremaine's story arc, was that after his first appearance he lets Aoife know she has a week to live up to her end of their agreement, but then he crops up two more times in less than 24 hours just to repeat himself. Why? It was never clear to me, but I was starting to feel like there was a glitch in my Matrix.

A convoluted story can be both confusing and mind-numbingly boring, but somewhat excusable in a debut author if they redeem themselves with characters you can invest yourself in. There have certainly been authors I've given the benefit of the doubt to, and carried on to book two because I loved their characters and the relationships they had built. Sadly Kitteredge didn't sell me on this point either. Cal is patronizing and annoying, and I spent most of the story (even after his big reveal) wondering how desperate Aoife must have been to make him her best friend. Dean was simply uninteresting, I mean at least Cal evoked an emotion from me, but Dean was just there. And his cowboy talk was ridiculous, especially once it's discovered he's part mystical creature of some fairy-type descent. Cowboy/Steampunk/Fairy/Madness tale was just two too many combos for the story. I can only imagine how much fun it must have been to fit this baby into a genre.

Most shocking of all was the Acknowledgments at the end, where Kitteredge goes on to thank an extensive list of authors I greatly respect, including: Cherie Priest, Mike Mignola, and Holly Black. Although it seems some of these she's just quoting as inspiration, Cherie Priest and Tiffany Trent seem to have helped her at points with the manuscript. How this is possible is one of the many, many mysteries of The Iron Thorn.

It was such an intense challenge, and downright pursuit of boredom to finish this book I am greatly relieved I didn't buy book two when I picked up book one. I can't see myself ever becoming desperate enough to give it a chance. Though I would be curious to know if any of you have read it and found it an improvement on The Iron Thorn.

So tell me, what did you think?

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### **Faye says**

The Iron Thorn Drinking Game: Everytime the adjectives "clockwork," "steam" " brass" are used to ensure the reader is too aware this is a "steampunk" novel, drink. Anytime someone "scrabbles for purchase," " or mentions a dirigible, drink twice. DO NOT drink anytime a jitney is mentioned; we're trying to have fun here, not get alcohol poisoning. Oh, wait, this is a YA book, we probably shouldn't be drinking... though this book would drive most people to it!

And how could you miss it being a YA book? Take one self-absorbed, moss-green eyed, outsider-type teenage girl with a tendency take on responsibility for fixing all the crap that is not really her fault, mix in one long-term do-gooder guy-friend with a crush and a new supernatural bad boy with eyes of liquid silver. Then send the girl, with the help of the sickeningly loyal dudes on a quest to save her brother. Throw in some stupid, transparent assumptions leading to threes-a-crowd tension. Oh, then make her discover her own

supernatural powers!

For once, sticking through a read like this almost pays off near the end when \*spoiler,\* the prissy good guy actually turns out to be a useful ghoul. No really, an actual ghoul - proving the author may have a sense of humour. I smiled for a whole chapter. After that the book proceeds to perfect the set up for the sequel, which I will only be reading if in a truly desperate, remote island type situation.

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## Mandy at Blythes & Books says

### **The Iron Thorn (The Iron Codex #1), by Caitlin Kittredge**

*This book is a **Must-Read!** It's got something for everyone: steampunk, romance, adventure, dystopian, secrets, mysteries, great characters, monsters, strange worlds, faeries, a beautiful written story, a plot with unexpected twists...*

#### **Here's the short(ish) version of the review:**

\* The cover seems very fitting, it projects the grim feeling of dark fantasy in the story, while bringing across the lonely feeling Aoife must have had many times, surrounded by those grey skies and spying Ravens. **5/5 stars**

\* Caitlin Kittredge has a very poetic writing style, beautiful sentences string the pages of this book together. However, the story wasn't overwritten: I found every word interesting, every word was where it needed to be and added only to the plot and story. The style and use of prose enhances and complements the feel of the story completely. **5/5 stars**

\*The characters are very interesting and very real. They have good and bad qualities, they doubt themselves, they grow, they make mistakes, their relationships change. They're actual humans, not just stereotypes, and you really care what happens to them. **5/5 stars**

\*The story itself has many different elements: steampunk, adventure, dystopian, mystery, romance, dark fantasy...

