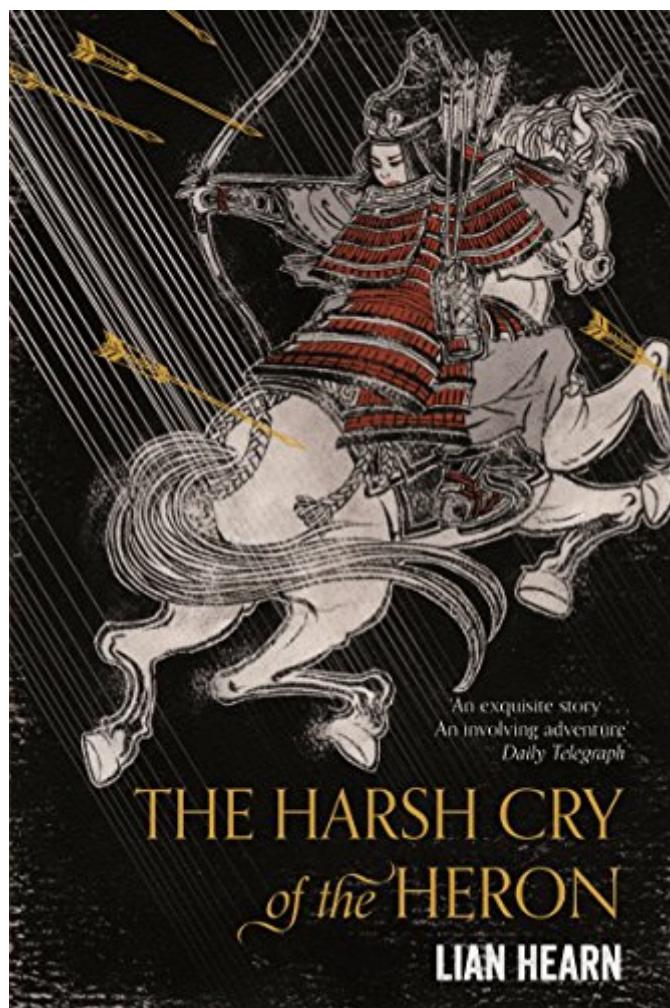


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The Harsh Cry Of The Heron (Tales Of The Otori)



Synopsis

Set fifteen years after the seismic events of *Brilliance of the Moon*, *The Harsh Cry of the Heron* is an elegaic and bittersweet successor to the bestselling series by Lian Hearn, *Tales of the Otori*. Their realm is held in balance by their union . . . Break that union and the Three Countries will fall apart. Otori Takeo and Kaede have ruled the Three Countries peacefully for over sixteen years, following the events laid out in the epic *Tales of the Otori*. They have three daughters: Shigeko, fifteen years old and heir to the Otori, and Maya and Miki, thirteen-year-old twins who have inherited the supernatural skills of their father. Kaede knows nothing of the prophecy that Takeo will die at the hands of his son and longs to give him a male child. Nor does she know of the boy he fathered sixteen years ago — a boy whose heart is filled with hatred and whose skills as a Ghostmaster give him the power to incite the dead. Takeo is determined that clan conflicts will never again ravage the Three Countries, but warriors are born to fight: the warlord Arai Zenko has deadly ambitions, the Emperor himself has challenged Takeo's rule and, despite a delicate truce between the deadly Tribe and the Otori, revenge still eats at the heart of renegade leader Kikuta Akio . . . Against these gathering threats Takeo draws strength from his love for Kaede, but even this is not beyond the reach of their enemies . . .

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Customer Reviews

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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