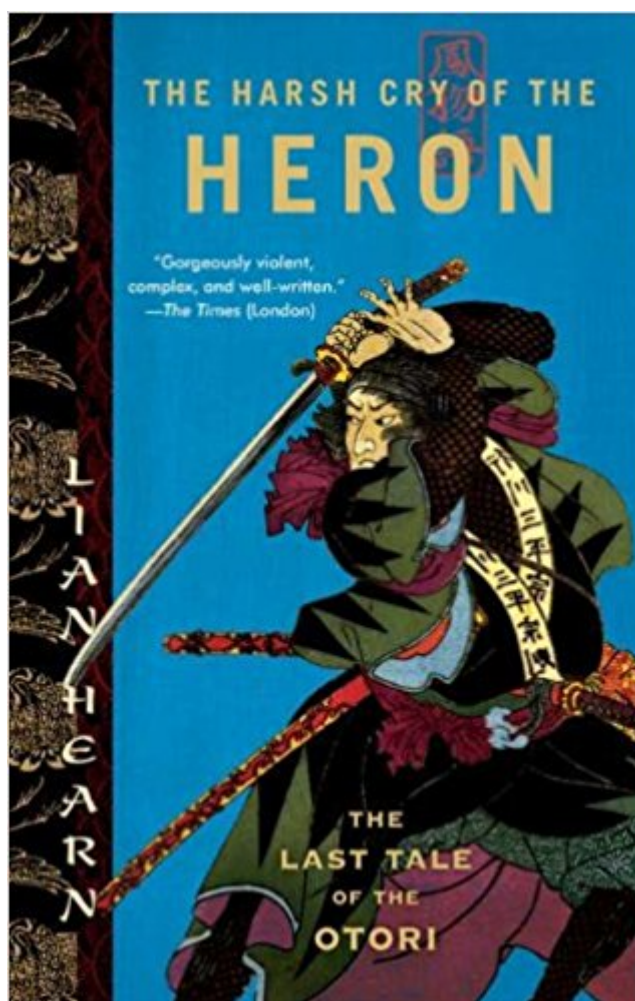


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The Harsh Cry Of The Heron: The Last Tale Of The Otori (Tales Of The Otori, Book 4)



Synopsis

The Harsh Cry of the Heron is the fourth book in the Tales of the Otori series by Lian Hearn. Don't miss the related series, The Tale of Shikanoko. A dazzling epic of warfare and sacrifice, passionate revenge, treacherous betrayal, and unconquerable love, The Harsh Cry of the Heron takes the storytelling achievement of Lian Hearn's fantastic medieval Japanese world to startling new heights of drama and action. Fifteen years of peace and prosperity under the rule of Lord Otori Takeo and his wife Kaede is threatened by a rogue network of assassins, the resurgence of old rivalries, the arrival of foreigners bearing new weapons and religion, and an unfulfilled prophecy that Lord Takeo will die at the hand of a member of his own family. The Harsh Cry of the Heron is the rich and stirring finale to a series whose imaginative vision has enthralled millions of readers worldwide, and an extraordinary novel that stands as a thrilling achievement in its own right.

Book Information

Series: Tales of the Otori, Book 4

Paperback: 572 pages

Publisher: Riverhead Books; 1st edition (June 5, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594482578

ISBN-13: 978-1594482571

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 93 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #208,126 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #187 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Myths & Legends > Asian #619 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Alternate History #1557 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Fantasy

Customer Reviews

Australian writer Gillian Rubinstein, writing as Hearn, concludes her bestselling Otori fantasy epic (Across the Nightingale Floor, etc.) with another magical tale of life and death in feudal Japan. Thanks to his enlightened leadership, 15 years of peace and prosperity have passed since Otori Takeo united the Three Countries, but his enemies continue to plot their revenge—including the Tribe, a ninja-like group of assassins, and the duplicitous Lord Zenko, one of Takeo's retainers. Perhaps the greatest threat, however, is the prophecy of a holy woman that Takeo will die only at

his son's hand; his only son, an unacknowledged bastard, is being raised by his sworn enemy Kikuta Akio, the head of a Tribe family. With his beautiful (and legitimate) daughter and heir Shigeko by his side, Takeo must navigate these treacherous shoals to save his lands and his legacy from destruction. Hearn seamlessly fuses fact and fantasy to create a sprawling, bewitching realm of magic. There's enough background in this fourth installment that a new reader will have no problem following along, and fans will be heartened to know that this "Last Tale" will be followed in 2007 by a prequel. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

