



The Iron Assassin

Ed Greenwood

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Hot pulp fiction: a steampunk Frankenstein is a weapon of death in an alternate 19th-century England

On an Earth that is not our own, Victoria never ascended the throne; the House of Hanover held England only briefly before being supplanted by the House of Harminster. It is a time of gaslamps and regularly scheduled airship flights, of trams and steam-driven clockwork with countless smoke-belching stacks. London, the capitol of the Empire of the Lion, is a filthy, crowded, fast-growing city where a series of shocking murders threatens the throne itself.

Energetic young inventor Jack Straker believes he has created a weapon to defend the Crown: a reanimated, clockwork-enhanced corpse he can control. He introduces “the Iron Assassin” to the highly placed Lords who will decide if Straker’s invention becomes a weapon of the Lion—or something to be destroyed.

It quickly becomes apparent that the Iron Assassin is more self-willed than Straker intended, and that the zombie’s past life is far more sinister than Straker thought. Has he created a runaway monster? Or the best guardian the Lion could ever hope for?

The Iron Assassin Details

Date : Published June 9th 2015 by Tor Books

ISBN : 9780765338464

Author : Ed Greenwood

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Steampunk, Fantasy, Fiction, Alternate History

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From Reader Review The Iron Assassin for online ebook

D.F. Haley says

Breathless pace with no character development and poor plotting. Three different factions with too many characters insufficiently explored. Many good ideas and hanging threads of characterizations, looks like could be made into an ongoing series if anyone can care about any of these cardboard characters. Promising, but disappointing as a result. Not my cup of tea.

Rowena Tylden-Pattenson says

Having read a few of the other reviews of this, I wholeheartedly agree with what others have said- 11 pages of character names when you open the book never bodes well. A lot of the book I spent confused as to whom was who- multiple characters are referred to by multiple names; first name, surname, or perhaps a lordly name as well! Much too much. The Iron Assassin I expected to take centre stage spent most of the time running around backstage, and the main protagonists didn't even seem to feature quite that much, or have much discernible personality. A bit of a shame, as I was excited by the blurb and cover.

Melissa says

See my other reviews at [Never Enough Books](#)

London is a city of gas-lamps and clockwork. Of airship flights and a rapidly growing city sprouting countless smoke belching stacks. It is filthy and crowded and to many, home.

The young inventor Jack Straker believes he has created a weapon to defend Crown and country; a reanimated, clockwork-enhanced corpse that he can control. He introduces “the Iron Assassin” to the highly placed Lords who will decide if Straker’s invention becomes a weapon of the Lion-or if it is to be destroyed. However, Straker and the Lords find that the Iron Assassin has a will of his own and his past isn’t all that it seems. Is this mechanical man a monster?

I wanted to like this book, I really did. Touted as a kind of modern Prometheus – a la Frankenstein, a personal favorite – I was hoping it would be something a kin to that. A man brought back to life, struggling to find his place in a world that is not ready, nor does it want him. This however, was not that.

One of the things that made this book so difficult to enjoy was how it jumped around constantly. There were too many different plot lines going on at the same time and the number of characters to try and keep track of was personally quite daunting. While the prose itself was strong, the action and dialogue were well written; the inability for the story line to say in one place for very long weakened the overall appeal.

Ed Greenwood is better known for the Forgotten Realms series. I haven’t read any of this particular series yet but they seem to get good reviews on Amazon. Those who are familiar with him and enjoy his writing might enjoy this addition. Those who are not familiar with him, take caution and maybe get this one from your library if you want to read it.

Lorene says

The plot was interesting. In London, different reality where steampunk is prevalent, a Lord and inventor reanimates a dead man using a metal exoskeleton. This dead man is strong and nearly impervious. He is controlled by a key in the back of his head.....unfortunately, the Lord's creation is stolen and the key is hijacked so the assassin is no longer controlled by the good side. Many adventures ensue. The plot is interesting. BUT, the reader changes POV constantly and not just between 3 or 4 characters. It felt like every few pages, the reader was jumping into someone else's mind, half of them unimportant characters. The character list was so long it required a list of their names and a brief description before the book started. It was so hard to follow who was who even using the character list.

