



## Afterimage

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## **Afterimage** Ais , Santino Hassell

In the Company of Shadows is a series about two people who are thrown together as partners in a secret agency; their mission is to disband rebels who have propagated in a post-war future, but they have to deal with everything that comes with an unlikely partnership as well.

Miscommunication, periods of distance, fleeting smiles and learning to trust someone when a person can't even trust himself, these are what they struggle with while still trying to do their jobs. One is a psychopath, called a murderer and monster and generally deemed subhuman by nearly everyone who knows of him; the other is an introvert, cold and emotionless and so lost in thoughts that he would agree that he can be called a monster of inhumanity. But what makes a person human; is it humanity, compassion, or is it simply the ability to reason? Can a monster be human, and general humanity breed monsters?

While they learn about each other, they learn about themselves; where their loyalty and morality lies, and how learning to trust another person can be incredibly difficult, bittersweet, and rewarding all at the same time. Join Hsin Liu Vega (aka "Sin") and Boyd Beaulieu as they struggle to find where they fit in a world slowly recovering from war.

*Status: Complete*

## **Afterimage Details**

Date : Published 2009 by Santino Hassell & Ais

ISBN :

Author : Ais , Santino Hassell

Format : ebook 1015 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Science Fiction, Dystopia

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# From Reader Review Afterimage for online ebook

Elise ✕ a.k.a Ryder's Pet ✕ says

??????\*Might contain spoilers\*??????

I was so fucking disappointed. I had hope that **Hsin ‘Sin’ Liu Vega** (27) and **Boyd Beaulieu** (21, becomes 22) would become closer, that more depth would enter their relationship; however they were barely together. It was stupid, full of miscommunication, selfishness and boring. The feelings on had started to feel for those two, disappeared, specially for their relationship. That back and forth, going back to square one; even way before that.

*“He'd lost the only part of his life that made it worth living because of a couple random fucks. How ridiculous.”*

**I lost all respect for each and every character** and I just wanted to finish the book before I flipped out and killed my pc. Everything just felt distant and there was no connecting between me and the story, the characters or the couple(s). I hated Sin and Boyd at one point, and now I think I still do. I'm not sure if I want to continue the series as I really don't give a fuck, but I hate giving up... Shit.

*So what was the point of desperately clinging to something that had turned out to not even be true?*

## **Quick basic facts:**

**Genre:** - (Adult) Science Fiction (?) - Romance (M/M)

**Series:** - Series, Book Two

**Love triangle?** - (view spoiler)

**Cheating?** - (view spoiler)

**HEA?** - (view spoiler)

**Favorite character?** - Hsin ‘Sin’ Liu Vega? None?

**Would I read more by this author/or of series?** - Unsure.

**Would I recommend this book/series?** - Unsure.

**Will I read this again in the future?** - No.

**Rating** - 1.5 stars.

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**Lenore says**

**I'm gonna fight them all**

**A seven nation army couldn't hold me back**

**They're gonna rip it off**

**Taking their time right behind my back**

**And I'm talking to myself at night**

**Because I can't forget  
Back and forth through my mind  
Behind a cigarette  
And the message coming from my eyes  
Says leave it alone**

Don't want to hear about it  
Every single one's got a story to tell  
Everyone knows about it  
From the Queen of England to the hounds of hell

**And if I catch it coming back my way  
I'm gonna serve it to you  
And that aint what you want to hear  
But thats what I'll do  
And the feeling coming from my bones  
Says find a home**

I'm going to Wichita  
Far from this opera for evermore  
I'm gonna work the straw  
Make the sweat drip out of every pore  
**And I'm bleeding, and I'm bleeding, and I'm bleeding**  
Right before the lord  
All the words are gonna bleed from me  
And I will sing no more  
**And the stains coming from my blood  
Tell me go back home**

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## **Deborah says**

I've just done my first re-read of this and it was just as emotional and draining as it was the first time. Despite it being a second read I was completely engrossed just like the first time. I love Hsin completely and just wished Boyd was worthy of him and wasn't such a selfish bastard. This book is long, 1015 pages long and while it's addictive and brilliant (fully deserving its 5\* in my opinion) it also has some slow parts (nothing a bit of editing won't fix) although it appeared to me that all the slow parts belonged to that selfish bastard Boyd. Maybe I'm biased, who knows?