One minute you find yourself in the middle of an Indiana Jones movie with all the secret chambers and flying airships, the next minute you've landed in a grim, alien-like Fairytale world. Madness and alternate worlds battle over one another, which one is the *actual* reality? Never a dull moment, but all is blended together perfectly with some unexpected twists. The action is not too overwhelming, or at cost of the story/feelings/characters. The story puts quality over quantity (despite it being sizable enough with almost 500 pages) and lacks no depth, thankfully. The ending is not disappointing, it is truly epic in proportions. **5/5 stars**

\*The plot and the alternate worlds built here were immensely thought through and well described with many details. The whole thing has a dystopian feel to it and steampunk it definitely is. Slowly the story develops, with surprising twists that keep you interested the entire time. It's kind of like reading an old-school adventure, with secret chambers, traps, airship-travels, and so on. Until the story takes a turn one did **not** see coming, seemingly unfitting the steampunk elements. Until the author made it fit, logically and extremely well. Convincing us of the strange reality of this strange world where time ticks to a different clock. Where there is darkness, there is light. Where there is reason, there is magic. **5/5 stars**

\*All in all I find it a very original idea, an original world. The real world, the 'Iron' world, is scary with its rules and demands. Dictatorial, cold, scientific; medieval even in the sense of punishing so-called heretics who do not accept their truth as the only truth. The 'Thorn Land' may even be scarier with its unpredictability; inhabited by corpse-drinking Mists, the treacherous 'Folk' and trees that could swallow you whole and turn you into part of them. **5/5 stars**

### **Here's an even longer review:**

Already in the first chapter, a dizzying amount of info is being dropped on the reader. Necessary info, for building the world our main character 'Aoife' lives in. The story is being told from Aoife's point of view (in the first person). The city of 'Lovecraft', Massachusetts, is a grim place, with its 17 asylums due to the immensely consuming 'necrovirus' which has infected many people. One of those infected people is Aoife's mother Nerissa, whom she visits her every week in the asylum where she is committed as a charity case. Aoife never knew her father.

The necrovirus slowly consumes ones brain until its victim becomes a 'nightjar': a ghastly creature who in turn can infect someone, after biting them.

Lovecraft runs on a big machine at the heart of the city, built by the 'Master Builder' who has become the 'God' of Lovecraft. There are strict rules provided by the government concerning what 'aether tubes broadcastings' inhabitants are allowed to listen to, where they can and can't go, what they can read and what 'religion' they must have. Heretics are people who do not believe in science and reality, but practice magic instead. Therefore, they are severely punished (old style, by partial or whole burning rituals) for their 'lack of ignorance', when caught by the 'Proctors'. Ravens (mechanically engineered ravens who have the ability to recreate an image which can be seen by a magic lantern of some sorts) are the Proctors' little flying spies.

Aoife and her best friend Calvin Daulton both go the Academy of Engines, Aoife as a charity case or 'ward of the state'. As a young girl she is not afraid to admit when she's scared, especially now her 16th birthday is coming up. The necrovirus is latent in her family; Aoife's brother Conrad has already been infected and was committed to an asylum after trying to kill his sister. However, he escaped. About 4 times a year he secretly writes her a letter to let her know he is still alive and 'well'. When he sends her a letter telling her to go to 'Greystone' (their biological fathers house) in order to save herself and help him, Calvin and Aoife go on a secret mission. Will she find Conrad in time, or has he been lost for good? Maybe even dead?