Don Priest says

DNF at 25%. The story sounds interesting, but is so jumbled and impenetrable that I just couldn't get intrigued. The story zigzags between groups and individuals constantly, with little, if any, rhyme or reason. Characters just seem to pop up and start being important, without any explanation of why they're there, what they're doing, or why they should matter. Mysterious, but not interesting or captivating. Serious events are glossed over (for instance, the titular assassin apparently runs away from his master, with no explanation or seemingly any real concern). At least one explanation (the state of the Queen) is given almost exactly the same way twice in a dozen pages, even though the characters involved are well aware, and the reader is too. Perhaps a massive dose of good editing could have saved this one, but as is, give it a pass. For steampunk, try *The Clockwork Dagger* by Beth Cato, or *The Mechanical* by Ian Tregellis.

Melliane says

Mon avis en Français

English review

I fell totally in love with the cover when I saw it and I admit that the summary also helped a lot. I was also curious to see what the author would present us for this first volume. Have I said that I love everything related to the steampunk genre? So how not to be intrigued by this new novel?

The idea of ??the book is really interesting, we have an alternative London where the crown is threatened by creatures that no one really manages to defeat. Jack Stracker therefore creates a weapon that he thinks necessary from a dead corpse and shows him to everyone. But this creation is not so simple, especially when he has his own desires and does not submit to every decision made for him. We therefore follow particularly these two characters and their history but also some others evolving in parallel with their lives. It was quite interesting I confess to see how everything would be developed but I admit that I was confused a lot of time on the story level. We pass quickly from a character to another and from one event to another without really going into the details. Besides, I'm not convinced that I have understood everything perfectly in the end, the novel was interesting and I still had a good time with the whole.

Another detail is noted making this volume beautiful and this is related to the pages of the book. Indeed, we do not have blank pages as we're used to but beautiful gray pages that give us immediately want to immerse

ourselves in the novel and to discover what is happening.

To conclude, it was an interesting novel although I think that I needed more to understand what was happening.

Laura Ess says

It's a bit of a worry when the 13 page, 98 character Dramatis Personae that precedes the story itself, often has more detail about the characters than the story itself. The story meanders from scene to scene in what seems to be an attempt to pad out the plot. My overall impression is that the author was trying to be whimsical, but it comes across as heavy handed pastiche. I say pastiche because we clearly have a Holmes and Watson analogue in the characters of Jack Straker (Lord Tempest) and Bley's Hardcastle. Straker seems more a steampunk Tony Stark however, in that his main problem is caused by his own creation the "Iron Assassin", the title character of the story.

Not that we see that much of poor Bentley Steelforce, who is reanimated from the dead and mostly appears at random throughout the story, like a clockwork deus ex machina. In fact with so many characters it's hard exactly just who the main characters are. In truth it may not have one. I read this in the middle of high summer and the heat and humidity here may have been one reason I fell asleep several times while doing so. At least I hope so, but in truth I found this to be a heavy handed and deadly dull read.

David says

Much, much better than the other reviews might have you believe. I thought it was pretty cool and very fun. Very inventive and fast paced.

Timothy Boyd says

I just started reading Steampunk books a few years ago and so far have really enjoyed this sub-genre of SiFi. I was surprised how many writers have a book or two out there. Ed Greenwood is very familiar to me for his fantasy books in the D&D Forgotten Realms setting so I was interested to see how he handled a very different setting. Man was I very presently surprised. Great action and adventure throughout just like his fantasy books. Very good read. Very recommended

Tim Hicks says

Ed Greenwood seems to be quite good at writing Forgotten Realms stories. Sadly, when it comes to steampunk he's more of an Ed Wood.

OK, there's a setting, and a plot, and a workable main idea. We get airships and steam and inventors and plucky women. A couple of the characters are actually quite interesting and could have been the basis of a good book.

But you start in a hole when you get a list of characters that runs 11 pages and 98 people

This book is weak on editing:

- * spelling (cinammon)
- * word selection/spelling (peddling for pedalling),
- * singular/plural ("the dump door and its chain was" and again: ("each of them has been reared to believe they are my son" - singular they is one thing, but we know they are all boys and this needs "he is")
- * pronoun use ("her deeds are making we ... more prominent")
- * names (surely Cramner and Ffloukes should have been Cranmer and Ffoulkes)

The Duchess, a Hanoverian, appears with a truly appalling attempt at dialect, the kind that makes writing coaches say, "Don't write in dialect."