My original review.

After reading and becoming completely addicted to Evenfall I couldn't wait to start Afterimage until I read some of the reviews.

The result of this was I couldn't bring myself to start it, I pushed it to the side for days while I read whatever I found at the top of my kindle. It was never far from my thoughts but I'd already been through so much with these two I just wanted them together.

I know life within the Agency will never be easy and their missions are beyond dangerous but that didn't matter to me as long as they were facing it together and that was the problem with this book, they weren't. I love Sin, I suspect it's impossible to read these books and not seriously fall totally in love with him. In Afterimage we discover more about his past and what shaped him into the killing machine he is today and as you can imagine it makes for difficult reading.

(view spoiler)

This is an incredibly emotional read yet I'd to force myself to put it down at night and even though I was totally exhausted I still couldn't sleep, the book was always on my mind, thinking over what I'd just read and wondering what came next and could I possibly read a bit more, did I really need sleep?

If you've read it you understand just how addictive it is especially when you consider half the time I didn't even like what I was reading. My feelings ranged from upset to absolutely furious and I was completely drained by the time I'd finished.

I've read some of the reviews for The Interludes and I'm glad it's lighter and actually an interlude of sorts because I don't think I could move straight onto another such draining emotional read.

I can't possibly give less than 5\* because, well because it's amazing and this is turning out to be one of the best series's I've read.

It's testament to how much I love these books that I've actually put them on my kindle. I have an iPad and a kindle and if I can't do what I want with them then I generally don't do it at all but after reading Evenfall 1 and 2 on my iPad I knew I had to get the series transferred so I cleaned away the cobwebs and wiped away the dust and actually used my computer for something other than playing the occasional Region 1 DVD.

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**Eva says**

**The book is BRILLIANT!**

**I felt so much**

**Loneliness...**

**Misunderstandings...**

**Stupidity and Madness...**

**Pain...**

**Heartbreak...**

**Love...**

**Passion...**

**And just... fireworks**

**I LOVED IT... to the next one...**

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### **Susan says**

I'm removing my rating, but not my review. I still love this series, even though I most definitely do not condone what SH has done.

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Another excellent book in the ICoS series. Words can never express my feelings for these books. I have been totally consumed by them. I could not stop thinking about Sin and Boyd. These books suck you in..

This one was all about the feels...

This book had me crying and hurting along with Sin and Boyd, but also laughing. I fell in love with all the characters even more in this installment.

**My beautiful Boyd**

**Gorgeous Sin**

The world Santino & Ais created.... I am so in awe anyone could write with this much feeling.

These characters are not perfect, they are flawed in so many ways. They make a lot of mistakes and they hurt each other. Often without meaning to. But because I loved the characters I had no trouble forgiving any of their actions. What they did may not have been smart, but it was all understandable. Not once did I 'hate' one

of the beautiful people in this book. Well, except the bad guys of course... And Boyd's mother, Vivienne, damn what a bitch... don't think I will ever like her.

And at the end, one of my favorite characters came back! Yay, this guy is so hilarious! I am going to love reading more about him in the next book. I love his attitude: quit whining and deal with it!

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## **Jewel says**

Review Removed.

<http://riptidepublishing.com/a-statem...>

[https://www.goodreads.com/user\\_status...](https://www.goodreads.com/user_status...)

Just so we're clear, Ais is innocent in all this.

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## **Wendy says**

I know many are removing their ratings and reviews of all the books they have read, written by Santino Hassell, in light of his despicable behavior. I have deleted my ratings from all Santino books I have read, because I too am shocked and appalled!!! I won't do it with the ICOS series though. I am gonna be honest here and say, that this series is one of the best I have ever read, and I am sure Ais played a big part in my enjoyment. As far as I know, Ais had nothing to do with all that has happend. Until I hear otherwise, my ratings and reviews for this series, will stay up. I am sorry for those who might not agree with me on this. I would also like to say that I am so sorry for all of you who have been hurt....my heart goes out to all of you ;) xoxo

Re-read 7/13/17...Yeah it was just as gutwrenching as I remember and just as freaking awesome !!!!

Wow...this book took me through the fucking wringer !!

First of all, you need to read book 1 before you read this one. This is a series and the books can not be read as stand alones !!

