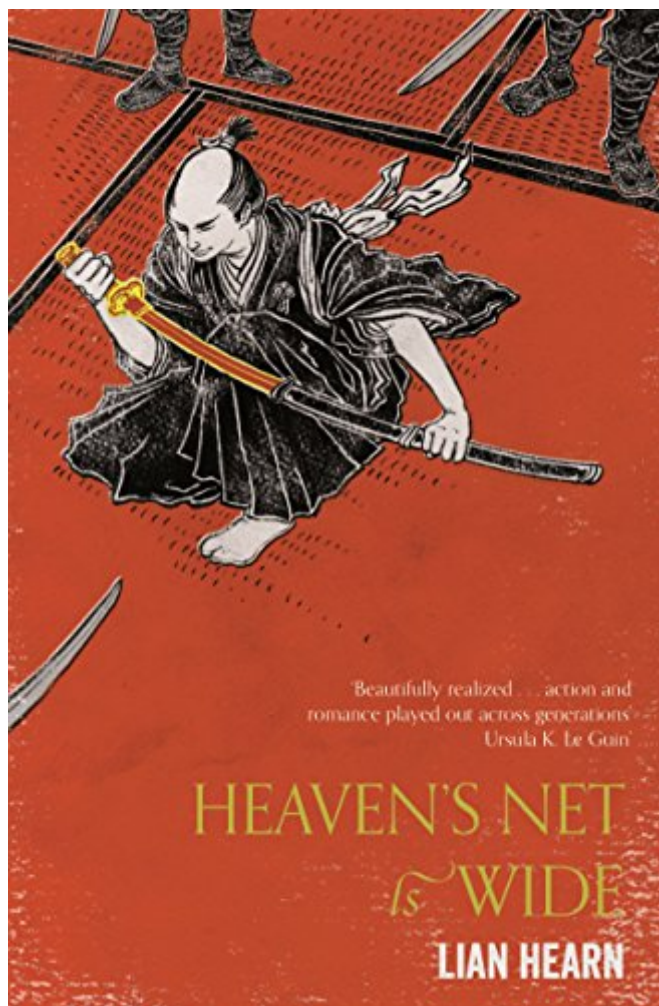


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Heaven's Net Is Wide (Tales Of The Otori)



Synopsis

'A beautifully realized setting, action and romance played out across a couple of generations, a high-class voyage to the long ago and far away' - Ursula K. Le Guin

The Middle Country, home of the Otori clan is ruled by a benign but weak leader while in the East, the warrior-like Tohan are gathering power. On the plain of Yaegahara the clans clash in a bloody battle that leaves Otori Shigeru desperate for vengeance. Meanwhile, in a remote mountain village, a boy is born gifted with the supernatural skills of his father, once the deadliest assassin of the Tribe. Set in the years before the beginning of Across the Nightingale Floor, Heaven's Net is Wide by Lian Hearn is the first and last Tale, which both closes the circle and introduces new readers to the fantastical, beautiful and thrilling world of the Otori. It is an epic story of betrayal, revenge, magic and love.

Book Information

File Size: 4055 KB

Print Length: 596 pages

Publisher: Macmillan; Unabridged edition edition (September 4, 2008)

Publication Date: September 4, 2008

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ISBN-10: 023001397X

ISBN-13: 978-0230013971

ASIN: B004KSRVF0

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #881,074 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #68

in Kindle Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Literary #143 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Teen & Young Adult > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Historical #374 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Myths & Legends > Asian

Customer Reviews

I started reading this thinking it was the first in the series, not realizing it was a prequel. Its still good. Like a Japanese tale but its written by a Westerner. Its pretty accurate to true Japanese myth. Jizo really is the guardian god of miscarried and stillborn babies. One thing bugged me. It mentioned the "long nosed goblins that live in the mountains" that were swordmasters. These "goblins" are properly called tengu, not goblins.

It had been a number of years since I read the "Tales of the Otori" series and it was just as GREAT as I had remembered it. The writing is tight, the scope is broad, and the characters "realistic" and well developed. Over a few weeks I reread the entire series, all 5 books. I was helped in that I also purchased the Kindle versions, with the Whispersync (Audible), so I could listen to portions on my morning walks, read the hardbacks at home, and take the Kindle version as I was away from home. I enjoyed every minute of it all. Now, having repurchased all the hardbacks, I can pass them on to friends and family (the first time I read library copies). I highly recommend the series!

In my opinion this book should have been first, but with this being said I believe that the author gave you characters whom you felt something for does what they call the "Origin Story" to find out why the father of the main character and his in all ways his wife too. Plus we now know why they turned him into a god after his death and why everyone else felt that it was their duty to place their loyalty to him and his wife. But with everything I could never understand why the main characters became so scared at the very end of the story. Yet I could not put it down, and reading the origin of the characters makes me want to reread the pryor books. Plus it is so well put together. It's very hard to put down. Especially if you enjoy Samurai stories. Yet the words Samurai, Ninjas, Dyamo or Katanas are mentioned in these stories. But you can pretty much determine whose who.