We have murderous scuttling hands, not an unusual thing in a magic story, But this isn't a magical world. How do they move? How does their master give them orders? Everything else is explained by acceptable handwaving about expert artisans and inventors; this is outright magic and we can't just take it for granted. If we can do that, why are there no fireballs and levitating wizards and invisibility cloaks?

And then we get to the slaughter. Here are the pages on which someone dies. Parentheses indicate multiple deaths on that page. The story starts on page 21.
23 (34) 42 (61) 78 (85) 94 96 101 127 150 (180) 184 195 200 (204) 205
(209) (210) (211) 239 248-9 256 (257) 263 (264) 266 (269) 270 (272) 280
(282) (296) (301) 303 (305) 306 (312) 314 315 (318)

Now we know why we had to introduce 98 characters. By the end there are about as many left as there are at the end of Hamlet. I suspect someone's been writing too many stories about dark elves slaughtering orcs. I grant you that Greenwood did establish that the Order has been killing a lot of people. But there's no need to scythe down most of the people that appear in the book.

This author might do well to stick to what he's good at. Or work with a co-author, because as I said this could have been a quite good book.

Kristin says

The book started out well. The first chapter was captivating and got me interested in the world. I think the world in which the story takes place, a steam punk version of Victorian England, was the best feature of the book. Unfortunately as the story went along I found myself getting confused by all the characters (many with similar names and some with two different names). The narrative kept shifting between characters but the splits between one character and another weren't very well done. I often found myself confused as to which character was now telling the story. Also the story started to drag about halfway through the book and it felt like the story had become circular, that it wasn't progressive but instead was going around and around the same issue. These features of the book caused me to lose interest and I didn't even bother to finish it.

Alycia says

Really liked this one, especially the plots-within-plots of the villains. At first, I was a little put off by the 7 pages of characters listed at the front of the book. But towards the end I found it was invaluable for keeping track of who was who. Can't wait for the sequel!

Carrie says

I won this book from Goodreads First Reads.

I have to say I had hopes for this one. Great cover and something new to try. But I'm giving up on it for now after 128 pages. The story seems to jump around everywhere without much progress or sense to it. I was a bit concerned with the several pages at the start listing a ton of characters and after reading as much as I have I seemed to be right in thinking there isn't much character development in the actual story. Jumps from one thing to another and gets too much to keep track of for my taste. I may return and give it another try someday and would revise my review if I change my mind but for now this is disappointment to me.

Wdmoor says

Cool premise, cool cover, and after 6 or 7 bewildering chapters I surrendered and moved on. My first clue of trouble ahead was a nine page list of characters at the front of the book, and I think most of them were introduced in the first four chapters. As difficult as it was keeping the characters straight, mid-chapter there were incomprehensible scene changes introducing more characters for equally incomprehensible reasons. I wanted a fun summer read, but this just felt like a reading assignment.

Huw Evans says

Had so much hope for this book but after the first chapter, in which we meet the titular Iron Assassin, the plot dries up and the writing gets very clunky.

Throughout the book the character development of the myriad of named participants is very poor and I was getting increasingly confused as to who was fighting whom. It didn't help that the author chose to set the work in the higher echelons of Victorian Society thus you had Lord's and Ladies fighting Lord's and Ladies. When foreign characters are introduced he writes their dialogue in cringing faux pidgin English, and they feel very much an aside rather than part of the plot although, apparently, they are key to the end game.

The female characters are treated woefully throughout. As one would imagine in a Victorian set novel Queen Victoria does appear but really as an afterthought and poorly conceived as the character presented is feeble and seems implausible as the Empress of India. Younger female characters, of which I recall three in total, are introduced as fluff. They are the objects of poorly written gratuitous sex scenes that do not really advance the plot but obviously fill the desires of the authors fancy. Even the main female character is denigrated by involving her in his sexual fantasies.

As to the Iron Assassin. After being introduced he barely appears as anything more than a human tank which

passes between the two sides in the conflict almost in a whim. There is no development of who he is nor the reasoning behind his conversion to a steampunk cyborg.

Overall a poorly conceived, written and presented book that is obviously trying to cash in on the steampunk genre.