I myself am an emotional basket case right now...but in a good way lol ;)

Again, there are so many good reviews about the storyline, so I'm not gonna go into that. Just like the previous book, I wouldn't even know where to start.

I will tell you that I spend most of my time pissed off at one of the MC's while reading this.

I really wanted to jump into the book and kick some ass !!

Still, even though this book pissed me off, made me cry and frustrated the hell out of me, it's one of the best books I've read. So far this whole series is. So it was definitely worth it. I also have an amazing support system, so once again....thank you Susan !!!!

At the end I really needed some laughs, which I got in the form of "Emilio" !! Thank god for his character. I think I fell in love a little :P

Of course I'm gonna jump into book 3 right away. I can't wait to read what happens next. The only problem I'm facing right now, is the fact that I'm a zombie. These books are really long and since I just can't seem to stop reading, my family seems to feel a bit neglected...lol

5 stars for Boyd and Sin and all the awesome sidecharacters !!!

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## **Shelley says**

**This book was horrible! An experience in emotional anguish that I think has left me with a bloody ulcer, a few gray hairs and a nervous tick.**

Afterimage is Book 2 of In the Company Of Shadows, and it should come with warnings: Those with heart conditions, stomach conditions, and mental instability, stay far away. Those who find themselves emotionally invested after the 1500 pages of Book 1 ( I defy you not to be) wrap your heart in kevlar and line your stomach with copious amounts of Gaviscon, cause the shits about to go down.

I shout out to Angst lovers from wide and far to gather round, look no further cause here lies your holy grail!

When I read a book like this I wish I was an educated literary smart arse with a psychology degree to be able to break it all down for you. I cannot.

The setting is cold, grey, stormy and does everything to fuel the mood of this book. "Now is the winter of our discontent" is a phrase that kept popping into my head.

Can you imagine a pulse and tone like this for a thousand pages?

then it all gets crushed and broken, becoming a thunderous emotional pounding that moves through every part of you

call me dramatic, but this is the outcome...you will bleed, heart and soul ...you will bleed!



May I mention the **ANGER** this evokes. Oh. My. God! The fierce rage coupled with the angst is my undoing.

It's all white noise after a while, the numbness settles and after staring off in the distance for an undetermined amount of time, you pick it up, carry on, and experience it all over again!

Why? Why did I read it if it left me in such a state? Because it's **brilliant!** Because it's **fantastic!** Because it's an addiction and because I am totally in love with Hsin Liu Vega! It was nothing I expected and more than I could have ever imagined.

I want so much more, even if it kills me, I want more. I am more than emotionally invested here, I am obsessed!

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## **nicklein says**

***“I only cared about my life after he was in it. Why should I care now that he's not anymore?”***

That quote DESTROYED me I'm not even kidding.

Though this book didn't quite blow my mind the way Evenfall did, it was still riveting and glorious. The plot was more intense this time. It has plenty of intrigue that kept me on the edge of my seat.

I want to hug both Sin and Boyd but at the same time I want to punch them and knock some sense into them. Argh. They frustrate the hell out of me. They were both too proud and hard-headed it's infuriating. \*gives myself a comforting cake\*

All in all, this was a great continuation of the series and while it's certainly not without its flaws, this installment still fvcked me up in the best way. I can't wait to see what the next book brings.

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## **Alkyoni says**

So...Afterimage. Angst raised to the Superpower.

Everybody kept saying how hard it was for them to read this book after they came to love the guys being together in Evenfall. I can't say that I enjoyed reading about how it all went to hell page by angsty page, but I for one wouldn't have it any other way. All these problems that they have as individual beings, it would be highly unrealistic if they easily overcame them.

Look at Sin. The guy's mental problems are so off the charts that he is walking nuclear accident waiting to happen.

Look at Boyd. The kid has a fight with his boyfriend and fucks up everything and everyone in a five mile radius.

Speaking of Boyd, I can't believe how everyone is so mad at the guy all the time, like everything that happens is his fault and his alone. When Sin fucks up, everyone (including me) thinks how he is not to blame because the poor guy is suffering so much. When Boyd fucks up, everyone (not me) is ready to crucify him because he broke poor Sin's heart. Oh really? How many kinds of awesome would someone have to be in order to be with Sin at this point?

