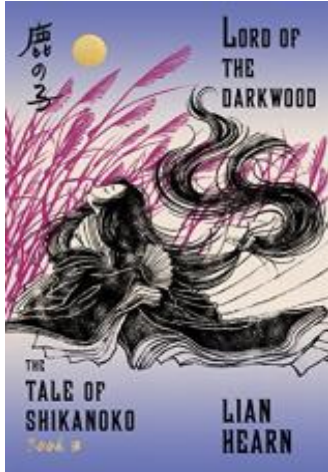


Lord of the Darkwood: The Tale of Shikanoko, Book 3

by Lian Hearn



About the Book

A self-assured warrior stumbles into a game of Go that turns fatal. An ambitious lord leaves his nephew for dead and seizes his lands. A stubborn father forces his son to give up his wife to his older brother. A powerful priest meddles in the succession to the Lotus Throne. A woman of the Old People seeks five fathers for her five children, who will go on to found the Spider Tribe and direct the fate of the country.

As destiny weaves its tapestry in Lian Hearn's *Tale of Shikanoko* series, an emotionally rich and compelling drama plays out against a background of wild forests, elegant castles, hidden temples and savage battlefields in LORD OF THE DARKWOOD.

Discussion Guide

1. What do Lady Fuji and the Abbess know about the art of survival? In their world, when is survival dishonorable?
2. When the lutes and weapons are able to recognize their rightful owners, what do they indicate about an 'inanimate' object's ability to become a personal extension of the soul? Which of your possessions would you want to bring to life?
3. Take and Hina discuss the fact that Heaven is punishing their people (through drought and other disasters) because the Miboshi arrogantly chose the emperor they wanted. In our contemporary world, does our planet reflect human discord and attempt to guide humanity to the right path?
4. Discuss the mysterious Darkwood as if it were a character. When does it bring comfort? When is it inhospitable? Who are its closest companions?
5. When Arinori takes Yayoi's purity, what does she learn about the price of a man's protection? How has she changed

since childhood? What will it take for her to reclaim her true identity?

6. What are Lord Arimoto's weaknesses? What has prevented his defeat so far?

Author Bio

Lian Hearn is the pseudonym of a writer --- born in England, educated at Oxford, currently living in Australia --- who has had a lifelong interest in Japan, has lived there, and studies Japanese. She is the author of the bestselling series *Tales of the Otori*.

For an interview with the author, suggestions for further reading, and more, visit www.lianhearn.com.

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Publication Date: August 9, 2016

Genres: Fantasy, Fiction, Historical Fantasy

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: FSG Originals

ISBN-10: 0374536333

ISBN-13: 9780374536336