



## ASH PRINCESS BY LAURA SEBASTIAN

Young adult/fantasy  
Ages 14-ish to older

*Ash Princess* by Laura Sebastian is the first book in a trilogy about Astrea, a land that was conquered by the Kalovaxian king (known as the Kaiser) and whose Fire Queen was killed during the invasion. The Astrean princess and the rightful queen of the country, Theo, is kept enslaved by the Kaiser, and is given a new name (Thora) and the title of the "Ash Princess", a title meant to be shameful. She faces public punishments and abuse, and lives as a prisoner in her own country.

For me, the book was a page-turner. It was captivating not because of the writing itself or even the plot, but because the book was so fast-paced. The world building was interesting and also helped. Astrea, Theo's country, was invaded by the Kalovaxians ten years before the beginning of the book. Astrea is a land blessed by magic, but as the Kalovaxians enslave the Astreans to reap the magical gems for themselves, magic is slowly running dry.

The main character, Theo, was also a fully fleshed-out, great character. Although she is somewhat of a blueprint of a normal YA fantasy book main character, it still works. My favorite character was actually Cress, Theo's friend. She is a Kalovaxian, the daughter of the man who killed Theo's mother, but is a great character and great friend to Theo nonetheless. The other characters, like the Kalovaxian Prinz Søren and the Astrean rebel Blaise, were also great. However, each of them lacked a few traits that made them a little hard to believe. For example, Søren was born Kalovaxian in a court full of darkness and was influenced by his sadistic, cruel father from a young age. However, he is kind to Theo, unlike the other Kalovaxians (excluding Cress), which was a little illogical.

This book is set in a very, very brutal and dark world. Themes of racism and slavery are prevalent, so be warned before reading it.

All in all, though the book uses a lot of common YA tropes (such as the dreaded love triangle), it was still a great read! I'd recommend it to people who enjoyed *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard, *Throne of Glass* by Sarah J Maas, and *Falling Kingdoms* by Morgan Rhodes. 8/10