I really love Sin, but the thing about Boyd is that I can relate to the guy. The mistakes that he made throughout this book are mistakes that I could have easily made if I were in his shoes. I wish people weren't so quick to judge him.

As for the rest... There were a couple of chapters that turned me a couple of shades paler and a couple of characters that I really wanted to bitch slap (hello "Dr".Ann). I loved Boyd's new friends from the training, especially Emma and Harriet. I was beginning to worry that there wouldn't be any amiable female characters in this series...

And holy mother of Endings...

I have a good feeling about the remaining books now that the worst (I hope) part is behind me. Needless to say that I'm addicted to this series and I think it will be hard to find something that I'll enjoy reading as much once it's finished. But look at the bright side. 2,500 pages to go.

Yay.

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## **Cristopher says**

### **5 STARS!**

Citizens of Goodreads, I am soo damn raw, exhausted, shattered and numb.. And I cant explain the ways my chest is tight and burning. I need a damn hug.

Thank you for tolerating my rants and ramblings full of foul hateful words. I apologize for my behavior. I promise to be better, but I'm notorious at breaking promises. So whatever.

Sigh.

This is ANGST on steroids. And its done in a way that I had to put it down every now and again to get myself a hot chocolate just to calm myself. Because I swear I wanna punch someones face. I've been asked couple of times by people around me if I'm alright cuz this just put me in such a crazy moood. God, I never

though a book could evoke pure rage. It's that intense!

Yet it was.. Soo good. Brilliant. Addictive. Epic. That despite of all the frustration, pain, anger and all that.. its DAMN WORTHY!

I couldnt wait to read the next one! Its gonna be a challenge to change my opinion about one of the shittiest character I've ever met.

\*\*\*

**Sin**, man. I love you. I love you. Choose me. Im sorry for the things that didn't go right. You have to get better and find real happiness from someone else.

**Boyd**. When are you gonna die? Cuz I'm throwing a party.

**Kassian**. You were great and hot. I hope you wont catch STD someday.

**Ann**. You sick psychiatrist! I admit I like you. But darn it. Why you always gotta floor me like that?!

**Zach**. General, thanks for looking out for Sin. Please continue to do so.

**Vivienne**. How about sending your son to a mission he'll surely die? You dont care about him anyway, and you'll do me a favor.

**Ryan**. Get well baby, you can do this.

**Andrew, Emma, Toby, Jon, Patrick, Harriet** and okay **Cade**. You guys are awesome! Proud of you all! Especially you Emma! You added sunshine into this rather gloomy book.

**Doug**. I don't like you. You don't matter. Be thankful you're getting a shout out too.

**Thierry**. What did you do here again??

**Chignon**. What the f??? How? - Just. I wish you stayed dead.

**Ari**, thanks for reading this with me! I apologize for my constant depressing whinings! Lol.

**Santino & Ais**. You guys could write! This is looooong. Seriously though, you both rock! Hats off.

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**Dia says**

**THE BIGGEST 5 STARS I EVER GAVE TO A BOOK**

**This story WAS AMAZING!!!**

I enjoyed it way more than Evenfall. I loved the first one, but the second ... **just blew my mind and consumed me SO MUCH!**

**SIN** - he made me love him so much!! His olive skin, deep green eyes and his killer mouth! He was just so vulnerable and his biggest flaw: he loved too much, too deep!

**Boyd** - well I am very angry with him right now, so all I'm going to say is: I really hope he will do something BIG to make me forgive him!!

This series is truly THE BEST I've read so far. It has A LOT of action, A LOT of suspense and the LOVE ... well it can't be described! It's way too intense!!!

**There are no words for this series and this book just broke my heart, but even so I just can't wait to read MORE!!!**

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**Optimist ?King's Wench? & MANTIES Champion says**

i didn't particularly like this anyways so cry 2 tears in a bucket, fuck it.

review removed

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**Tara♥ says**

**"Love and trust and believing in other people – what was the point when humans were all flawed and fucked up anyway, when they only hurt each other continuously because they were too stupid to do anything else?"**

I am sad. So sad.

I finished Afterimage last night and went straight into The Interludes. Last night I was feeling much better about everything that happened in this book. Throughout Afterimage I told myself that everything that was happening was happening for a reason. That both Boyd and Sin needed to work on their inner demons before they could ever hope to have a truly healthy relationship. The pain that they were inflicting on themselves and each other would all be for the greater good. Then this morning I woke up and realised that I'm a fool, a fool who was in denial. Today I can't stop thinking about everything Sin. I would just like to go sit somewhere quiet and have a little cry.

