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Stormdancer: The Lotus War, Book One



Synopsis

The first in an epic new fantasy series, introducing an unforgettable new heroine and a stunningly original dystopian steampunk world with a flavor of feudal Japan. A Dying Land The Shima Imperium verges on the brink of environmental collapse; an island nation once rich in tradition and myth, now decimated by clockwork industrialization and the machine-worshipers of the Lotus Guild. The skies are red as blood, the land is choked with toxic pollution, and the great spirit animals that once roamed its wilds have departed forever. An Impossible Quest The hunters of Shima's imperial court are charged by their Shogun to capture a thunder tiger - a legendary creature, half-eagle, half-tiger. But any fool knows the beasts have been extinct for more than a century, and the price of failing the Shogun is death. A Hidden Gift Yukiko is a child of the Fox clan, possessed of a talent that if discovered, would see her executed by the Lotus Guild. Accompanying her father on the Shogun's hunt, she finds herself stranded: a young woman alone in Shima's last wilderness, with only a furious, crippled thunder tiger for company. Even though she can hear his thoughts, even though she saved his life, all she knows for certain is he'd rather see her dead than help her. But together, the pair will form an indomitable friendship, and rise to challenge the might of an empire.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First, let me say I don't care about all the cultural appropriate stuff. I didn't let that come into the rating of the books at all. A book that combines steampunk aesthetics with the ancient Japanese world of the samurai- can such a thing exist? Yes, and it's called *Stormdancer*, the

first book in the Lotus War series by Jay Kristoff, an award-winning, Australian author. Kristoff said that he first got the idea for this sci-fi/fantasy after a dream he had, and that's totally believable. From the bleak setting to mythical demons, to iron samurai with chainsaw katanas, this book certainly seems like it could have come from someone's nightmares. The majority of the story takes place in a polluted world, half-destroyed by the production and consumption of a plant called the blood lotus. Because of this flower, the sun is scorching hot and so bright you go blind if you look at it without goggles. The air is poisonous- those of means have expensive respirators, while others get by with dirty handkerchiefs tied to their faces. The poorest succumb to blacklung- a disease that spreads through your body, eventually causing a painful death. There are few animals left, and there are no pets- faced with starvation, their owners have been forced to use them for food. And if that weren't bad enough, the blood lotus poisons the ground, making it impossible for anything to grow once the blossom has been harvested. Most of the story takes place in one of two settings- the Iishi Mountains, the last wild place in all of Shima, home to demons and the dreaded Kigen, who seem intent on destroying blood lotus fields, and Kigen City, the capital of Shima and center of the Guild, a group of engineers, priests, and businessmen who oversee production of the blood lotus.. There are multiple conflicts in the story, but the strongest are nature vs. machine, rich vs. poor, and man vs. man, with Yukiko vs. the Shogun being the strongest. In the beginning, Shogun Yoritomo Kazumitsu, a cruel and heartless leader, commands his hunters to capture an arashitora, or thunder tiger. The creature, a griffin thought to be extinct, is meant to be a symbol of the shogun's power, the thing that will ensure victory over a long war overseas with the gaijin. Masaru, the lead hunter, his daughter Yukiko, along with a sailing crew, two other hunters, and a guildsman named Kin. They hunters go off to find a griffin, flying into a dangerous storm and manage to succeed in trapping the beast. But before long, the ship is struck by lightning, and a good deal of the crew, including Masaru, Kasumi (a female friend and fellow hunter), and Akahito (a brother-in-arms sort of character) are forced to abandon the ship in a lifeboat while the arashitora is still in its cage. Yukiko jumps from the lifeboat to free the caged arashitora just as the lifeboat is freed from the side of the ship and plunges toward the forest floor. The arashitora, whom Yukiko names Buruu, becomes more than just a protector, as they make their way through a forest filled with demons and Kage, eventually meeting up with Kin, who also survived the destruction of the ship. Kin learns Yukiko's secret by watching her and Buruu interact without speaking- she has the Kenning, the ability to speak telepathically with animals- but promises to say nothing as it would result in her death at the hands of guildsmen priests intent on destroying anyone who displays gifts

