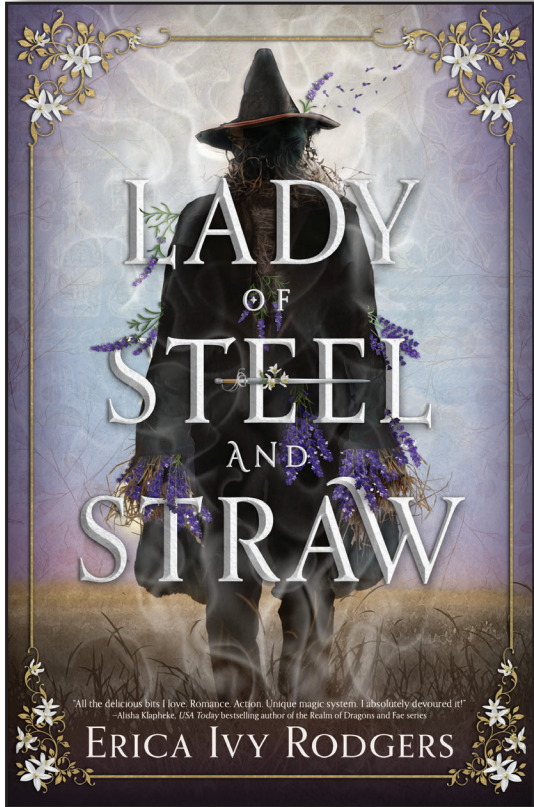


READING GROUP
GUIDE



Lady of Steel and Straw
by Erica Ivy Rodgers

ABOUT THE BOOK

A tenacious heroine with a dark gift must defend her family’s legacy and faith from a handsome enemy in this young adult fantasy debut.

Lady Charlotte Sand was born to calm the restless dead, but her power has grown unpopular thanks to the newly ascendant religion of the Silent Gods. Worse, her family’s ancestral Guardian, a lavender scarecrow who was once a defender of the crown, hasn’t woken for a new heir since her father’s sordid death. Captain Luc de Montaigne is a pious follower of the Silent Gods, and he comes calling on Sand Manor with orders to collect the magic hearts of every sleeping Guardian. As an army of the dead amasses and dormant warriors stir from slumber, Luc and Charlotte grapple with a forbidden attraction: kill the other and step closer to victory—or yield to the electricity between them. The hearts they stand to lose may, in fact, be their own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- At the beginning of the novel, the author uses the following quote from *The Count of Monte Cristo*: “The difference between treason and patriotism is only a matter of dates.” How is this an appropriate quote for the novel? Cite examples of treason and patriotism in the novel. Which characters skew the lines between treason and patriotism?
- The first chapter is about Parson Rainier Worthington (Worth). Discuss why his story takes place two hundred years before Charlotte and Luc’s stories. Why is Worth considered “a living legend”? What is his role in the novel? Explain the purpose of the scarecrows he makes. Discuss his duty to the dead. What is his advice to the soldiers about fighting the dark?
- Explain the conflict between the Order of Guardians and the Silent Gods. In what way might the conflict be considered a religious war? Name the characters that belong to the Silent Gods. Who belongs to the Order of Guardians? What are the Wraith Wars? Discuss the act of wielding.
- Describe Charlotte Sand. What is her role in calming the “restless dead”? Explain what her grandmother means by, “But the dead can feel when you work from duty rather than mercy. Don’t give what you must. Give what they need” (p. 3). What are the needs of the dead? Cite scenes from the novel when Charlotte is acting out of duty. When does she work from mercy? How does Charlotte’s sword give her courage?

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- Think about the following secondary characters, and use one word to describe each: Marta, Petras, Pol, Micah, St. Claire, Charis, Durand, Artus, and Lorraine the Pure. What is their role in Charlotte's quest? Name the cardinal's elite. Why does Cardinal Lorraine the Pure want the Guardians' hearts? Which ones has she collected? Explain why she is willing to risk everything to get Worth's heart.
- How does Luc de Montaigne experience fear, shame, and dread? Discuss how he ended up in the hands of Cardinal Lorraine the Pure, Cardinal of the Silent Gods.
- Explain what he means by, "What do you believe in, Sand? The Order? Or yourself? Does rebellion run in the family?" (p. 149). In what way does Charlotte rebel? How does Luc underestimate Charlotte?
- Who is Grandier? What is his view of Charlotte? Why does he call her "feral"? What is his role in William Sand's death? Explain why Charlotte feels guilty for William's death.
- How does Charlotte walk the line between light and dark after her brother's death? Discuss how his death establishes the conflict in the novel. Plot Charlotte's journey to avenge his death.
- Worth awakens and needs a partner. Why does he wake for Charlotte? Explain the concept of partnering. Explain why Charlotte is conflicted about the partnering. What information is Worth seeking before he and Charlotte begin their journey to the palace?
- Describe the Hotel de Jute, the headquarters of the Order of Guardians. What is Charlotte's reaction upon seeing the city of Jute? Discuss what she encounters within the palace walls. How does she escape?
- How often is trust mentioned in the novel? Discuss moments of trust and distrust in the book. Debate whether trust is a theme of the novel. Cite scenes when Charlotte realizes who she can trust.
- What is the symbolism of the Broken Bird? Identify other symbolism in the novel.
- Fantasy has elements of magic. What is the magic in this book? There is almost always a dangerous quest in fantasy. Describe the danger Charlotte encounters. What is the climax, or turning point, of the novel? Discuss the ending. Explain the title of the book.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



Erica Ivy Rodgers lives in Nashville, Tennessee, with her husband, two children, and one very lovable, frenetic pit bull mix. When she isn't writing or driving kids around, you can usually find her in the woods, rock climbing, or beneath an ever-growing pile of bookish quilting fabric. *Lady of Steel and Straw* is her debut YA novel. Learn more at EricaIvyRodgers.com.