The pain and loneliness that Sin experiences in this book is just absolutely heart breaking and the more I think about it the more upsetting it becomes.

I love dual POV's, they are my favourite type of books to read but this book was one of the best dual POV's I've read. I spent most of my time changing my mind about who was doing the right thing. I would read Boyd's POV and think to myself 'I can totally see why he is doing that, he needs to look out for himself, he needs to be selfish or he will never be happy.'

Then I would read a Sin POV and everything would go out the window and my heart would break for him and I would find myself so angry with Boyd for how selfish he was being. Sin makes mistakes, really, really big ones but I honestly was never angry with him. He has absolutely no idea how relationships (not just romantic) work. He has never really been treated as a human so how can he possibly know how to navigate his way through all these new feelings? Add to that the fact that he is very unwell and the people that should be helping are either completely unprofessional (Ann) or just have absolutely no idea how to communicate properly with him (Carhart) and we witness him go through terrible bouts of depression, fear and loneliness.

**"I only cared about my life after he was in it. Why should I care now that he's not anymore?"**

**"Please don't hate me ever again."**

It was so difficult to see him like this. Sin is a lethal weapon and everyone around him seems to think that he is incapable of remorse or empathy. The reality is in fact the opposite.

**"I didn't live up to your expectations and you aren't living up to mine."**

There are no real answers to anything in Afterimage. At the end there are just more questions but it definitely gives you a much clearer look at the people that inhabit this world. Nothing in the world of ICoS is black and white and not everybody is what they seem. If I had one complaint it would be the length of the book, it is mammoth and there is a lot of repetition. As with Evenfall I understand that the authors are working on editing it. I usually only give books that I would definitely reread 5 stars and when I finished this I did give it 4 stars as I wasn't sure I could work my way through it a second time but I will definitely, without a shadow of a doubt, be reading the edited version so that's a reread right? Sin has kind of made me fall in love with him so it feels wrong not giving it all the stars.

Throughout reading this my brain kept throwing the lyrics of one particular song at me, so it has kind of become my soundtrack for this book. I'm pretty sure that every time I hear it from now on Boyd and Sin will come to mind. Part of me thinks it's because I went to see the band who sing it two weeks ago so their music is banging around inside my head but I also felt the lyrics were very Boyd and Sin.

**"And I have seen all that you've seen  
And I have been where you've been  
No, our hands will never be clean  
At least we can hold each other"**

**"When You Break"  
Bear's Den**

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**Steph says**

**I didn't think it was possible for Sonny and Ais to write a book as amazing as Evenfall, but they did it. Afterimage is absolutely incredible, I have no idea how to tell you just how much I loved it, but I'll give**

it a good go...

I was warned by many ICoS fans that this book would crush my heart, and my soul. But I was very happy to discover that I could totally handle it. Okay I will admit that I did cry, hideously so at times, but I handled all the other stuff just fine. LOL

I am going to try and tell you about this book, but not in too much detail. There are so many twists and turns here that if I told you too much, there would be no surprises left, and that would ruin everything. Which I would never do to you guys.

In Evenfall we got to see Sin and Boyd come together, as partners, as friends and as lovers. We know just how deeply they care for each other, how much they depend on each other for affection, for comfort and safety. **What we are shown in Afterimage is that Sin and Boyd's full-on co-dependence, could never work for long. No matter how much Sin and Boyd want to be together, they are both broken in their own ways. As hard as it is to see, they both need time to learn and to grow as individuals, before they can be any good for each other.**

\*\*\*\*\* Some spoilers ahead \*\*\*\*\*

Ann is a very difficult character for me to talk about, because although I want to hate her, I still don't. I liked her at the start of this book and was happy when Sin became her patient. Was I worried about it? Yes, of course. But I really thought she could help Sin, and she did. There was one instance where I was beyond furious with her. I think she took advantage of Sin when he was at his weakest point. She abused her position as his doctor, for her own gain, which was disgusting. She also put Sin in a horrible situation, which led to him having an Episode. She stupidly put herself and her needs before his.

