



Heroes Return

Moira J. Moore

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View our feature on Moria Moore's *Heroes Return* Being a hero is a recession-proof job—from the author of *Heroes at Risk*.

The Emperor has personally selected Shield Lee Mallorough and Source Shintaro Karish to protect the duchy of Westsea-Taro's ancestral lands. But Westsea is suffering from deadly earthquakes that resist Lee and Taro's magic and political unrest that is stoked by their arrival.

Heroes Return Details

Date : Published July 27th 2010 by Ace (first published July 2010)

ISBN : 9780441019526

Author : Moira J. Moore

Format : Paperback 358 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Romance, Magic, High Fantasy, Fantasy Romance, Adventure

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From Reader Review Heroes Return for online ebook

Ruth says

Ok this was more like a 3.5 but I love this series, so I'm giving it 4. Here's my problem, the last book felt like a prequel as if it was building up towards something. I thought that whatever that something was, would be addressed in this book. Instead we got another long set up. I also, again felt that Lee was being somewhat oblivious, and at times Taro also upset me. Even though this isn't one of my favorites, I love this series so much that I have to keep reading. I mean, I have to give Moira J. Moore praise. She created this world with these characters, where you get so involved and invested in their future, that even if it annoyed me at times, I'm still going to continue reading this series.

Stephanie says

3.8

In several nutshells:

The 'negative'

-- Lee and Taro really need to work on their communication skills. She keeps going on about how she (thinks) she knows him and she understands him, but her actions speak differently, and louder. She keeps assuming things about him that the reader can see are not true, despite the fact that we only see Taro through her eyes.

-- Lila is very clearly singled out as a person of interest of *something* because she is always interrupting Lee and Taro at, ahem, inopportune moments. I figured that she was behind at least something/everything from her second interruption, so her role in the "accidents" etc came as no surprise to me. What does come as a surprise is who her employer is (see more on this in the 'balanced').

The 'balanced'

-- Taro's mental state being back in Flown Raven. Considering how he was trapped in that room for so long, I am not surprised and find him justified in his being "off" for most of the book. While his unfounded paranoia about Lee flitting off with Academic Reid and his attempts to control how she does things were borderline domestic abuse at times in my opinion, it was almost certainly made as bad as it was because of being back in Flown Raven. I'm not surprised that the "bad energy" was coming out of Taro's old room (though admittedly I'd thought they'd find something in Lila's room), and I thought from the moment they decided it needed to be cleansed that Taro was the only one who would be able to successfully do it. If he had done the ritual instead of Fiona, I'm sure it would have worked. Putting it off until he took the axe to it was a way of adding drama and letting him really vent his feelings physically as he has not really done before.

-- I am definitely curious as to the Emperor's interest in Lee and Taro, and what sort of spell he was casting during the oaths ceremony. Surely it was not as innocuous as the magic that came up during Fiona's oath ceremony with the tenants?

-- When is the Triple S going to redirect their focus from grilling Lee and Taro to what seems to me a more

concerning matter of the Emperor over-stepping his boundaries by re-assigning Pairs at his own whims? They know more than they are letting on, especially in the spells department, so why don't they go for the rider instead of the horse? (sorry Taro and Lee!)

The 'positive'

-- Fiona is feisty. She stands up for herself and her values, and is lively all around. She knows her way around her duchy a lot better than some give her credit for, and I think she does an amazing job keeping everything together in the face of the trials she's been undergoing ever since she took over as titleholder, not only from the tenants but also from her own family. She's also very level-headed, and if this world had been more aligned with our medieval (conceived) history and role of women, I would say that she is very progressive and plowing her own path more so than she already is.

-- Once Lee and Taro got through all the rough stuff, I was happy to finally see some of the more normal conversational interactions between them which I had fallen in love with from the first two books. The one that hit me first are these two lines in particular:

Lee: "You're sending my mind to unwelcome places, Taro."

Taro: "Good. It can keep mine company."

I missed this sort of banter and conversation between them, so it was nice to see it reappear again (it probably helps that moments like this remind me very strongly of a friend and I). I hope that it keeps up for the next two books in the series!

CJ - It's only a Paper Moon says

Ok, so the fact that Lee and Taro didn't even have sex in this book drives me crazy and it should because with all of the attempted murders, the planned intrigue and the attempt to separate them - they are both incredibly immature at times.

Lee still believes Taro is going to leave her and Taro is in love with her, that much I can tell, yet he doesn't do anything but become incredibly morose and melodramatic.

Ugh.

