



# Blood of Tyrants

*Naomi Novik*

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Shipwrecked and cast ashore in Japan with no memory of Temeraire or his own experiences as an English aviator, Laurence finds himself tangled in deadly political intrigues that threaten not only his own life but England's already precarious position in the Far East. Age-old enmities and suspicions have turned the entire region into a powder keg ready to erupt at the slightest spark—a spark that Laurence and Temeraire may unwittingly provide, leaving Britain faced with new enemies just when they most desperately need allies instead.

For to the west, another, wider conflagration looms. Napoleon has turned on his former ally, the emperor Alexander of Russia, and is even now leading the largest army the world has ever seen to add that country to his list of conquests. It is there, outside the gates of Moscow, that a reunited Laurence and Temeraire—along with some unexpected allies and old friends—will face their ultimate challenge...and learn whether or not there are stronger ties than memory.

Naomi Novik's beloved *Temeraire* series, a brilliant combination of fantasy and history that reimagines the Napoleonic wars as fought with the aid of intelligent dragons, is a twenty-first-century classic. From the first volume, *His Majesty's Dragon*, readers have been entranced by the globe-spanning adventures of the resolute Capt. William Laurence and his brave but impulsive dragon, Temeraire. Now, in *Blood of Tyrants*, the penultimate volume of the series, Novik is at the very height of her powers as she brings her story to its widest, most colorful canvas yet.

## Blood of Tyrants Details

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# From Reader Review *Blood of Tyrants* for online ebook

## Beth says

Captain William Laurence has fallen into the sea during a tremendous storm, leaving him stranded in Japan with no memory of the past 7 years or his life with Temeraire. The political situation in Japan is about to explode with William sits in the center.

Vague memories arise but when Temeraire and William are reunited he still can't remember their friendship and years together.

The story continues as they trek to China and then to Russia. Glimpses of memories resurface but Temeraire is remorseful about his inability to protect Laurence.

This is a completely compelling story that rivets you to the pages. Novik's work may come out slower than I like but it's definitely worth the wait. I am amazed every time by Naomi Novik's ability to write a historical fantasy that makes me feel like I'm actively participating in the story. The perfect combination of funny, character interaction, suspense and drama...if your a fantasy lover you have to read *Blood of Tyrants*. OMG, did check out this cover!!!

This ARC copy of *Blood of Tyrants* was given to me by Random House Publishing Group - Del Rey Spectra in exchange for a honest review. This book is set for publication August 13, 2013.

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Naomi Novik's Website

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## Kaethe says

2014 October 12

I loved it so much that I haven't really been interested in anything else since I finished it. So much, that I'm only happy reading the series over from the start. Dragons in 1812 Japan, China, and Russia! Dragons! I say!

Library copy

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### Mark says

4.5, its a really good read, I had a problem with the way lawrance was written in this book, it seemed like a recap of the other books to keep us the reader up to date, but it kinda didnt happen, its hard to explain.

the end is good but another cliffhanger ending.

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### Mitch says

Something strange happened while I was reading *Blood of Tyrants*... I started to like *Temeraire* again. This series had me at 'Napoleonic Wars' and 'dragons', but while the first few books ranged from serviceable (*His Majesty's Dragon*) to standout (*Black Powder War*), by the time *Empire of Ivory* rolled around, these books had started to get bogged down in a Carmen Sandiego-esque need to visit exotic world locales and became less about the War or the dragon. For me, the series peaked at Napoleon's invasion of England and began a downward slide soon after, and if it wasn't for a few things here and there, I would've completely lost all hope.

*Crucible of Gold* was one of those things and a step in the right direction, but as I said before, something's not right when Austerlitz and Jena get maybe a paragraph and there's chapters dedicated to African slave traders or setting up an Australian penal colony. I wasn't sure which *Temeraire* would be making an appearance in *Blood of Tyrants*, the Napoleonic War invested *Temeraire* of *Black Powder War* or the random globetrotting filler *Temeraire* of *Tongues of Serpents*, but to my dismay turned surprise, both. Since, in maybe a first for the *Temeraire* series, *Blood of Tyrants* is divided into three parts sufficiently distinct they can probably be read as easily as three separate novellas as one full novel, I'll just talk about each part separately and why Part Three makes this the best *Temeraire* book in some time.