But when it comes down to it, Ann is the one who got Sin to talk. Ann is the one who got him his initial diagnosis after years of failed attempts. She is also the one that was there for him when he needed someone. Do I agree with it? Holy crap no, I hated it. But she was there for him when Boyd and Carhart had their heads so far up their own arses that they weren't there for Sin when he needed them most.

Ann also went to help Boyd, she told him everything he needed to hear, which helped him move things along with Sin.

So as much as I disliked her at times, Ann played a pivotal role in this book.

One man that I really adored in this book, was Kassian. Every single scene with him, I warmed to him even more. He's such an amazing guy.

I think this was the perfect way to describe him (from Boyd)...

*'Boyd truly liked Kassian as a person; Kassian was thoughtful, objective, serious, mischievous, funny, kind... He knew how to make a person feel like it was okay just being themselves while at the same time he didn't let things slide if someone did something out of line.'*

He was the person who was always on Boyd's side. He was there when Boyd needed a friend, someone to talk to. He was there to make Boyd laugh when he felt like there was nothing more to laugh about. Some of my favourite scenes in this book were between these guys and I loved every time Kassian took Boyd out on his motorbike.

There was one part in this book that probably should've made me a little angry at Kassian. But I found myself enjoying every single dirty second of it. LOL. I actually wanted more and I re-read that one per-cent three times. It was incredibly sexy.

***"You'd asked me why I was attracted to you," Kassian replied, running his tongue along Boyd's neck. "I think it's your androgyny. It fucking turns me on like nothing else."***

Oh, and Vivienne is as cold as ever. *Surprise, surprise!* But she does something so damn shocking to Boyd in this book. I don't think I could ever understand her. But I think she has just lost her last chance with Boyd, not that she deserves anything less.

Anyway, back to Sin and Boyd.

I was a little disappointed that we got such little time with Sin and Boyd when they were happy, before everything fell apart. Things went wrong so quickly and we only go to see distant light at the end of the tunnel within the last few pages of the book. After everything, I think we (as readers) deserved a bit of relaxed, sexy time. LOL

Sin is really suffering in this book; it broke my heart to see him so alone. To see him completely falling apart with no one he felt he could turn to. It seems like as soon as he let himself care for Boyd and realised how much he already cared about Carhart, that the flood-gates open and all the old evil flowed out. He was plagued with guilt, insomnia, awful nightmares and hallucinations of all the people he has killed. Seeing Sin in therapy and finally getting the help he needs was great, but really hard to read. Knowing some of what he went through as a child was enlightening and heart-breaking.

I desperately wanted Sin to tell Boyd what was happening, knowing that the deceit would cause problems for them. But poor Sin was so scared...

***'How could he ruin it? How could he take the faith Boyd had in him and crush it, proving that Sin really was psychotic, dangerous, capable of monstrous things? How could Sin correct him, change that viewpoint and take away that comforting touch forever?...How could he potentially scare away the only person who'd ever made him smile?'***

Worst of all was the fact that Boyd was nowhere to be seen when Sin needed him. Once he got into the Rank 10 training, all thoughts of Sin were gone.

I never thought I would be so angry at Boyd, but holy crap, was I. I could not believe how self-centred he was in this book. All he cared about was making himself be a better/stronger person. He paid no attention to the fact that Sin was deteriorating right in front of him. Never asked why he looked like he was getting better and never cared to ask what was going on. It made me so angry and sad on Sin's behalf.

There are so many problems with them personally; it is making it impossible for them to have a functional relationship. So I think that them being apart is for the best, for now.

The last 15% of this book was absolutely out of this world, indescribably brilliant. There were so many things going on at once, and two massive revelations that totally made my head spin.

The introduction of the new team member was amazing. He seems like a bit of a creepy arsehole, but I think I love him already. There are some frickin hilarious quotes I want to post from him, but that would be giving too much away :(

**I have one last thing to say... Em, you are a fucking genius! I cannot believe that you figured this out before we even finished Evenfall. \*bows\***

I am dying to start Interludes, but will be happy for a few days break. My heart really needs it.

We see hope for Sin and Boyd at the end of this book, but they still have a very long way to go.

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## Susan says

[I CAN'T HANDLE THIS BULLSHIT!!!! (hide spoiler)]

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## Judith says

\*\*\* 4 Stars \*\*\*

Review to come.