After *seemingly* saving Aoife and Cal from becoming ghoul dinner because of their initially chosen guide, the attractive but illusive Dean Harrison leads them out of the city. Dean is somewhat of a mystery, a heretic in his own way, but very loyal when it comes to standing at Aoife's side. Aoife is not sure what to make of him at first, a liar, or not? Here's a quote from Dean that illustrates both Aoife's doubts as well as Deans perspective on life: "*A touch of truth makes a lie worth believing.*"

Their journey involves places Aoife has only heard rumours about, such as the Nightfall Market, the ghost of a bridge that supposedly crashed years ago (taking 21 victims along with it...) and an eventful flight in an actual airship. Encounters with deadly mud-like monsters called Shoggoths, causing one of the characters serious (possibly lethal) injury by injecting them with the virus. The 'mad' flashes and visions are beautifully written; truly painful, poetical craziness.

The evolving relationships are written very believable and natural, the characters seem very real.

Aoife discovers and unravels more and more about her father; his strange, secretive clockwork driven house and her lost brother. When she learns of the 'Land of Thorn' she doubts herself even more at first. Could she really possess a power, a 'Weird', like her father before her? Or are these the first signs of madness, seeing how Nerissa spoke of the Land of Thorns as well? Aoife's self-confidence and fear keep altering, the hope to find her brother keeps her going, even though the fear for the lurking necrovirus stays with her. Learning the truth, discovering who really is the bad guy, experiencing her father's memories, realising nothing and no one is what it/they seem(s); all these things only seem to make Aoife stronger. She intends to fulfil the destiny which has been forced upon her in order to protect her loved ones.

The author really takes you along the journey of feelings Aoife develops for Dean, slowly but steadily. Since Aoife is afraid she has no future besides the one in the madhouse, she doesn't allow herself to get involved

with anyone at first, not even Dean. She doesn't need distractions from her quest either, after all. But Dean is the first person who does not judge her for her family's burden and believes her without a doubt. He's an outcast, like herself. More than once he risks his life to save hers, mind you despite the fact Aoife is **not** your typical damsel in distress! (She's independent, smart, brave, not afraid to speak her mind, good with machinery and doesn't act the way a 'properly brought up young lady' should.)

Calvin finds it hard to believe in anything besides the Proctors' truth and is convinced that everything happening to Aoife is just another sign of her upcoming madness. The way he looks down upon the 'common' people, even if Aoife is one of them too, is not a nice personality trait. The way he feels towards women's behaviour and future may be considered 'normal' during the fifties, I find Calvins expectations degrading. I actually didn't understand why he befriended someone like Aoife at first, because associating with heretics (Nerissa) is punishable and he keeps throwing that knowledge in Aoife's face in one way or the other, practically saying she should be thankful to have him. I find him quite nasty and unbearable and cannot comprehend why he sticks to Aoife's side. Until things finally become clear... He's the guy you expect to turn on his friends in the end, because of his allegiance to his country/beliefs/so-called righteousness/whatever. (You know the type...) But maybe he is not what he seems after all...

I did not expect what was happening in the end. At all. Some important things turned out right, other things spiralled out of control into a huge, epic disaster.

The only downside I can see? The book ENDED. With a major cliff-hanger! I am seriously DYING to know what will happen to Aoife, Dean, Cal and even Bethina. What will happen to Thorn and Iron, though we saw disturbing glances already. I'm not ready to leave this world yet, to leave Aoife and Dean behind. I wanna go along with them on their journey and I certainly will, once the sequel is out. Which hopefully will be soon. Yesterday, if possible. *Pretty Please, Caitlin Kittredge????*

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### **Scribblegirl says**

I facepalmed at least 3 times. It started off well enough, and Kittredge is a talented storyteller (in that the overall story was interesting), but I find her writing abrasive. She leaves details out, sometimes makes improper verb tense choices which make the reading confusing (ie. he saw instead of he had seen), makes cliched dialogue choices, and is lacking in motivation for her characters, who do everything they do solely to either help or hinder main character Aoife, as it suits the convenience of the story, and for no other reason. Cal is just flatout irritating; I really hoped something nasty would happen to the condescending, pretentious little git. Every character in the book is either incredibly stupid or evil. Even when she is repeatedly presented with obvious evidence her mother is not, as she believes, crazy, Aoife is unable or unwilling to connect the dots\*. As a reader, that is unbelievably frustrating, especially when something obvious seems to go ignored or unaddressed nearly every single chapter.