On another level, I liked meeting Fiona, Dane, Tarce and Radia. I knew who the bad guy was - or rather the physically active bad guy - about a hundred pages in but Lee, being Lee, didn't and that was mildly frustrating.

The idea of magic being real and forcing Lee to accept something that she is too stubborn to fully admit works. As well as making her hair green by a spell that she cast. If someone doesn't believe in magic after that... well!

When she does accept, she fails for her first big outing which results in Dane's death and a new level of guilt from which she hasn't really felt before. Perhaps going forward she will allow herself to open up a little more and forget what was instilled in her. I mean, when the Triple S comes to visit and interrogates her and Taro she has no problem being defiant. She's developing a bit of a backbone.

Fiona is a strong secondary character and I hope to see her again in the next one. Bringing back the Dread Dowager (which I think is an apt name and Moore should just take that from me and go ahead and use it) is a very good idea. She's so hateful that you can't help but love it when Fiona or Taro give her a dressing down. I just wish Lee would grow a little bit more of a backbone. I suppose that might be a little out of her character but a girl can dream.

Excellent use of music, location and characters. While it is a fantasy book it sort of borrowed from gothic literature.

While I feel that Lee and Taro have a lot more growing up to do in terms of their relationship, they are both clever and good people. I liked Taro's cathartic use of the axe as well as Lee's ability to see through the Dowager's Simone deception.

What bugged me was the ending, Taro sunk Lila into the dirt to get her to talk but then there was a mudslide and it seemed that he tried to save her but he couldn't. I don't know why Lee would have to feel that she needed to re-evaluate her feelings. I mean, didn't she kill a man? I hate to say it but it seems Taro is more into this relationship than she is.

Something has to give.

All in all ... it's a 4.5 and I can't wait for the next one.

Felicia says

I want to give this book 3 1/2 stars, but that's not allowed here. I hate to give less than four stars to this series as a whole, because it is so enjoyable, but there was a plot line that I got impatient that no one caught on with in this book, so it annoyed me into being honest and dropping a star. NONETHELESS, terrible addictive page turner, Taro and Lee continue to develop as a couple and still are terribly immature at times. I just really love love this series, I hope there's more!

Kristen says

[There is actually tea-sipping at one point, he is great. (hide spoiler)]

Zahra says

Are the covers just progressively getting uglier??

Zimt says

Before reading this review, you should maybe have read till volume 3 of the Hero series.

After the surprise at the end of book four, the story unfolds quickly with more challenges than ever for this special Pair in "Heroes Return".

Someone would think everything is fine after Lee and Taro declared their love for each other. But now, Taro is facing his biggest challenge. The Emperor is sending him back to Flown Raven to attend to it as the posted Pair. Flown Raven is for Taro a place full of misery. His first eleven years, he was imprisoned in a room by his own family. Nothing in Flown Raven brings good memories to him. Now, he is supposed to protect it from natural disaster, even so a Source has always problems to channel events from their birthplace. On the other hand, the new emperor is quite thorough in asserting his degree to outlaw spell casting. For the people in Flown Raven it is quite common to cast. So, this can only mean trouble when the Imperial Guards appear to enforce the law. And then tragedy struck!

Really, after three years working together, will this pair never have a quiet moment in their life?

First of all, I did not expect this answer to the magic and Pair issue, I mentioned in book four's review. It seems like the Triple S has more secrets than Lee and Taro ever thought. There is a promise for quite a showdown coming in the last two books.

The relationship between Taro and Lee is developing nicely and they are finding their footing. However there are always minor troubles in a relationship. So, it is cute to see Taro so jealous about Lee's enthusiasm about meeting Academic Alex Reid, a historian who is translating a book by the First Landed. On the other side, it is sad to read about the meddling by the Dowager Duchess, Taro's mother. She really has nothing better to do, such a terrible person.

Besides the personal problems of our main protagonists, Lee and Taro have to attend to the community of Flown Raven as well. There is a lot of spite and anger from the people of Flown Raven since Taro declined the title. At first, our Pair is quite helpless how to act. There really is no right way to manage the residents. Luckily, the wit in the writing is a match for the seriousness of the situation Lee and Taro find themselves in. At the end of chapter one is a paragraph which shows very well the dry sense of humour which is so special for the whole Hero series. Taro and Lee just arrived at Flown Raven and Lee is quite impressed with the manor:

"We climbed the steps toward the front door. The door seemed even larger when I stood right in front of it. Really, who needed a door so large? What purpose did it serve, other than the attempt to intimidate people? I was intimidated by a door. That was sad. Taro knocked on the door."