Part One - if I could pretend this never happened, I would. As promised, Lawrence is shipwrecked in Japan and unfortunately this part involves the same kinds of excesses that made the last few books (*Crucible of Gold* somewhat aside) such chores to read. With the war raging in Europe, I could care less about what happens in Africa or Australia, and with the general narrative focused on defeating Napoleon, these side plots really provide no purpose other than filler that takes away from what's supposed to be the main draw of the series. There's just no point other than Naomi Novik telling us this is what happens to Lawrence and his crew, and while Novik does provide a glimpse of early nineteenth century Japanese culture with dragons, that doesn't make this any less filler. Combined with Lawrence's incredibly convenient amnesia which hardly affects the rest of the story and what even the book describes as useful, numbing minutiae, and Part One just seems like an intentional detour to drag out the book.

Part Two - better, like on *Throne of Jade*'s level. Still missing one crafty French general, but the court

intrigue in China at least doesn't feel as blatantly filler as the shipwreck storyline. While nothing in Part Two is really needed to understand Part Three, it does pick up some loose plot threads from *Throne of Jade* and explain why China would enter the war, and this time at least the explanation makes more sense than the whole fiasco with the Incan Empire in *Crucible of Gold*. Plus, Novik likes to show off where the logistics of draconic warfare is concerned, so having the various strategies used by the British vis-à-vis the Chinese side by side make for some interesting comparisons. Skippable sure, but it's interesting nonetheless.

Part Three - where have you been all this time? I'm thrilled Novik finally, finally gets to what I've been waiting for ever since *Black Powder War*, an actual, honest to goodness campaign that doesn't involve the heroes being sent to another continent while the battles are being fought. Napoleon's back. He's invading Russia. Lawrence and Temeraire are there. That alone makes Part Three way more worthwhile than anything that's come out since *Empire of Ivory*, and seeing how Napoleon's actual invasion of Russia has shaped Novik's fictional campaign is a real treat. Too bad awesome villain(ess) Madame Lien is still missing in action and the book ends on a cliffhanger with the Russian winter, but I am totally stoked to see what comes next.

In a nutshell, *Blood of Tyrants* is definitely the strongest *Temeraire* novel since at least 2007 (even without pretending Part One never happens), simply because Naomi Novik brings the series back to its roots. Fans of the series should be happy to know *Temeraire* is finally back on track.

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## Jeff says

Let me start by saying that Temeraire is easily one of the best characters created in the fantasy genre in the past decade. A fascinating, charming, believable dragon who you would definitely want to be friends with.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, this book suffers from Reverse-Jordanitis. Jordanitis is a terrible disease, named after the late Robert Jordan. Jordanitis (an ailment of my own naming) occurs when an author writes too much about too little (I used to joke that Jordan could write 500 pages about Rand al'Thor going to the bathroom). This book suffers from Reverse-Jordanitis in that Ms. Novik has written too little about too much (hence reverse-Jordanitis). The book lurches from Japan to China to Russia and, reading it, I ended up feeling robbed. As the characters jump around there are a number of places where the jump felt "artificial" and where I wanted to know more about what happened. This book could easily have been two books (if not three) and I would have been happy. While previous books have spent time creating the newly-dragonized nations, this time we are only given snippets (the Japan section was especially given short shift in my opinion).

I can't recommend this book to anyone other than hard-core Temeraire fans. While better than some of the books in the series (books 3 and 4 are definitely not among my favourites), it is nowhere near the excellence of Books 1-2 or even the satisfying crunch of books 5-6.

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## Kathleen says

Not the best in the series, but not bad. This book is broken into three parts. Because they could each be stand-alone books, I rate and review each part separately.

**2 Stars for Part One, JAPAN:** Laurence washed ashore about 60 miles from the only internationally accessible port -- Nagasaki -- after he got swept overboard, hitting his head, and losing his memory. The authorities are hunting him. A Japanese youth named Junichiro plays a role. Meanwhile, Temeraire frets and Iskierka lays their precious egg.