It annoys me too, that Kittredge gives no reason, no alternate history or background, to explain why 20th century America is a Dickensian construct plunged into what seems to be a combination of the Dark & Industrial Ages, where "heretics" are steam-burned at the stake in the public square. If there's been a massive, world-destroying war that robbed mankind of all the technological knowledge & advancements of the last 200 years, TELL US SO & WHY. I find the lack of background story irritating and lazy. I also find Kittredge's descriptions of the steampunk uselessly longwinded and nebulous, like she didn't fix it in her own mind before she set it down on paper. She just sort of vaguely waves a metaphoric hand at the other end of

the room and mutters "over there."

All in all, I kept reading because I can't seem not to finish a book once started, but I skipped mass sections of rambling, insubstantial description, and I couldn't wait to be done with it. I wanted to know how it ended, but I will not be reading any sequels.

#### SPOILER ALERT:

\*Kittredge covers it with some mumbojumbo at the end about iron sickness, but there's no compelling reason to believe Aoife's mother is insane when everything which Aoife thinks signals insanity turns out to be 100% true to Aoife's own experiences, and a smarter character would have put 2 & 2 together and figured out that if one's mother says she's been to the lily field, and then not only does one also go to the lily field, but while she is there, she is told flat out that one's mother was also there before her, said mother might be, oh, I don't know, actually telling the freaking truth about having been to the lily field, rather than hallucinating, for the love of GOD.

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#### **Tiffany says**

This book is on my library's YA best fiction shelf, but I was highly disappointed. I kept waiting for it to get really good, but it didn't. There was almost too much description in the first 300 pages. It was distracting and made the story drag. The ending picked up. I got excited thinking it would become hard to put down. It never did. Then there was a random event to the plot that left me raising an eyebrow. The worst part, after finally getting through all 492 pages, the story is no where near finished. As much of a cliff-hanger as the ending is supposed to be, I can't even find myself to be curious as to what happens next.

If I were an editor and was handed this book in the exact form it is published, I would say, "Great start. Cut 200 pages, give a little foreshadowing for this end event, so I doesn't seem like you threw it in just to get the MC's out of a sticky situation, and make the female MC's name prounouncable."

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#### **Adriana says**

Kirkus got it right when they said "overwriting" in their review for The Iron Thorn. The book is almost 500 pages (I read an advance reader's copy) and it felt long. Some books despite being long (i.e. Harry Potter and A Great and Terrible Beauty) don't feel that way because they keep you intrigued and engaged. The Iron Thorn did none of those things. I can appreciate the writing, but it got to be where the author was repeating circumstances and explaining the character's outfits, which had nothing to do with the story. The book combines steampunk with faeries and witchcraft set during an altered history of the United States in the 1950's. It was anything but simple and I think that hurt the flow of the story. So many things could have been edited out without compromising the most important elements of the story, which to me were finding out what Aoife Grayson's destiny is, where her brother Conrad went, and their role in the land of Thorn and of Iron. I could appreciate the world building in the book but it took too long and by the end of the book most steampunk elements weren't even being mentioned anymore, aside from the Lovecraft machine. The cover of the book doesn't even allude to steampunk, and when you begin reading the book that is all that is being

conveyed. I will wait to see what kind of reviews come in for the second installment in this series, because I wasn't left with a desire to keep reading despite the fact that the book ended so abruptly. (Oh, and how the heck do you pronounce her name?)

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## **Mizuki says**

**Rating:** 2 stars only. The extra one star is given to the creative homages to H P. Lovecraft and his Cthulhu myths. How can this book **be so dull?** Even duller than *End of Days* by Susan Ee!?