The Otori saga concludes in this gripping novel, set in the years after the previous book in the series, *Brilliance of the Moon* (2004). Otori Takeo has brought peace to the Three Countries and rules them with a benevolent but firm hand; however, his old enemies still bear him malice and continue to plot against him. Lord Arai joins forces with Takeo's bitter brother-in-law, Zenko, hoping to bring down Takeo, while the emperor of the region has dispatched a deadly warlord to attack Takeo, who knows there is only one person who can kill him: a prophecy has decreed that only his son can end his life. While Takeo and his wife, Kaede, only have daughters, Takeo does have a child that Kaede doesn't know about, 16-year-old Hisao, who has been raised by Lord Arai to hate Takeo. To ensure his daughter Shigeko's reign, Takeo decides to try to make peace with the emperor and even offers Shigeko's hand in marriage to the warlord Saga. The Otori saga gets better with each book, and this is the most absorbing entry in the series, complete with intrigue, magic, romance, and action. A perfect final chapter to the story that began in *Across the Nightingale Floor* (2002). Kristine Huntley Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

I was a little disappointed with this novel, though I loved the three originals. The author rushed it... The most interesting parts were glossed over. SPOILERS SPOILERS I was bored with Takeo and highly disappointed by Kaede. I wish the author had instead focused the chapters on the daughters' abilities, increased the romance between the eldest daughter and the senior retainer, and spent a LOT more time focusing on the son and his ghost master ability, by leaving Kenji alive or something to teach him, or having Kenji's ghost teach him? There was just SO much potential and so many loose ends. Super disappointing. It had all the teasing elements to be an amazing story, I don't know what happened -- it just rushed to the end. Hearn's editor really failed her.

All four of the series were terrific but this last one was the best. It was thrilling to see how the end was reached. It would make a great movie.

I entirely agree with what "Avid Reader" wrote in the first review of this book, quote: "All I can say is that if you liked the first three books in the Tales Of The Otori... leave it there. Let that be the end, and that is what Lian Hearn should have done also." The reviewer from "Book List" gave it a good write-up, that's marred by the fact she gets some of the main characters' names wrong (she mixes up Arai and Akio for example). I wonder whether she actually read the book. The Tales of the Otori were supposed to be a trilogy, and should NEVER have become a tetralogy. This fourth instalment was probably written under the publisher's pressure due to the success of the first three, but Lian Hearn ran out of ideas. All she does in this book is some filling-up, some mental acrobatics and some not believable plot twists. As "Avid Reader" said, she manages to make you hate people you used to love, starting with Kaede who's such a likeable person, strong, smart, resilient and understanding in the first three books and, in just a few short pages, becomes an irrational shrew, not to mention a betrayer of both her husband and her people - Her second turnabout and her fate at the very end are psychologically and politically incomprehensible. Some of the plot twists make no sense whatsoever, and the way the prophecy about Takeo's death is fulfilled is just plain cheating. Not to mention that the reason he dies for is nonsensical. Takeo (who, like his adopted father Shigeru, has this deplorable habit of sparing his enemies' lives when he has them at his mercy, but is a strong warrior and a good ruler) becomes this wishy-washy guy, totally undone by... well, not to give too much away, by the result of his aforementioned leniency towards his enemies. The only good thing in the book is the deep but doomed love between Shigeko and Hiroshi, the only characters I could still like and sympathize with. (I also liked one of the twins, Miki, though her sister Maya gave me the shivers.) This book made me despise Takeo and hate Kaede, and wish I'd stayed with the end of "Brilliance of the Moon" and never bought this fourth book. The fifth book, however, which tells Shigeru's story before he rescued and adopted Takeo, brings the series into a nice circle - it ends where the first book begins, and it is both interesting and satisfying, but that's a subject for a different review. My advice is, read the first three books, skim quickly through the fourth if you feel you must, then read the fifth. After doing so myself (I mean reading the fifth book), I re-read the first three again, and enjoyed them all over again. But I did not, and will never, reread "The Harsh Cry of the Heron". Hiroshi and Shigeko notwithstanding, I'm sorry I read it at all in the first place. It ruined everything for me, which is why I reread the first three, just to (figuratively) take the bad taste out of my mouth. The two stars I gave it are for Hiroshi and Shigeko,

and also in memory of how much I enjoyed the original trilogy.

The Otori saga is a marvelous story, you won't be able to read just one book. I recommend reading them in order so as to get the most of the continuous tale, which the author develops in great detail. Love, lust, war, revenge, there are no perfect people, but people with good hearts who make terrible mistakes. Kind of real life, except for the fantastical elements.

I agree with the many other comments rightly noting the author's spectacular failure of craft in the last chapters of this book; a failure which confuses and betrays the power of the first three novels.

A bit underwhelmed about a series that I really enjoyed. A lot of the plot was rehashing the previous stories and for me, frankly was just not enticing enough to want me to pick up the next in the series. Unfortunate because he has spun a very good yarn!

It made me often have to clarify who I was identifying. I am compelled to see how the family survive.

Read The Tales of The Otori in their entirety, a second time around--the first many years ago in paperback. Feel the last tale was really needed to tie up any loose ends remaining after book three.

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