

Autumn Princess, Dragon Child: The Tale of Shikanoko, Book 2

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 AUTUMN PRINCESS, DRAGON CHILD.

Discussion Guide

1. When Kazu became free from his uncle, Sademasa, and was transformed into Shika, what made his mask a source of both healing and sorrow?
2. As you read about the birth of Lady Tora's sons (Kiku, Mu, Kuro, Ima and Ku), did you believe Sesshin's prediction that they were demons who needed to be killed? As Shika bonds with them, what does he discover about the power and limitations of kinship?
3. What are the common threads between the novel's sorcerers (such as Shisoku) and monks (such as Gessho)? How does the Prince Abbot compare to them? Is he wise or foolish?

4. Is Takaakira benevolent or self-serving (or both) for taking Hina under his wing? Would you have kept her identity a secret, even from her own family?
5. Nyorin and Risu's foal, Tan, is born on the same day as Take. Compared with other animals, what is different about the way horses are intertwined with the human saga in the novel?
6. Do you think Shika will be strengthened or shattered by the tragedies unleashed through Kuro's venomous snake?

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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