### **(1) The heroine Aoife Garyson is an annoying, ungrateful brat:**

She is supposed to be a charity case without the protection of her family, an almost-orphan living off the charity offered by the city's welfare system. Yet she acts so entitled, ungrateful, unworldly and naive for an entire book. Not to mention she also treats her one and only male best friend like dirt, always hissing and yelling at him whenever they have disagreement.

### **(2) Despite of all the Lovecraftian homages and reference to Cthulhu myths, still the story is hopelessly unimpressive and dull.**

Trust me, I really do appreciate the Lovecraftian homages and the reference to all those Lovecraftian creatures in the story. A city in the fictional steampunk version of America named 'Lovecraft'? A town named 'Arkham'? Innsmouth? The Older Ones? Sisterhood of the Stars? Cthulhu? Flesh-eating ghouls? I love them all. The Lovecraft fan girl in me was jumping in pure joy when I saw those references.

(Link: <http://knowyourmeme.com/photos/170204...>)

Still, the story is dragged down to the mud by the heavy weight of the disorganized storyline, the irritatingly slow pacing and the uninspiring characters.

### **(3) The characters are hopelessly dull.**

I'd mentioned above that the heroine is a bratty cow, the other main characters ~~and unluckily, the main love interests, since it's a YA book so love triangle is just unavoidable~~, Dean and Cal are almost just as bad.

Dean is the mysterious, supposedly streetwise and jaded older teen, who hangs around with Aoife for no good reason even after shit hits the fan. I mean, why would he risks his neck for a girl whom he barely knows when he is supposed to associate with her just for the money? Okay....**because of true love.** How can I forget?

As to Cal, the male best friend is also unimpressive. For the first half of the book he tags along with Aoife with seemingly no good reason, risking his future and his place in the society to help her to a point beyond the power of friendship and loyalty. Their friendship is also unconvincing as well, I can't see Cal sharing anything deep and meaningful with Aoife and in turn I can't see why would Cal care enough to hang around, neither.

Not to mention, both Aoife and Cal are acting so naive when they first visit the black market in a supposedly

dangerous slum filled with outlaws, cultists and thieves, trusting every single person they talk to and believing every word those complete strangers tell them. Oh, goodness!

As sad as it sounds, Cal only becomes half-way interesting only after (view spoiler). Outside of this his character is as remarkable as a piece of rag soaked with dirty water.

Aoife's estranged father, crazy mother and missing older brother are mentioned here and there, but they are both so paper-thinned that they almost feel like plot devices.

#### **(4) The world building is unexplained and poor.**

I know nothing about why this fictional America came to be what it now is, why there is a virus plaguing the country, why there are ghouls and monsters attacking humans, why the government would banish magic and the occult and why they are dangerous, after reading the whole book.

#### **(5) The ending sucks.**

Aoife's father and brother both warned her (view spoiler), but what does she do in the end? Helping those people and unleash their power to the human world!

Lord Cthulhu! Our mighty Lord and Destroyer! How could this happen?

Review for book 2: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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#### **Tamora Pierce says**

This is a very dark fantasy/steampunk, set in a world in which magic was discovered instead of nuclear power. Rather than embrace the new energy, a government led by President McCarthy is trying to eradicate it and the people--ghouls, vampires, and others--that thrive on it. Aoife Grayson is an engineering student under suspicion by her schoolmasters and living with the fear of the madness that took her mother and brother and may well take her. Determined at last to seek out her unknown father and to learn the truth of why her family history decrees madness at the age of 16, she hires a guide to take her and her friend Cal out of the city, where she takes flight on an airship, is bitten by the strange, Lovecraftian monster called a shuggoth, and discovers that magic is her inheritance, and nothing is what it seems. I loved it and can't wait for the next book.

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#### **Ferdy says**

Set in 1950's Lovecraft - an alternate Boston, 15yr old Aoife Grayson attends a prestigious academy for engineers. Aoife is a ward of the state, her father left, her brother ran away and her mother has been in a mental institute for most of her life. Her mother's condition is hereditary and her brother went crazy when he turned 16. Aoife is dreading turning 16 because of the strong chance of her going insane and being locked up like her mother. After getting a distressed message from her missing brother, Aoife runs away from the academy with her best friend to find her brother.

