



Last Dragon Standing

Rachel Aaron

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Dear Reader,

There is no way to write a blurb for this final book without spoiling all of the others. Suffice it to say, mysteries resolve, dragons war, pigeons abound, and Julius must risk himself in ways he never dreamed possible as Bob's grand plan finally comes to fruition.

But the Great Seer of the Heartstrikers isn't the only one whose schemes are nearing completion. The Nameless End is coming, and even the machinations of the world's most brilliant dragon seer might not be enough to stop it. As the world comes crashing down, it's up Julius to prove what he's always known: that seers can be wrong, and Nice Dragons don't always finish last.

Last Dragon Standing Details

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Author : Rachel Aaron

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Genre : Fantasy, Urban Fantasy, Dragons, Magic, Audiobook, Paranormal, Young Adult, Romance, Shapeshifters, Urban

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From Reader Review Last Dragon Standing for online ebook

Celeste says

Full review now posted!

This was pretty close to perfect for me. I have a new series to add to my favorites shelf!

I love fantasy; it's my favorite genre by far. However, so much of the fantasy genre is plagued by darkness. While that often makes for a very good story, one of the reasons I read is to escape from the real world, and that level of darkness negates escapism for me. When real life is hard, I sometimes feel overburdened when I add a grimdark novel to the mix.

And that is exactly why I loved this series so much. The past few weeks have been hard, but I always had this series to turn to for some distraction. Even in this book, which was by far the darkest in the series, there was just an unrelenting sense of hope. I can't tell you how nice that was, to keep returning to a series with a main character who was doggedly optimistic in the face of staggering odds.

This installment was apocalyptic, with every character involved fighting together to prevent the end of the world. The fact that so many beings, humans and mages and spirits and dragons, could work together without killing each other was a huge testament to the influence Julius Heartstriker had had on his world. The fact that he could even gather all of the world's dragons in one place without war breaking out was incredibly impressive. All of his pacifism and unerring forgiveness, which I have to confess irked me earlier on in the series, was totally validated in this final installment. Without his reputation for peace-making, the majority of the events in this book wouldn't have been possible.

We also finally saw the ending of and reasoning behind all of Bob's machinations. And they were fascinating! The mysterious pigeon is finally explained. We see a family that has always been at each other's throats band together. There's not much else I can say without giving away important plot points from preceding books, but I will say this: Heartstrikers is one of the most vibrant and refreshing series I've ever read in any genre. It's uplifting and hopeful and clean. Because of that hopefulness, I always felt secure in believing that everything would work out okay in the end, even when things were at their darkest. Some people might find that such certainty dilutes the drama and tension of the story, but I didn't find that to be the case. Why should we always have to fear the worst in order to truly appreciate the best?

I feel like I could recommend this series to anyone between the ages of 12 and 80 without worrying about the content. It doesn't have foul language, the few sex scenes occur off-page, and there are honestly not very violent crimes outside of legitimate fights. Yes, there is blood and violence, but even that isn't described in visceral detail. Do you know how few series there are that fit those perimeters that isn't actually a middle grade series? Incredibly few. This is one of the cleanest things I've ever read outside of the middle grade or Christian genres, and I appreciated that more than I can say. I can actually tell people that this series is good, clean fun without feeling like I'm stretching the truth in any way.

I honestly can't recommend this series highly enough. I know some people didn't enjoy this last book as much as those that came before it, but I found it immensely satisfying. While not every book was a 5 star book, in my opinion this is definitely a 5 star series. I can already see it being a series I return to for comfort when life is hard or sad or not going according to plan. It's a series that I'm already planning to ask my husband to buy me for Christmas, because these books deserve a place on my shelf.

A huge thanks to the lovely TS for convincing me to pick up Aaron's work and for being there to discuss it with me!

Niki Hawkes - The Obsessive Bookseller says

[2.5 stars] My thoughts on this final book (reluctant disappointment) are vastly different from my thoughts of the series as a whole (happy feelings). The series is such a unique blend of genres and ideas, with some of the most memorable characters you'll ever come across. No Good Dragon Goes Unpunished (Book #3) is one of my favorite books I've ever read. All that said, although I loved where the story ended, I had quite a few issues with how it got there and can't help but feel let down by the overall execution of the last two novels of this series.