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## Virginia Books says

Rating removed because of this:

<http://riptidepublishing.com/a-statem...>

Ais, you are an awesome writer

Original review:

**Hard and raw** third installment of "**In the Company of shadows**" (book 2 if you've read the unedited version) where our heroes are not together, things are tough for both of our guys, and **sadness, betrayal and surprises** share prominence in an extraordinary plot.

### Everything is broken...

One star has fallen, I'm aware of it, believe me, but all the 4 remaining stars are because the book deserves them, because my Hsin deserves them (well, **Senior Agent Vega deserves 5 stars himself**) and because the masterminds that has created such a wonderful story, with such perfectly developed side characters, deserves them.

But that said, I have to be honest and say that the first half of this book was not my favorite. And that's where my fifth star has gone.

I blame the director's cut I came from, because **afterimage is a lot of things, but "cut" it's not one of them.**

Thankfully we have Hsin marvelous parts to compensate Boyd boring ones... yes, I'm sorry to say that and you are allowed to criticize me a bit, but there was a moment (the torture test, around 60% of the book) that I thought I was being the victim. I just wanted it over (Boyd drowned or happily alive, but I needed an end and



soon).

Ohhh my poor Boyd, how did I say something that awful about him? I'm not proud \*gasping and slapping myself\* because even if the training was not my cup of tea, I still liked him. Hating his childish and selfish behavior all the way? Checked. Homicide impulses toward him? Also checked. Wanting him to get lost with Kassian? Checked, checked and checked buuuuut I didn't hate him, not that much at least, I disliked him, yes, because that's what Santino & Ais wanted from me and they got it and in a superb way, as usual.

The thing is **Boyd's attitude and behavior is done to affect the reader**, to create feelings in us. In my case, I was mad at him because no one mess with my Hsin, but I had to recognize that **all his actions were a huge cause and effect** thing, and he was 22, and broken, and clueless, and in love... And I could add lots of "ands" here, because **there are so many layers that can make the reader like or hate Boyd**. He is so well written that empathize with him is easy or, at least, affordable. He is so complex, so detailed... once again, the authors has done a terrific job sketching and developing an amazing character. Excellent.

Something that you learn Reading this story is that **Boyd is real**. He makes mistakes, his decision-making process can be wrong, his vision of the reality about Sin could seem incorrect, but he is so human, so young, so frustrated so...wrong.

**We are supposed to love Hsin. The authors have created the scenario to favour him**, all this drama, Boyd's mistakes, his faux passes, everything is written to end the way it ends. To drive both characters to a certain ending. And it is flawlessly executed. I'm amazed.

Even when you are hating Boyd (or disliking him) you know he has his reasons. He doesn't want an unhealthy relationship, he wants to grow up individually and get things by himself and also, **it's a huge responsibility to be the rock, the pillar, for someone who is mentally ill**. Boyd is just a kid. One that made me very uncomfortable many, many times.

So, summarizing, **the missed fifth star went to the training and also to the slow parts in Boyd's life**. There was a moment when he went to buy a car and I had to read 10 pages about it... OMG, I wanted to kill myself again. (number of pages randomly chosen, but it was something like that and I am just too lazy and to count them now).

Well. I'm done with my inner critical bitch now and I'm ready to start talking about **my poor, hot and beloved Hsin** (don't you worry, I'll try to keep it short)

**He is alone and lonely...**

Hsin has to deal with a lot of things: illness, the absence of Boyd, the reject from his friend, partner and lover. **He is alone, he's always been** and facing his shitty life thinking he has zero support, assuming he deserves all the bad things because he is a monster, broke my heart in a million pieces.

Hsin parts are full of terrific quotes and **the sad atmosphere is perfectly executed**. I felt everything. I pitied him, and understood him, and even made excuses for him. Because **he is lost, and amazing, and completely broken. Hsin Lou Vega is, without any doubt from my part, one of the best characters ever done**. He is

complex and fragile even if he is a killer. He is brave but at the same time dependent. He is ill but also admirable or maybe he is admirable because he is ill and still living or trying to... \*long sigh\*

And what do I expect now? I don't know, but I want some peace. Not that many uncomfortable scenes. Scenes that deserve a huge ranting themselves but I wanted this spoiler free so I'm not talking about them. But, really, I need more fun, more love, more Hsin&Boyd, more Santino's bitter humor.