I don't much care for amnesia-based plots and this part felt pointless and slow. I didn't like the attitude aboard the British ship. But there are cool sea serpents and river dragons. I liked Sui Riu, a water dragon, the Guardian of the West. Vivid rescue scene.

**4 stars for Part Two, CHINA:** This part reminded me of Throne of Jade. Very good! Would almost go 5 stars if not for amnesia and rehashing past books with shadowy memories, and re-confronting the treason issue. Another weakness is the way Novik waxed on laboriously, showing how Laurence justified his willingness to look the other way with respect to a gay relationship among the aviators, which of course was illegal. It was overkill, and we already went through that in Crucible of Gold.

But still, this is the best part of the book. Laurence and Temeraire help to thwart another rebellion / assassination against the emperor's son, Prince Mianming. Excellent pacing and wonderful battle scenes. Loved seeing how General Chu (a dragon) runs a military campaign with more than 200 dragons. Clever organization of food service and supplies. Secondary characters include Lily's formation, Arkady, Tharkay, etc.

Laurence recovers his memory towards the end of part two. Finally! A happy scene shows delighted dragons splashing under warm water spouts in the imperial courtyard.

Also, part two provides an interesting link with history (Brits engaged in opium smuggling -- bringing it into China to level the trade imbalance, addicting the populace, and some references to the White Lotus Rebellion).

**3.75 stars for Part Three, RUSSIA:** The setting is Napoleon's 1812 invasion of Russia with his Grand Armée. Excellent alternate history, but incomplete. Several battles commanded by the historically-celebrated General Kutuzov, but the tragic Battle of Borodino is tweaked a good deal. Vivid heartfelt scene of Russians burning their beloved Moscow, so Napoleon cannot gain anything from it. Graphic portrayal of abused and starving feral dragons in the Russian breeding grounds.

Characters include General Chu the Chinese dragon, Tharkay (rigged out in silk robes in one memorable scene) and our old Prussian friend Dyhern from Black Powder War.

But we're left on a cliff!! In wintry Russia, hungry and cold and hanging on a cliff! If only Novik had deleted part one (Japan), clearing space to finish this story.

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## Linette says

I love spending time with Temeraire and Laurence. This book has three distinct storylines, and contains hardship and confusion, struggle and defiance, reunions and Sunderings, adventure and humor, and sometimes even sweet success and exultation. And war, when they meet up once again with their arch nemesis, Napoleon.

These dragons are naive and idealistic in their expectations of humans to behave kindly and intelligently, even though they are frequently betrayed by us. Our odd notions of duty and law and rituals confuse them and they do their best to strip them away and show us the difference between right and wrong. These 'beasts' could teach us a lot if we let them.

I read as slowly as I could, trying to make it last, but it was difficult as I just wanted to burn through the pages. I won't say any more, as I don't want to risk spoilers, but I am already wishing I had the next book.

Until we meet again, Temeraire, be careful - you are much too impulsive and wanting to rescue everyone (unless they threaten Laurence of course, but you really musn't flatten them, no matter how much they deserve it).

Let the divine wind blow!

(I received this ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.)

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### **Laura says**

*'We did not get ourselves into trouble at all. .. It came to us without any effort on our parts.'*

And that is exactly what happens in this book. Trouble keeps on coming for Temeraire, Laurence and their friends. One after another tight squeezes and bad luck.

Even though I wish the amnesia angle had been written a little differently I still enjoyed this story A LOT. And that is because of the dragons. This book is all about the dragons. Their bond with their riders and their interactions with each other are described at best in this instalment.

I absolutely loved the dragons!

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### **Manisha says**

Pretty standard rating from me (for this series).

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### **Jeffrey says**

Blood of Tyrants is the 8th book in Naomi Novik's wonderful alternative history of Napoleonic Wars. Completely re-imagined with the addition of dragons as major weapons of war, Novik has journeyed around the world. While the central conflict between England and France forms the main focus of the series, there have been excursions to Brazil, the Aztecs, Australia, Africa and China. While war has always been a mainstay of the series, the poor treatment of the dragons by the British and other countries has also played a major part of the story.