My #1 Issue: pacing. Rachel Aaron is also known for her super insightful 10000 words a day writing technique (one I've tried and it really makes a difference!). Unfortunately, I think all of that unbridled word vomit inevitably led to two final books that were unnecessarily drawn out, wordy, and dialogue-driven than necessary. At least 90% of Last Dragon Standing was strictly dialogue – rehashing ideas and other endless explanations and discussions. **The 10% of actual plot advancement was amazing 5-star quality writing, it just took FOREVER to get there.** I sincerely think the series could've turned out amazing had books 4 and 5 been condensed into a single novel. I did not pick up anything new in book 5 that wasn't explained 10 different ways throughout book 4, and all of that endless dialogue effectively killed any momentum it had going for it coming into the finale. I maintain that a more concise flow would've made for an absolutely KILLER conclusion to this series. Overall, it felt very... self indulgent seems to harsh a phrase, but it definitely looks to me as though the story could've benefited from an more impartial outside perspective (such as a publishing house) by requiring a more intensive edit. That's just my personal opinion on the matter based in part on comparing these last two books to her other trad-pub titles (which had perfect pacing).

Whatever the cause, the end result felt an opportunity wasted.

But is the series still worth reading? That's an easy: absolutely!

I went into this final book with clear expectations, so I was specifically looking for things to go a certain way. At the end of book 4, I stated: "I swear if they try to rationalize and discuss things with the enemy in the final book, I'm going to throw a fit" ... which I did. And: "If she can write at least 50% of the final book without endless dialogue and explanation, I'll be happy" ...which I wasn't. So you can see how I set myself up for a bit of disappointment. However, the friends I read it with over at Fantasy Buddy Reads didn't dive in with such a picky mindset, and for the most part loved the dialogue and character immersion this book had to offer. They had so much fun with it, and I was the raincloud on their parade (I hate it when I do that). Also keep in mind that this series produced one of my favorite books EVER (#3) and I still absolutely loved the vast majority of it. I am just feeling very over-critical of the final installment. For what it's worth, I really like how it ended. :)

Recommendations: Heartstrikers is an excellent series to dive into if you like fun characters, dragons, great world-building, more dragons, and awesome moments. My personal issues with the final book aside, it's a unique series well worth your time of you're in the mood to have some fun. :)

Via The Obsessive Bookseller at www.NikiHawkes.com

Other books you might like:

Petrik says

Heartstrikers is easily the most fun I've ever had in an urban fantasy series.

And so this is the end of the series, for now. It's by all means not a perfect series and I know I haven't read a lot of urban fantasy for my opening statement to hold a lot of strength. However, the reason why I rarely read UF in the first place is that my experience with the genre—with the exception of Paternus by Dyrk Ashton—is more or less the same as my experience towards YA books: mediocre, disappointing, and 100% rate of over hyped. Heartstrikers, like Julius Heartstrikers, managed to do the unthinkable and grabbed my attention until the end of the series; I binge read this series in less than two weeks after all.

The blurb stated it already and I won't be talking about anything other than this is where we finally get to see Bob's grand plan revealed in full. Bob in this book be like

As far as conclusion goes, Heartstrikers landed its ending wonderfully and satisfyingly. Do know though that if you expect this to be action packed like the majority of the final installment in an high/epic fantasy, you'll most likely be disappointed because this book is still full of talking. I have to admit that after the first 30% of the book, which was basically the characters standing around talking and planning, I'm starting to get impatient despite how much I enjoyed the prose and dialogues. It's not only 30% but 75% of this book consisted of the characters simply standing around and talking. I know this has been the same since the third book of the series but I truly expected the pacing of the last book of this series to return to greatness like it did in the second book, which in my opinion is hands down the best installment within the series. This brought me to the minor issues I had for the book.