Unfortunately, there wasn't much positives to this book, the world building was quite interesting but was

executed poorly and the relationships between the heroine and her various family members was somewhat engaging.

The heroine Aoife was a mean, shrewy, annoying cow. The way she treated the people around her was disgusting. I didn't really believe her so called fear of going insane, she just felt sorry for herself..there was no urgency or desperation in her supposed impending insanity.

The love interests were cardboard cutouts, there was Cal - the puppy dog, best friend and Dean - the gorgeous, slightly older, sarcastic playboy. The only reason Dean was an ok love interest was by not-so-subtly showing Cal to be a mysogonistic, immature coward. If I'm meant to believe that the hero is suited to the heroine then it has to be shown by the hero's own actions and behaviour not by shoving an obviously unsuitable guy in everyone's face to give the impression that the hero is so great and perfect in comparison. The storyline was just all over the place and half of it was just Aoife trying to go from one destination to the next. The writing was at times nonsensical..it was also overly descriptive which just slowed the plot down. I'm not sure I'll read the next book even though I bought it when I got this book. If I have nothing better to read, I might get around to it.

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### **Kristi says**

My first steampunk! And it was AWESOME!

It took me a little while to get into it. I'll admit the world itself took me a while to get used to, the lingo and what-not. (I can't really say if it was just this novel, or if it's steampunk related.) But once I was enraptured by the story, there was no turning back!

What a complex world! Magic, machines, Kindly Folk..... I can honestly say I never knew what to expect next! I was blown away by the complexity and innovation of this novel. Kittredge is a very talented story teller, and at five hundred some pages, The Iron Thorn is one hell of a story.

I loved the characters in this novel, Aoife, Dean & Cal, and EVERYONE of them surprised me! Aoife was a kick-butt protagonist. I loved how realistic she was, she was afraid and cautious but she still did what she believed she needed to do. Dean was instantly my favorite the moment that he hit the page and Cal, well I'll leave you to make your own decisions about Cal!

Don't be afraid of it's size, there is a great story in those pages, and it builds and builds and that ending! Wow! I can only anticipate the epicness of the next novel!

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### **MJ says**

I forgot how long ago I had downloaded this. But I picked it up last night, not remembering the plot of the book. And Kindle doesn't give you a blurb. It takes place in an unknown, modern time period... there were several references to 19XX dates, as well as 18XX dates, but since the book was an alternate history type, it's unknown if people were using the same calendar as us. So, despite the Steampunk/Victorian flavor, it's not technically from then. But I was so confused through the half of the book I did read. I just couldn't get into the narrow-mindedness of the society, especially the main character's friend who I grew to hate more the more he opened his mouth. Ugh. Too many parts of the book (school and mythical creatures) were too descriptive, and other places so lacking that you had to struggle through (the airship, the bad guys). I set this

down half way. Probably won't finish it.

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## Arooj says

The unexpected has happened.

I have read a historical/steampunk novel about faeries.

And actually *liked* it. A lot. So much that it even made it to my "books I fell hard for" list.

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Every time someone asks me what my least favourite type of books to read are, I always say historical. And faeries. You see, historical just isn't something I'm interested in. I find it boring. The only other historical book I actually like is The Infernal Devices series, but that's because I already love Cassandra Clare and her books. And faeries are just...blah. Besides The Iron Fey series, there aren't many novels about faeries that I like. I'm very iffy about them. As for steampunk, it just sounds very confusing to me so I never tried to learn more about it. So the fact that I loved The Iron Thorn, which has all these three things, totally shocked me.

This book made me see steampunk and faeries in a whole new way. I actually searched steampunk to better understand what it is and found out a lot. The best way to describe it is by this slogan I found, "What the past would look like if the future had happened sooner". Basically, a dystopian world set in historical times. And I love dystopian. How cool is that?