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**~Mindy Lynn~ says**

**ME, AT THE BEGINNING:**

**THEN THINGS WENT TO HELL WHEN SIN HAD HIS MELT DOWN:**

**ME, WHEN BOYD IGNORED SIN WHEN HE WANTED TO OPEN UP ABOUT HIS ISSUES:**

**ME, THROWING A TANTRUM WHEN ANN AND SIN DID WHAT THEY DID:**

**ME, WHEN SIN TOLD BOYD ABOUT ANN:**

**ME, WHEN BOYD DID WHAT HE DID WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA:**

**KASSIAN:**

**SIN AND BOYD BEING APART:**

**THIS BASICALLY SUMS UP MY THOUGHTS ON THE AGENCY:**

**I SCREAMED THIS A LOT MAKING MYSELF LOOK MORE NUTTIER THAN I AM:**

**ME, AT MY LAPTOP CURSING THE IDIOTS IN THE BOOK. I'M HOT, RIGHT? LOL**

**ME, MOST OF THE TIME DURING READING:**

## THAT PRETTY MUCH SUMS UP ALL MY FEELS FOR THIS BOOK...

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### Rachel says

**\*\*SPOILERISH\*\***

Hsin and Boyd's *Evenfall* HEA is short lived with this sequel. However, this only improves the characters, the story and even the writing! Don't assume too much - Boyd's rambling soliloquies are still present, but maybe not as abundant or pointless. Still had to skim at some parts - only to go back and reread them to wring as much enjoyment out of this series as possible - because, GEEZ, this thing is epically long. But I have to admit, as in need of an editor as this series is, I enjoy the two week, total engagement journeys that Sonny and Ais take me on with the books in this series.

The best part of this installment - also the part that drove me most crazy! - being trapped in the head of 20 year old Boyd. Yikes! At 33 years old, it is a toughie to be trapped in the mind of a 20 year old, making selfish, shallow, oblivious 20 year old mistakes. In *Afterimage*, we are transported back to the 20 something time of life when the world is yours to experience and every experience is new. Tackling your life like you know everything - only to find out that you know nothing and that you have screwed it all up. And those late teens, early twenties - whew, that was the time to f\*ck around - enjoy the hell out of sex, make poor decisions on who you sleep with and then make even poorer decisions trying to fix the one relationship that touched your soul and you let slip away. The 20 something realization that all of the mistakes that you have made and were so sure you learned a lesson from, can be outdone by a new series of stunning mistakes you had no idea you were capable of making. It speaks volumes to the authors that, with Boyd, Sonny and Ais take me back to that frustratingly wonderful time of early twenties relationship discovery, disaster and recovery.

And despite being almost 30, so does Hsin. In this sequel, we begin to see Hsin shed his arrested social development and start to feel his way through the uncharted mess of relationships - romantically, sexually, professionally and even with tentative friendships. Bringing to light the fact that getting dumped can be a painfully, helpful event in ones life. Catalyzing the opportunity for self reflection, self assessment and even some changing for the better.

Kassian, mmm, yum. Glad he has been brought into the spot light of characters, as I was hoping while reading *Evenfall*. Perfect and flawed, Kassian is sexy, conflicted, cocky and vulnerable - just the way I like my heroes. He adds fun, intrigue, distraction and a level of tension to the mix.

What I wanted more from *Afterimage*? Ann. \*ducks and covers from all the Ann haters.\* I liked the interplay between Hsin and Ann and thought it was very smart of Sonny and Ais to take this direction with the series. In *Evenfall*, Hsin questions his sexuality, after never having particularly associated himself with one. Ann not only confirms he is bisexual, she provides him with a sexual relationship outside of Boyd. I also simply found her interesting. And I might be a bit of an enemies to lovers sucker, finding her involvement with Hsin, both thoughtful, provoking and adding even more character depth to a cast of well drawn characters. More of Hsin's thoughts on his relationship with Ann and more detail in their sexual encounters would have been appreciated by this reader. I feel parts of Ann and Hsin's relationship was glazed over by the authors, perhaps due to fans who found this development unwelcome? Not sure, but this fan dug it.

My love affair continues with this outrageously engaging series. *Afterimage* is well done for a sequel,

providing frustratingly logical developments for our youthful heroes and a satisfying surprise in the ending.

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