I won't lie, I probably will stop myself from starting any five-book series in the future, the number five seems like a curse for me because every five-book fantasy series I've read have the same issue: it should've been four books and this series is no exception. A lot of info dump sections (more or less 200 pages) in the fourth book could've been replaced with contents from this book. Replacing the info dump in the fourth book (which believe me, I forgot all of them already even though I just read it three days ago) with the important part of this book would make Heartstrikers a super incredible series.

The final 25% was satisfying and worth the conclusion. A lot of positive messages can be gained from reading this book and the ending was satisfying. I've had the fortune of reading plenty of great indies (or originally indie) series such as Books of Babel by Josiah Bancroft, Arcane Ascension by Andrew Rowe, Paternus trilogy by Dyrk Ashton, The Lot Lands by Jonathan French, and Riyria Revelations by Michael J. Sullivan, and I strongly believe that despite its flaws, Heartstrikers belong in that list.

For those of you who are looking for an urban fantasy series with a unique take on dragons, superb characterizations, a simple prose that doesn't get in the way of the plot, but most of all fun, look no further because most likely you'll have a blast with this series like I did. I highly recommend Heartstrikers and special thank you to my friend, TS, who recommended this series to me.

Series review:

Nice Dragons Finish Last: 3.5/5 stars

One Good Dragon Deserves Another: 4.5/5 stars

No Good Dragon Goes Unpunished: 4/5 stars

A Dragon of a Different Color: 4/5 stars

Last Dragon Standing: 4/5 stars

Heartstrikers: 20/25 stars

*You can find **this** and the rest of my Adult Epic/High Fantasy & Sci-Fi reviews at **BookNest***

Mihir says

Full review over at Fantasy Book Critic

OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS: I was extremely lucky to be able to read the conclusion to the Heartstrikers series in its manuscript form. I can't thank Rachel Aaron enough for her kindness and for being the awesome person that she is.

The blurb of this book is going to be a difficult one as how do you compose one for a series ender. As you can see with the official blurb as well, the author has kept it as spoiler-free as possible. I'll do my best to continue in the same vein but I will presume that if you are wanting to read this book then you have read all of the four preceding titles. Hence some plot information which I talk about might be spoilerific for the previous titles but I truly don't see a way around it. So be warned if you are wary about even the least bit of spoilers then READ NO FURTHER!

The book begins (in a fashion similar to its preceding titles) within moments of the climax of the previous book (A Dragon Of A Different Color). We also get a prologue from the point of view of the one character (Bob aka Brohomir) that has been pulling all the strings in the background. It's a glorious prologue and one which will answer another fundamental question about the series and is a special treat for fans of Bob.

After the events of the last book, our characters are all within each other's proximity in the DFZ and are faced with a situation that is literally the end of all things. Once again it's up to our Nice Dragon to do what is required but he's been overwhelmed with ecstasy by SPOILER's return. We get to see Chelsie reunited with her brood & their father. Then there's the F clutch who are wholly finding their feet and lastly we also get to see all of the characters mentioned so far (Justin, Ian, Svena, Katyana, the DFZ spirit, etc.) come together. There's also an epic reunion of sorts between a Heartstriker and the daughter of the three sisters (however it's not the Hearstriker you are thinking). There's also a major confrontation that has been hinted at since book 2 and we get to see play out in all of its glory. I enjoyed reading it and of course so will the readers.

First thing which I loved and want to highlight is the glorious cover. What's even better about is that it's not by series artist Anna Steinbauer but by Tina Rambaran. Who not only managed to keep the style intact from the previous titles and gave us a fantastic Bob alongwith his pigeon. Secondly this book literally has it all from saving the universe to romantic reunions, & explanations about all the things happening so far. The story hinges on two specific events, the first one we get to see in the first third of the book and the second

plot thread is the culmination of Algonquin's action as the end of the fourth book. It will take everyone's efforts, dragons, humans, mages & things from the beyond to make sure that the universe doesn't get devoured. This is truly the crux of the story and longtime fans of the series are in for one hell of a ride with it.