The Tales of the Otori were recommended to me by a friend, but I'm wary of enthusiastic recommendations and at first only bought the first two books, Across the Nightingale Floor and Grass for his Pillow. Half-way into the first book, I was totally hooked and immediately ordered the last three of the series so as not to have to wait once I was done with the second. This work was supposed to be a trilogy, became a tetralogy, then a pentalogy. I loved the first three books, and when I read the fourth, Harsh Cry of the Heron, I thought to myself, Lian Hearn should have stopped at three and left the fulfillment of the prophecy to our imagination. The fourth book is really the weakest of the series and undid whatever good feelings one had for the main characters (Takeo becomes a wimp, and Kaede a total b*tch). But this fifth book, Heaven's Net is Wide, made up for it,

for it brings us back full circle to the beginning of the Tales of the Otori. The last scene of the fifth book is the first scene of the first one, though seen from Shigeru's point of view rather than Takeo's. It is very satisfying, and it takes away the bad taste left by "Heron". It fills up the gaps and ties loose ends nicely. As soon as I finished it, I went back and reread the first three books, now seeing certain details and tell-tale signs that I had missed at first reading. I skipped the fourth and if I feel the urge to reread the series one day, I'll skip it again, except maybe for a peek at the scenes featuring Hiroshi and Shigeko, who are the two characters who partly redeem "Cry of the Heron". Otori Shigeru was always my favourite character in the series anyway and I was glad to see him come into his own, though his was not a particularly happy life. Some commentators here have complained that he is too perfect. Well, he does have a fatal weakness (which he shares with Takeo) - they both have this unfortunate habit of sparing their enemies' lives when they have them at their mercy, which is ultimately their undoing. I particularly enjoyed also Shigeru's love affair with Lady Maruyama Naomi, who's a more likeable person than Kaede, the main female character in the other four books. The books are very well-researched, and I learned quite a lot. Though Lian Hearn insists it's not "really Japan" and never uses words like "katana", "samurai", "ninja", "seppuku", "ronin" or "daimyo", let alone "shogun", or even "kimono", it's obvious the roots are steeped in Japan's tales and traditions. I discovered by the way that one of the legends is the same one we have in Vietnam, the one day of the year when all the black birds leave the fields to fly to heaven to make a bridge so the princess, separated from her love by the River in the Sky (the Milky Way) can cross the river and they can be together once a year. It's fascinating that two countries with such different cultures and traditions, and so far apart (considering the means of transportation at the time) would have almost exactly the same legend. And the two countries also have their legendary woman warriors (but those, like Kaede and Shigeko, belong in the first four books, not this one.) I also learned that Christianity came to Japan as early as the 8th century, and that the faith endured there for centuries among the "Hidden", without priests and without sacraments. That too was fascinating. One commentator compared Hearn to George R.R. Martin, and I agree, as far as the number of characters are concerned (they both have to have pages upon pages for their cast of thousands) and the complexity of the plot, but unlike Martin, Hearn doesn't wander too far away from her central theme. All this, though, is beside the point. One other commentator recommended NOT to give in to the temptation of reading this "First Tale of the Otori" before the others, and I concur. It would ruin the reading of the original trilogy. It's much more satisfying to read it at the end. So I recommend the whole series, minus the fourth book, and I particularly recommend this last-but-first one. Five stars.

This book was an excellent read all the way through. I found the use of language exquisite and evocative, creating an image in my mind of the feudal, honorable, but also deceitful society that the author tries to invoke. The main character feels realistic and his struggles with himself and with learning to lead others form a superb tale that I would highly recommend to anyone that enjoys the themes and culture of feudal Japan. My only complaint is that the book did seem to drag in some places, especially with the love affairs surrounding the main character. They felt, from the start, as though they were a burden. That said, they ultimately play masterfully into the overall character, and he would not be the same person without those affairs, so in the end they added to the story's overall beauty.

I read books 1-3 and found them captivating. I loved the characters and was immersed in their lives. This book 4 is really book 1, a prequel to the other 3. It is bittersweet reading about the beginnings of this man, when you already know how his story ends. It is exciting and wonderful to be back in this tough, pitiless world. I recommend this series to anyone who loves the stories of feudal Japan, combined with a bit of fantasy in an alternate verse.

Best booksalmost ever but I have to contain myself from exaggerating...but it's a close call with a few others I've read the series at least 3 times now and I love it...I'm constantly checking for more of this type/style/world/character from this artist

I adore this series.

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