The Iron Thorn is full of magic, adventure, and some pretty scary stuff. I loved it ALL. The beginning instantly pulls you in and you just can't help but keep turning the pages. At first it's very fast paced, but towards the middle, it slows down. This is a pretty heavy book. Do not expect a quick, light read. It's the kind of book you should read when you have a lot of time on your hands to settle down and absorb all the information. It's not the kind of book you'd want to read in the 5 minute breaks you have in between work, or a quick chapter before you go to bed. (Though I wouldn't blame you if you couldn't help yourself!) I read this book at the worst possible time. I had end of term school work to do while I was reading this and I could only read about a chapter at a time. My mind was always on the book and at times I couldn't even focus! See what this book does to you? You need to be fully alert when reading this because since the pace is slow, you might get tired at times. However, this book is NOT boring. At all. The romance takes some time to emerge. It slowly builds up from the start keeps you guessing just when it will happen, but when it does, you'll be swooning over and over again like me. It wasn't the main focus of the story, but I didn't mind that one bit. In my opinion, this book is sort of a mix of The Infernal Devices and The Iron Fey series. All in all, Caitlin Kittredge has created an amazing novel with a twist on the usual faerie theme that'll have you wanting to devour the whole book up in one sitting. If that's even possible!

Before I began the novel, I made sure to learn how to properly pronounce Aoife's name (it's ee-fah) otherwise I would have gone mad trying to figure it out. Aoife is a badass. She takes crap from no one. She isn't the noble, order following good girl like others around her. She thinks and speaks for herself. I loved her immediately from the start and that love just grew when I learned about her admiration for books. Anyone who knows how to appreciate books is immediately awesome in my mind! Dean was by far my favourite character. Totally hot, a little bad, and a charm that can melt any girl's heart. I loved him! Cal was adorable, but a bit annoying, however he turned out to surprise me the most. Why? Well, you'll have to read the book

to find out then won't you?

Thanks to this book, I have a new determination to read more steampunk books. If anyone knows of any like The Iron Thorn, feel free to recommend some to me!

Thank you Caitlin Kittredge, for writing such an amazing book.

**4.5/5**

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### **Sesana says**

There's a lot going on in this book. The setting is unusual. Steampunk, in 1950s America. It's set in a city called Lovecraft (Boston, I think), which is, appropriately, infested with horrible things that would be at home in one of Lovecraft's stories. But they aren't supernatural, of course. That wouldn't be rational. Instead, the creatures that stalk the city of Lovecraft, ghouls, nightjars, and springheel jacks alike, are people infected by the necrovirus. Some infected turn into bloodthirsty creatures, and others go mad. Like Aoife's mother, and brother, and, in time, probably herself. All of this is set up in just the first 50 pages, and it only gets more complicated from there. So many writers wouldn't have been able to handle such a huge, complicated system of ideas. But Kittredge is able to weave it all together into an easily comprehensible, complete world. And although she can't entirely avoid infodumping, she does it as little as possible, and spreads the exposition through the book.

There's also a good cast of characters. Aoife is a good narrator, bright, capable, and with the best of motivations throughout the book: her family and friends. At no point did I find her thoughts or actions unbelievable or inconsistent with her character. Her growing relationship with Dean didn't take over the book, because she had more important things to worry about, and the trajectory of it was plausible to me. I also liked her friendship with Cal. Kudos to Kittredge for giving Cal the sort of casual, paternalistic brand of sexism that I'd expect to see out of characters from the 50s, without letting it turn Cal into a villain or even an unsympathetic character. Hard balancing act.

My one small complaint about the book is that there's so much exposition at the front, out of necessity, that the first half drags a bit. But once the world's been set up, it's a much quicker read. It's the one thing that kept me from loving this book entirely. Since so much has already been established, I expect that the other two books in the series will have less of that. And the ending is enough of a game-changing cliffhanger that I'm eager to read them.

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