Previously Rachel had mentioned that this is Bob's book and he takes the center stage in the first third of the story. Almost every character has been his instrument in some form or the other. Plus all his stratagems have led to the events featured in this book and Bob is betting it all for the one thing that he prizes above all and also for preserving the universe. He's a character who many fans love to read about and have can't have enough of his antics. In this book, not only do we get to see him in full flow but also see the "why" behind all of his actions. This not only managed to humanize him but also gave a nice twist of the cool, funny wizard trope.

We also get a renewed focus on Julius Heartstriker who does the impossible by finding solutions where none appear to exist. Rachel Aaron had previously mentioned why she chose Julius as her main character over other stronger and more magical characters. We get another excellent example of that in this book. Even though Julius is a main character, he's been overshadowed by Chelsie, & Marci in the last couple of books. This book he gets back into the thick of things and possibly gets his heart's desire as well. There's also a potential paternal reveal about the J clutch which was fun to read about and came out of the blue.

This book is the culmination of all of Rachel's plotting efforts and we get to see it spectacularly. From the amazeballs climax featuring almost all the dragons in the world versus something that considers them to be gnats, this book does have a lot of action, magic and upheavals to satisfy most if not all of the heartstrikers fans. The action scenarios are of course in line with all that's been hinted in the previous books but the author goes all out in showcasing why everyone fears dragons. Lastly I wanted to point how truly spectacular a climax Rachel has penned in this book. It measures up to the world shattering events of Spirit's End (Eli Monpress book 5) and perhaps betters it in terms of sheer imaginative scale. I sincerely wish that this series gets picked up as a TV miniseries just so that we can get to see the visual imagery as mentioned in this concluding volume.

Some things that perhaps might cause a hiccup or two for the readers is the plot pacing which is a bit off due to the occurrence of two pivotal events. The first one causes the tension to build up and then once it is resolved, we get a bit of uneven pace until the final showdown. I believe Rachel Aaron will expound on this aspect in her interview with us so watch out for that. Another grouse that I had was that one of my favorite characters had a very reduced role in this book, I can see why that would be the case but considering how much of an action-oriented character this is, it felt off to not see them in much action.

CONCLUSION: Featuring plenty of action, major major reveals and Dragons in all their glory. Last Dragon Standing is the dragontastic ending to this superb series by Rachel Aaron. Why should you check it out? For an amazing character cast, some wonderful world-building, a fantastic magic system and perhaps the best thing of all, a truly undragonlike dragon who makes everyone around him shine brighter. Last Dragon Standing is a finale that showcases the best of what Rachel Aaron offers and leaves you wondering what genre she will conquer next.

D.G. says

OMG! Bob's in the cover!!! And love the red jacket!!!

ETA: The audio comes out on March 1st! PRE-ORDERED!!!

Miche says

I was so excited for this book. It had so much potential to be the best of the series, but it ended up being the weakest installment. The story presented here didn't have enough plot development for one book. It feels like book 5 was part of 4, but since 4 got too big for the genre, the text was split into two. I don't think that was the best tactic. With a more throughout edition process, these two books should have been condensed into one and it would have been as amazing as book 3. As they stand now, they are two good books with pacing issues. Nonetheless, Last Dragon Standing provided a satisfactory ending to the series and it even brought a few tears to my eyes.

The Heartstrikers series was a refreshing and fun series to read. I will definitely pick-up other books from Rachel Aaron.

Alisi ? wants to read too many books ? says

Alright. Two month into the new year and I've read the most disappointing book thus far. It probably won't stay the alone disappoint (am reading Lake Silence atm) but this was still pretty bad. JFC, what a horrible book to finish this great series. And it pains me to give this 2 stars too. I finished this last night and was trying to think of a way to give this 3 stars, because I love the series but this was appallingly bad. Like, the author just dumped this one out and gave us the steaming pile to read.

The thing that got me with this book is that there's basically nothing in it but filler. Nearly 90% of the book is just talk and argument. You think I kid, but I do not. I was listening to the audiobook and by the 4th hr of arguing, I started keeping track.

