FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

General

American Goth
J. D. Glass
Bold Strokes Books
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> *I didn't know, couldn't really say, what had led me to go from cutting myself to digging deeper, only that it had…become an imperative that I obeyed.*

Samantha Cray hadn't really wanted to die, but after the phone call from across the Atlantic, only blood could stanch her pain. First, she had lost her mother; then, when she was fifteen, her father was killed—supposedly in the line of duty as a New York City firefighter.

Now, eighteen years old and an ocean away from home, Samantha is reeling from the death of Nina, the troubled and passionate friend she left behind. Yet in the midst of suicide, Sam finds herself transported to the strangely familiar astral plane. Joined there in non-corporeal form by Cort, her "uncle," she begins her training on the path she was born to: Sam is a Wielder, bound by blood to the Circle of Light Bearers.

She must freely choose her fate though, and the Dark is all around, threatening and seducing her to join the other side. Sam throws herself into alchemical and martial arts training, and her bass guitar.

The past is too painful to reconcile with her new reality; but when she hooks up with a group of musicians and Fran, her estranged best friend—and one-time rival for Nina's affections—shows up in London, Sam begins to see that her whole life has led her to this moment. Fast-paced and unapologetic, Glass's novel is equal parts esoteric thriller, coming of age story, and expertly crafted, gender-bending queer erotica. Its protagonist is refreshingly unconflicted about her sexuality, and even gender exploration is treated with a frankness that belies the author's unstated assumption that her readers are sophisticated enough to have moved beyond the need for "coming out" angst.

Between the layers, however, the Goth atmosphere and characterization alluded to in the

book’s title are unfortunately smothered. Still, devoted Glass fans will no doubt read into the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Sam’s lost love. Could she be the same Nina that appears in Glass’s other novels, *Punk Like Me* and *Punk and Zen*? Glass isn’t telling. At least, not yet.