Another aspect of the Hero books comes through stronger than ever. Sometimes, everyone thinks too much what others could say or think about them. There is this man, Callum, who is banned by Fiona, Taro's cousin and Duchess of Westsea, because of dangerous deeds. There is this scene where Fiona explains to Lee her actions and that she offered Callum's partner a place without him but she declined. Here Lee thinks: "Of course she would. She had children with him. Everyone would think less of her if she chose security over him." There is no 'of course' about something like that. The kids will suffer for something their father has done and their mother seems to be too proud to tolerate the whispers of their neighbours. This is maybe just a minor thing, but Mrs. Moore often inserts these little situations where people just think too much. It really seems ridiculous at times how worried humans can be about what the opinion of others is. It should not have such a strong influence on our actions. It does not always matter what others think. It is equally important that we are content with our own decisions. This is a strong message to everyone which Mrs. Moore is expressing in her books.

You would think this series cannot get better, but it does and I am confident for the next book in Mrs. Moore's delightfully Hero series.

Note on Short Stories:

There two new short stories to have after book five.

- Heroes Short Story (Taro Early Book Five)
 - Short Story: Triple S council meeting(near the end of book five)
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Michelle says

Taro and Lee couldn't be in more of a fix.

On the Emperor's orders, Source and Shield Pair Shintaro Karish and Dunleavy Mallorough have been sent to Taro's backwater home, Flown Raven. Knowing that Taro spent a hellish childhood in Flown Raven, Lee isn't exactly thrilled with forcing him to face those painful memories all over again. Or facing his dragon of a mother, the Dowager Duchess, who lives just down the road and makes your average villainess look positively sweet. Until recently, Flown Raven had never experienced the natural disasters usually associated with the posting of a Pair but recent occurrences have proved otherwise. After Taro gave up his right to rule his ancestral home (much to his mother's fury), the townspeople of Flown Raven have endured a string of bad luck which they believe is solely the fault of their newest titleholder, Taro's cousin Fiona. Things aren't looking much better once our favorite Pair actually arrive, quickly followed by a group of Imperial Guards, who nobody wants around.

So let's see, technically Lee and Taro have been posted in a city they shouldn't be in, by someone who should have no power over them (the Emperor). Their bosses, the Triple S Council, are breathing down their necks for a detailed accounting of their past deeds (which they can't divulge). While they are constantly plagued by Taro's awful mother and her schemes to break them up and to return control of Flown Raven to Taro (which he does not want). And to top it off, the Pair are having trouble channeling - something that should not be happening. Nothing ever is easy for these two, is it?

As always, Moria J. Moore delivers quite a story. As I've come to expect from her previous Hero books, Taro and Lee always wind up in the craziest circumstances - usually ones way beyond their control - with the barest amount of information and *Heroes Return* is no different. In a series that has such uniquely brilliant world building and stunning characters, I can only say these books are fast becoming more layered and developed with each installment. The author tempts you with glimpses of political maneuverings and tidbits of historical context that leave you clamoring for more. I just know this series is heading for some major developments as Lee and Taro seemed a bit more out of their league than usually. Which is saying a lot really.

Most importantly, after the crazy (good crazy, mind) events of *Heroes at Risk*, I was *so sure* Taro and Lee had *finally* taken that first crucial step in learning how to function as a couple but sadly, no. Once again *Heroes Return* is crammed full with Taro and Lee's inability to communicate effectively. [insert my long-suffering sigh here]. I don't know what it will take for these two to finally figure things out (how many books do we even have left Ms. Moore?!?) but I just want to gather them both into a giant hug and just make everything all right. Because they are perfect for each other. Absolutely perfect. Aside from all the misunderstandings, Taro and Lee two trust each other implicitly. They crave the other's good opinion. And most importantly, they would do anything for each other. Really, anything. That's why I think I have such a

hard time with all the frustrations in between since it is obvious how much they mean to one another. And to this reader.

Snail in Danger (Sid) Nicolaides says

Another "things get worse before they get better" book. Things seemed to move too quickly for me to really emotionally engage with this book and the characters. But maybe I just read the book too quickly. Also, it's been a while since I read most of the other books, but I think there were more deliberately unresolved loose ends in this book than there were in previous books.

Also also, we get more worldbuilding background-ish stuff in this one.