Basically, after the prologue, the cast stayed in the same room and argued for about the first 6 1/2 to 7 hrs of the book. The exception is that Marci left around hr 5-ish. She had her own thing going for like 20 or 30 minutes, then it was back to the arguing. At one point, around 5 hrs in, Julius said something like they'd only been there for 30 minutes and I looked at my ipod and thought 'are you fucking kidding? We're past the 5 hr mark. We're like 100 pages + in and we're still in the same goddamn spot we started in, and you're trying to say they've only been talking for 30 an hr?'

What was worse was that it wasn't even really plotish type of arguing. Oh no. We got this repetitious cycle thing happening. Someone would come in, that person would threaten someone, and everyone would be like 'you'll have to go through me' after we're told how terrible they are for X reason (that happens to be plot vomit.) This literally happens at least 3 times, back to back to back.

I read another review that said something like books 4 and 5 could've been put together if the excess was removed and that got me thinking. That's the issue with this book. The two were probably one book but she cut them up, and added this massive amount of BS conversation to "cover" for it.

Literally nothing happens. They try something and it fails, then we're treated to yet more talking and

discussion, because, really, what book needs any action? It's not like the first 7 hrs were just talk. Haha, that would be SILLY.

Shame on Aaron for releasing such a terrible book. She didn't even try to make this a story. I feel burned by this crap. I'm not sure I'll read the next series (because, naturally, there's a set up for me.)

TS Chan says

The Heartstrikers series is a triumph of urban high fantasy that is positively overflowing with heart and magic.

With a conclusion that is so satisfying that it leaves me basking in the afterglow of completing an amazing series, Heartstrikers have sunk its dragon claws into my heart and established itself as my favourite urban fantasy series.

The series started with a fairly light touch as it introduces the reader to the world in which dragons walked the earth in human form and magic has returned after a thousand years of drought. And of course, to Julius Heartstriker, the titular 'nice dragon', whom the tale spins and revolves around. With every instalment, the scale and epicity (if this is not yet a word, it should be) of the story increases - the most dramatic leap being from the first to the second book of the series.

Rachel Aaron has created the most fascinating magic system out of the lore of this world in which we live; from dragons and seers to spirits of the land, creatures and mortals, and human mages. The expository narrative mirrors the progression of the story as it gets larger and wider in scope. The reason why I deem this an urban *high* fantasy is simply because of the sheer scope of magic contained in the narrative. Furthermore, the dragons in these series are inspired by folk lore around these mythical creatures, from Quetzalcoatl of the Meso-Americans to the Qilin of the Chinese.

Quetzalcoatl (By Genzoman - DeviantArt)

Magic aside, the highlight of this marvellous series lies with its characters. Every single one of its characters is memorable, and I feel so much joy picking up the book and flipping the pages to spend time with them again. One of my favourite characters, who remained pretty enigmatic throughout the series thus far was Brohomir, or Bob, the Great Seer of the Heartstrikers, together with his consort, the pigeon. This volume is where the revelation of Bob's endgame comes to the fore. The Prologue alone made me squeal with anticipation.

Without going into any further details of this book, given that anything else will be a spoiler, I will just say that the climax was so beautifully done that I was reading it through my tears! It truly was down to our wonderful nice dragon, Julius Heartstriker, the one whom Bob calls his lynchpin of all the planning he did in the past several centuries. With the entire world's survival at stake - and this is not an overstatement by any measure - what can the weakest, smallest and youngest dragon of the Heartstrikers do to save everyone when even the most powerful cannot? Not through sheer might, of course, but through *sheer will*; an iron will born by compassion, empathy and mercy, be it for family, friends or antagonists.

"He's very used to disappointment. He just refuses to expect it. That's what makes him stronger than the rest of us."

Although that may sound a tad cheesy, trust me, is it not. That is the key theme or message that the story conveys. Through centuries past, humanity had undergone persistent and devastating conflicts arising out of hatred, intolerance, and the inability to break or see through stereotypes. Show of strength through violence had not and will not get us anywhere, but back into this vicious cycle of continuous strife. Its social commentary on the current state of our world affairs is highly relevant, and I have to say that our world needs way more Juliuses, especially in leadership roles.