In Blood of Tyrants, the Napoleonic Wars are coming to a head. But Laurence is missing off the dragon

carrier ship. Beached on the coast of Japan, he has lost his memory and has to survive his encounter with the xenophobic Japanese long enough to rejoin the British. It's a perilous journey.

Once Laurence does rejoin Temeraire, they travel to China to seek allies against Napoleon. Again Novik is not afraid to put the onus on the British for the introduction of opium into China.

Finally, after some trials and tribulations in China, Laurence and Temeraire journey to Russia to fight Napoleon directly, with the aid of the Chinese dragons.

This is not a series that you can join in at this late stage, but Novik still makes it interesting for her fans, just not as compelling a read as the earlier books. Some of the scenes felt old, some of the episodes felt tired. It's still amazing however, how Novik can interweave the dragons into the history of Europe and provide a vivid retelling of this period.

More importantly, again we are reminded of the bond between Temeraire and Laurence. Novik also drops a clue here and there about how Temeraire and Laurence can finally escape the clutches of the British and seek their own freedom, but first they must defeat Napoleon in Russia.

The book, however, ends in mid battle with Winter on its way.

It's still a good story, and the amnesia element still showed that on the important issues, irrespective of their previous bond and history, Laurence and Temeraire had similar hopes and values. At the end of the day, Laurence's battle to rejoin Temeraire and be with him is the heart of this story and this series.

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## **Kelly says**

I hated, hated, HATED the soap-opera-esque plot contrivance that dominated the first half of this book, and when it was unceremoniously cast off (with as little logic as it was introduced, I might add) I rejoiced and was able to enjoy the remainder of the book.

I was glad to see some old favorite characters who had been left out of the Australian and South American adventures return, the foray into Temeraire's love life was fun and I enjoyed seeing the Chinese dragons take center stage, as well.

One thing that Novik does rather well in previous Temeraire novels but fails to execute deftly in *Blood of Tyrants* is comparing between the relatively progressive-thinking aviators with their 21st century sense of social justice with the social norms of that time. Novik has always managed the female aviator characters really well -- showing the stark difference between their importance, power and influence in the Aerial Corps versus the limited status of most British women in that age. However, in *Blood of Tyrants*, Novik tries the same trick with gay aviators (gayviators?) -- and Laurence's enlightened-for-his-era acceptance of the gay aviators just fell flat. Which is not to argue that Laurence would not accept the gayviators (who are his friends and colleagues) -- his character totally would -- it's just the way Novik wrote Laurence's moral justification was overwrought and exhausting. Like, just let the two dudes love each other without explaining



to us that being gay in 1812 is VERY VERY VERY WRONG unless you are a sailor in which case it is VERY VERY IGNORED. We know all that. We like Laurence because he's super straight laced and can make peace with lady aviators and gay aviators and social justice dragons.

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## **Jacob says**

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT A MAN HE FORGETS HE HAS A DRAGON LIKE WTF NAOMI HOW DOES THAT EVEN HAPPEN.

So. I won *Blood of Tyrants* from First Reads, although I'm still not sure why. I haven't won anything in a Goodreads giveaway in three years, I only rarely enter contests anymore, and my interest in the Temeraire series has been declining lately, but somehow, for some reason, I gave this contest a try and managed to win the book. Stranger things have happened, I guess. Like forgetting that one has a dragon, amiright? Yeah.

So. William Laurence, a man who has a dragon--and who has had said dragon for the past seven books in this series--wakes up in Japan with no memory of the events of the last seven books, including his dragon. Amnesia! That's totally original and has never been done before! Fortunately (and conveniently) he is fluent in Chinese, so when the Japanese household that rescues/captures him discusses his fate in Chinese for some reason, he's able to understand them and escape to the coast, where he is reunited with the dragon he doesn't remember having and continues on a planned trip to China where his amnesia continues to interfere with the story until everything fortunately returns to him at the most convenient time. Then, with an army of dragons lent by China, he goes off to Russia to fight Napoleon. WHICH IS WHAT SHOULD HAVE HAPPENED ALL ALONG.