Mikki says

I'm pleased to see that Lee isn't as annoying as she was in the previous books, but that is mainly because Taro has stepped in to take her place. I do get why they're both so strained (in fact, the reasons why they're both so upset with each other is sprinkled just a little too liberally through the book), but one would've thought the lines of communication have been well and truly drawn out by now. It's been five books already, come on. How old are they?

Also frustrating is how this book seems to just be there to build up to the next one. All this talk and speculation about the Emperor's plan, the Triple S's role, the Dowager's dastardly plot, and hardly any resolution whatsoever. I get that this is part of a series, but you usually have to give your readers some sense of fulfillment with each installment.

All that said, I did enjoy reading Heroes Return. I have all these complaints but I was really into the book while I was reading. Felt full sympathy for Fiona's many plights in dealing with her new people, and booed whenever Lee and Taro couldn't get their Lee-and-Taro time. The series may have slowed down a bit with this book, I'm still picking up the next one.

Sylvia says

Too booooring to be finished.

Angie says

I literally bounced in my seat when I saw HEROES RETURN pop up as being in stock and ready to ship a couple weeks ago. I quickly ordered my copy lest that lovely little "In Stock" button disappear, and I sat back to wait--impatiently--for it to show up on my doorstep. I adore Moira J. Moore's Heroes series because of the two main characters. Lee and Taro are incorrigible, endearing, at times pull-your-hair-out maddening, but they are two of my favorites and I look forward to each adventure with gleeful anticipation. I think about these two a lot when I'm not with them. I think about my favorite scenes--the ones where they let their

defenses down for perhaps two seconds at a time and actually communicate. Sometimes I have to go re-read one or two of those scenes to remind me how subtle and real they are. We've hashed out these covers before in detail and I won't go into this latest disaster. Much. Except to say that never does blue lightning crackle between Taro's meaty paws. If that image worries you at all, let me set your mind at ease. Also, he is rather devastatingly handsome. Despite the way he is portrayed on the cover. This is the fifth installment in the series.

Not in their wildest dreams did Source and Shield Pair Shintaro Karish and Dunleavy Mallorrough imagine they would ever be taken away from High Scape and reassigned to Taro's homeland of Westsea. But that is exactly what's just happened. Without so much as a by your leave, the newly minted Emperor orders them to swear fealty to him and pack their bags for the remote coastal city where Taro was born, and where he lived the first bleak eleven years of his life. Lee dreads the whole notion, what with the politics that are involved and the fact that Taro's mother the Dowager Duchess--otherwise known as the Wicked Witch of the West's less nice sister--lives right next door to where they'll be staying. But, as it turns out, the Duchess should be the least of Lee's worries. For there is something wrong afoot in Westsea. The new Duchess is scrambling to command the respect of her people, the Emperor's guards have been assigned a permanent post there amid rumors the people are engaging in spell casting, and the level and frequency of natural disasters in the area are increasing with every day that passes. Add to this the fact that Taro's abilities to channel are becoming erratic, Lee's passing interest in casting begins to ratchet up a few levels, and the Triple S seems awfully suspicious of them and their recent activities, and these two are in for quite the couple of years at this their new post.

Nothing is ever easy in the world of Taro and Lee. I don't know why I keep thinking things will settle down for a spell and they will be able to sort a few rather important things out. Like their monumentally tragic communication problem. Because **HEROES RETURN** is all but a formal treatise on the failure to communicate and the disasters that result from said failure. I'm starting to feel like my favorite Source and Shield have fallen into a dangerous and dysfunctional habit of making assumptions rather than talking to one another. And I'm honestly afraid of where they'll end up if they don't address the situation in a patently overt manner. Because everything was subtle in this installment. Nothing was straightforward, upfront, or frank. Much of that wasn't Lee's or Taro's fault and, as such, I felt very defensive on their behalf. They were kept apart so much and they weren't fighting to be together. They need to do that a bit, I think, with how important they really are to each other. More so than in the previous books, even larger forces than they are used to seemed to be buffeting them about and I have the feeling there will be more dire reveals to come. This felt very much like a transitional piece and, as such, it was harder to say goodbye at the end, feeling so worried and discombobulated as I did. I feel as though the world itself may turn on them and I sat fretting for quite awhile after finishing. I know there is a sixth book on the way and that is very reassuring. What I don't know is what lies beyond that. Will things wrap up? Will there be more adventures beyond? Because nothing about **HEROES RETURN** is neat and tidy and I am going to need some kind of meeting of the minds and souls to calm my poor heart. As always, I fell into Moira J. Moore's world, and into company with these loved characters, the moment I started reading and I did not surface again until the final page. I very much enjoyed the change of setting and the peeks into the Taro's origins and how different it is from other places in their world. Taro made me particularly proud in a couple of key scenes--one of them just especially well done. And I like that Lee is branching out in her interests, even if those interests give Taro fits. After all, Lee is right. He really is adorable when he's mid-fit. Another great installment in one of my very favorite series.