like those Yukiko has. With the help of some new friends, Yukiko, Buruu, and an injured Kin make it out of the Ishii wilds. Armed with new knowledge about her mother's disappearance, and the war on Shima's poor and the environment, Yukiko aims to take down the shogunate with help from Buruu. But will they succeed? Overall, I liked this book. One of my favorite books of all time is *Shogun* by James Clavell, so the samurai theme is right up my alley. *Stormdancer* wasn't jaw-dropping awesome, but I didn't expect it to be either, so it didn't really disappoint. The plot moves the reader quickly to the climax, which is satisfying, and I did start to connect and care for some of the characters. Others, I couldn't care less what happened to them, and this was one of my complaints. I think a good book should develop the characters well enough that I do care what happens to them. Some of the action scenes were also a bit jarring. The description was heavy, but abstract, so sometimes it was difficult to get a grasp on what was going on. As a result, the images- especially some of the battle scenes- floundered in my head. Ultimately, it was the premise of the story that captivated me, and it did that well enough that I'll read the other two books in the series. I would recommend this book to fans of science fiction and fantasy, as it has elements of both. I would rate this book 3-4 stars. The ending was satisfying enough that I wanted to move on to the next book right away, which is a good thing in my book.

The best way to describe this is a Japanese-Dystopian-Steampunk mashup I'm not sure if that makes it Dystopunkanies or Japasteamian or something else completely. Just to give you a little history most everything I know about Japanese culture I learned from *Mulan*. So I'm not really versed in much of the Samuri culture or honor and can't really tell you how well this follows any of that or if some of the story came from an interpretation of Japanese lore. What I can tell you is that this is about a Girl with a sword who went on a quest to find a hippogriff Thunder Tiger to give to the Emperor but found that doing the honorable thing might be the worst decision of her life.*** "The thunder tiger looked at her like an avalanche looks at a butterfly. ***There is lots of other stuff too like a world bound in poverty and sludge and addicted to a flower that either kills or addicts everything it touches. There is also a power struggle between the Emperor who has been fighting a war against the west and a conglomerate of people, the Guild, who dress completely in metallic suits various compartments for all your gadget needs that never let the world see the people underneath. The Guild controls everything about the Lotus flower that is controlling the entire populace and have a tendency to burn people at the stake that they find impure a.k.a magical. It takes a little while for the

story to pick up and get going. All the Japanese names and the world take some time to build up. There are flying ships and the city reminded me of something dirty and much like the times in the industrial revolution. I didn't really start to enjoy the story until Yukito (the Girl), Buruu (the Thunder Tiger) and Kin (reluctant member of the Guild) were separated from the rest of the group and started a journey of their own. Yukito and Buruu's time together was especially interesting as she and the Thunder Tiger become friends. ***Kin watched them mutely, wondering what passed between them. He couldn't help but feel jealous of the beast, to know the inner workings of her mind and heart, to speak volumes without ever saying a word. What a strange thing for the Guild to want to exterminate. What a wonderful gift. To never be alone. To know the truth of another's soul. Maybe that was why they were afraid. Truth in the Guild was a dangerous thing. ***There is also some talk of honor since this is a story with Samuri in it. But I think that it is more a story of breaking away from traditions and choosing what is the honorable path for yourself. ***"Without his oath, without his Lord, a samurai is nothing. Honesty. Respect. Loyalty. Honor. This is the code of the warrior. I am samurai before all, Yukiko. To wield the long and the short sword and to die. This is my purpose." "Someone once told me "To be a servant can be a noble thing, but only as noble as the master served." ***Overall this is a great set up story. There were a few deaths that happened off page that I thought could have been more dramatic. I enjoyed getting a glimpse into this world, there were some horrific discoveries along the way I wasn't expecting and a surprise at the end that I didn't see coming. This reminded me a little of how I felt towards the end of Joe Abercrombie's Half a King

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