So. I've been a fan of the Temeraire series from the very very beginning, and have been rather forgiving of the various adventures which Laurence and the dragon Temeraire have had, but this is just ridiculous. Amnesia? C'mon, was that necessary? L&T couldn't have gone directly to China without incident, gone through the exact same trials to secure China's help in the war against Napoleon (though this time without the burden of Laurence having no memory of the previous seven books), and then gone on to Russia where the main focus should have been all along? Devoting a full third of the book to a pointless side adventure miiight have worked in earlier books (and often did), but this late in the series it's rather a waste of time, dontcha think? It sounds like the next and final book will continue the war in Russia, unless Laurence is suddenly sent to Norway to observe the habits of ice dragons or something, but the page count devoted to this soap opera amnesia story could have been employed for something better.

But. That's just me, really. I've become a grumpy old reader with little patience for fantasy these days, and I still believe the series should've ended with the fifth book. Still, there's one more story left in the adventures of Laurence & Temeraire, and I'll probably read it anyway. But I doubt Goodreads will be willing to give me a free copy next time around.

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## **Aldi says**

It's been a real delight tearing through this series and growing to love it more with every book. The few misgivings I had with the first couple of books have fully dispersed by now, and I just love that feeling of being able to trust that an author knows what she's doing and that whatever calamity she next decides to

throw her characters into, I will happily follow them across the world (and back again, and around, and then diagonally upwards, maybe), alternately whooping with joy, gnawing my fingertips to shreds with anxiety, or just plain grinning like a fool. These characters have become beloved friends, and much as I want the next book, I also don't want their story to end, so I'll happily (if not exactly patiently) wait for League of Dragons.

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### **Rk Stark says**

I am so incredibly disappointed with this book. The author should have waited another year to rethink the extremely poor plot crutch she uses for the first half of the book. Surely she could have come up with something more interesting than amnesia. There was no real need for it except to serve as some sort of stupid explanation of how much Laurence has grown, which could have been much better shown by using Junichiro as a foil.

Junichiro is a young Japanese man who helps Laurence escape to the sea where he can be picked up and returned to his people. Junichiro follows the dictates of his honor, which are poorly explained and barely examined, which means he has to leave his home. I understand that the author wanted to introduce the Japanese and needed an excuse of some kind to send his Japanese companion (whom is entirely forgotten for almost the entire second half of this book) back to Japan, but really to introduce Junichiro and then completely forget about him until the very last chapter of the book is just lazy, especially when so much of the book is wasted on the useless guilt of Temeraire and a ship wreck.

The most interesting part of the book was the very end, when they travel to Russia with a Chinese force to provide aid against Napoleon, and even that is very poorly written until the last couple of chapters.

Ultimately this book is nowhere near as good as the other books, with none of the excellent plot development, and imaginative writing of the other books. With very little exploration of the new cultures and countries visited, and a shamefully lame plot for the first 200 pages, I can say it was almost a waste of my time to read this. I can only hope that this series will end on a positive note, and not become one of those series where the author should have stopped writing midway through.

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### **Tamara says**

I guess I'm the only person who didn't mind the amnesia plot? Given that the Temeraire books are not exactly a font of deep and introspective characterization, even a fairly cheap device like amnesia was fairly effective at wringing some out.

I don't know if this is a particularly unusual way to read the books - my impression is that I'm in a minority, anyway - but I've always cared a great deal more about Laurence than I have about Temeraire. Temeraire is just kind of twee and cute and modern politically correct all the time. Laurence actually has a fairly complex and difficult character arc buried under all the reticence and good manners (well, and a degree of authorial disinterest), from having his whole life upheaved, reassessing his sense of duty and doing it all while, at least in the early books, still being a product of his time. I'm beginning to lose track of all the war stuff and who is against who and the dragon emancipation business which feels like pandering to reader sensibilities. I could, however, spend a whole book reading Laurence having awkward conversations with his mother and trying to decide who to promote to lieutenant.

Anyway, back to this book - that's why I liked the slower, lost-Laurence stuff of the beginning. Afterwards

when we're back to adventuring around and such, well, it isn't bad, but it all gets to be rather the same after a while.

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