Reading Order: Resenting the Hero, The Hero Strikes Back, Heroes Adrift, Heroes at Risk, and **HEROES RETURN**

Mieneke says

Heroes Return is a fun new addition to Moira J. Moore's *Heroes* series. The fifth book of the series about Dunleavy Mallorough and Shintaro Karish, a bonded pair of the Source and Shield Service a.k.a. the Triple S, takes us back to Shintaro's childhood home. The book moves the series along nicely by suggesting that magic, 'true magic', is returning to Lee and Taro's world. It ties in with both Lee and Taro developing strange new abilities that are, as far as they know, unheard of among Shields and Sources. In the end though, the book leaves us with as many questions as answers, which is both pleasing as it promises more books in the series, but frustrating because the mystery keeps getting bigger.

The characters make up for a lot of the frustration, as they are interesting, smart and funny. I especially love Lee's voice, her sarcasm always gets me chuckling. She's very human and down-to-earth in a profession and situation that could easily go to someone's head. The way her relationship with Taro, both professional and personal, is still able to set her off balance is great, without getting mired in an eternal 'will they or won't they'-dynamic in which many of my favourite TV-series tend to end up. Taro appears to be Lee's polar opposite in many ways, out-going where she's more reticent, almost arrogantly self-confident where she's a little more self-conscious, hedonistic and seemingly vapid, he's far more than he wants people to believe. He's smart, honourable and, like Lee, very conscientious in his Source and Shield duties. They make for a really interesting pair and they're never dull.

The Dowager Duchess, however, is just plain annoying. Evil is rather black and white in these books and the Dowager Duchess is a prime example of this. There is nothing redeeming in her and her motivations get more murky the more we find out about them. In a similar vein, the Emperor is making a grab for power, without really any explanation of why he does so, other than a lust for power one presumes. Still, it'll be interesting to see how the emperor's power play works out and whether the Triple S will start to move against him. There are some cool secondary characters in this instalment too, such as the current Duchess of Westsea, Taro's cousin Fiona, her brother Tarce and the Windwatcher Radia. Thus far, most secondary characters haven't made any real reappearances from book to book, but hopefully since Lee and Taro seem to be staying at Westsea for a while, we'll see more of them in the future.

Heroes Return is a fun breezy read, that doesn't take itself too seriously, which covers the fact that it's a far more serious story than it seems at first glance. Hidden beneath the snark and the comedy is a really interesting take on 'magic' in all shapes and forms and a mystery that is crystallizing more and more, even while becoming larger each book. I really like this series and I hope we'll get closer to the heart of the mystery in the next book. The sixth book in the *Heroes* series, *Heroes at Odds* is due out at the end of July.

Miss Clark says

3.5 stars

SPOILER HEAVY

Taro and Lee arrive in Flown Raven, Taro's family's ancestral home and holding, after being robbed on their in of their valuables, including the harmony bobs. (Significant? Hmmm?) Things only go downhill from there, with mysterious accidents plaguing Fiona and her husband, dealing with Taro's awful mother, Taro's odd behavior and emotional distance, the strain of channeling in Taro's home, and the threat of the emperor's

soldiers in the town to arrest anyone caught "pretending" to cast magic, an ability that Lee seems to possess.

Decent pacing and some development for Taro with coming to terms with his past and his mother, Lee in regards to magic, and introducing Fiona and the setting of Flown Raven, where I assume some of the following book(s) will take place, at least in part. But I felt like so much of it was filler, the in between stuff that has to happen for what follows to be sensible and logical, but not terribly exciting or intense, particularly for Taro/Lee. I am still left with a slew of questions, as per the usual, but this time, I have some working theories.

The Emperor wants Flown Raven (with or without Taro, though currently preferably with Taro as titleholder possibly because of a deal with the Dowager) and he wants it b/c of its strong connection to magic, the same magic that Gifford is well aware of, but fanatically trying to prevent other people from using. Why? Apart from the obvious, "I'll have all the power?" He cannot possibly hope to contain it from everyone.

Why does Gifford want Lee gone? How? Is it b/c she can cast? Is he threatened by that? Is there something specifically unique about Lee and Taro *together* that makes them a threat to Gifford - a rival or obstacle to whatever magical takeover he seems to be plotting? WHY is it so important to get rid of Lee? Why not Taro? Simply b/c of the Dowager? And what is *their* connection anyway?

The Triple S seems aware of the connection, at least partially, between magic, First Landed, pairs and the fact that pairs may have the ability to cast. Why hide that fact from the pairs? Depending on where they were raised and where they become stationed, some are going to find out sooner or later.

The Dowager is also aware, it would appear, of Flown Raven's importance, either from living there so long and realizing it and telling Gifford or she may have realized it from Gifford. Either way, I say she knows and that is part of why she is so obsessive about getting Taro in control of it b/c she knows it will be important. However, is there something important about Taro and Flown Raven? Some blood connection, etc.? Again, why is she really trying to get rid of Lee? (And will she go to further lengths?)

Magic and channeling both connected to....?

Apart from bad, bad memories and being near the Dowager, all understandable causes of Taro being very upset and moody, he seemed unusually and distressingly different. We see a new aspect of Taro's personality here. (Or a very magnified one.) He is very unhappy, moody, depressed, restless, suspicious and jealous of Lee, unkind towards her and far from as affectionate as he had been in any of the prior books. No mention of any calm or comfort given through a touch, at all, which is in sharp contrast to the other novels. Is his distant and strange behavior merely b/c of the Dowager and the house where he was basically imprisoned as a child? Or was/is there more to it? (As in, at risk for insanity?)

And Lila? She probably had zero chance of actually making it out from under that rock before it crushed her, but did Taro intentionally keep her buried? If so, was it b/c he was afraid Lila might reveal Lee as a caster to the guards?

Lee and Taro are basically out of sorts with one another for the whole book. Lee is not sure, in the end, how she feels about Taro any longer due to his behavior over the past weeks, as well as what happened with Lila. He was not at all trusting of her (though, she probably deserved that for all the grief she gives him), jumping all over her for talking to Reid, acting like Lee does not value him. He sees himself as unintelligent. Is that why Taro was so mad on the island and now here, when his necessity to Lee is less, where her attention is elsewhere? Is he truly worried by that? He surely does not act like it, but something someone said, maybe

Lee's mother, about why Taro acts the way he does around other people is nagging at me - I'll have to look it up. His behavior here is far more calculated to drive her way, which is in wild contrast to his behavior from book 4.

But right now it is all so contradictory and confusing. We do not know if the Dowager will really leave them alone, if Taro will go back to normal, if Lee and Taro will remain together, if the spells allowing their channeling to work will continue to be efficacious, how the whole magic returning/world healing is going to play out, what Gifford's real goals are, esp. with that spell at his coronation, the illegality of casting, what Lee and Taro may be capable of, what about Aryne, Taro's hatred of Flatwell, the significance of Lee and Taro's unusual talents, particularly Lee's ability to cast and influence weather, Lee's connection to Taro (not mentioned here), etc.

In book six I would love more action and more emotional character development between Lee and Taro, both as a couple and as individuals.

Check out this recent interview with Moira: <http://us.penguingroup.com/static/pag...>

Jessica says

I think the reason fans of this series get so upset about the cover art is because the characters Lee and Taro are so well realized in the stories -- not just in terms of Lee's red hair and Taro's black, but also in the tone and nuances of their body language -- that the cover art creates a sort of unsettling disconnect between our internal view of those characters and what we see on the outside of the book. (It's weird, too -- Ace usually does some pretty fabulous cover art, so it's hard to understand how it's so consistently off for this series, despite the many different artists who've worked on it.)

Anyway, the characters, that's the main draw for this series. The world building has improved and the stories are generally pretty interesting, but it's the characters that keep me coming back. When they're happy, I want to smile with them; when they're sad, I want to offer them a hug; when they keep repeating the same mistakes, I want to smack them in the head.

I enjoyed several scenes (particularly after Lee accidentally turned her hair green and when Taro confronts the place he was confined as a child) but I think the one below is my favorite. It might not seem like much if you're unfamiliar with the series, but in the context of Lee and Taro's individual trust and self-confidence issues, and compared to their first interactions, it's kind of squeeful:

"He's so smart," he complained. "You have so much more to talk about with him than you do with me."

"I do enjoy talking with him. There's nothing wrong with that. Just because you and I love each other doesn't mean we have to be all things to each other."

His eyebrows rose. "You've never said you loved me."

I frowned. "I must have."

Looking amused, he shook his head.

"Oh. Well. I do. Love you."

"Be still my heart, you romantic, you."