I cannot recommend this series highly enough. If you love dragons (seriously, how can you not?), and if you like lots and lots of magic with great characters and a compelling tale to boot, pick up the Heartstrikers series right now!

This review can also be found at Booknest

Mary ~Ravager of Tomes~ says

Actual Rating: 3.5 Stars

So here we are, finally at the end of this series. *And what a spectacular ride is has been!*

It's bittersweet to be here because it's always wonderful to complete a series you love & finally see its resolution, but it's never fun to say goodbye to a cast of characters that have grown to feel like family.

This is just such a cozy little tale & honestly I can't wait to reread the books in the future.

However, this is unfortunately the weakest installment for me. It's not by any means a bad ending, so please do not interpret me that way.

In fact, this series evolved into some **crazy epic** situations that I never imagined possible just after finishing Nice Dragons Finish Last. As it turns out, I'm feeling **quite satisfied** with the way events worked out & I have relished the journey.

However, I can't escape the feeling that perhaps the last two books maybe could've been divided up a bit differently? Shortening A Dragon of a Different Color, and perhaps adding some of the plot resolution from that book to Last Dragon Standing would've been a smooth way to combat the "tacked on" feeling I got while finishing up the *Heartstrikers* series.

Still, there are a handful of **excellent** moments here, and until I saw the events play out I really wasn't certain how the situation could possibly resolve itself. So Aaron gets *all the points* for **creativity & a fulfilling conclusion**.

It seems like most of my issue here stems purely from organization. Also, I would've liked the timeline from the first to the last book to extend a bit further than it did. I believe the whole series takes place over 4 months or so? It feels like I've spent closer to 4 years with these characters. For a couple of things that came to light at the end, that just feels **way too fast**.

That said, the praises I've heaped on these books in my previous reviews still stand for this final installment. It's full of **uplifting messages, unique circumstances, and is ultimately a barrel of fun at its core**. It easily stands apart from other Urban Fantasy books I've read, and I'd recommend it even for readers hesitant about that genre, as I tend to be.

Heartstrikers is truly an accomplishment, even if I hoped for just a **little** more from this last book, I still felt completely comfortable rounding up because overall **I've had a blast**. I can't wait to read the next book Aaron comes out with, as I'm confident she will only continue to improve as a writer & storyteller.

Robin (Bridge Four) says

Last Dragon standing could be called What about Bob.

This is the book where we find out what all of the Pigeon loving seer's machinations were for and why Julian has been the lynchpin to so many of his plots.

This was a solid conclusion to an overall really good series. We got the big fight against the Nameless End, a fitting conclusion to the animosity with Algonquin, some Marci and Julius alone time and so much more.

A Dragon of a Different color suffered a lot from info dumping and it made sections of that story dull and lackluster. While there are some magical lessons laid on us in *What about Bob* they are far less and were a bit more entertaining. I do think though that with some editing books 4 and 5 could have been done together to wrap this all up. Still overall I don't have many complaints for the overall series.

Julian has always been one of my favorites to root for since the beginning of the series and adore how much our baby dragon has grown over the series. You can see how he will continue to be the bind force behind Dragons and other creatures moving forward from this story.

Marci is a great female character as well. She is strong, smart, independent and completely herself at all times. I love how generally excited about the world she is and how that tumbles out of her uncontrollably sometimes.

I'm sad to see the series end but it has been a solid ride and I love where the story ended up.

Molly Mortensen says

More like 3 1/2 stars. As satisfied as I was with the end of the final battle and the wrap up afterwards, I was bored through the first 75% of this book.

Up until that wrap up, this book takes place in the few (3?) hours before the world is destroyed. Basically the whole book is the final battle. Through the actual excitement doesn't start until the halfway point, with the first HALF being filled with nothing but talk. (I understand that the talking is important, we had things to learn and big plans to make, but there was too much.)

As dramatic as stopping the end of the world is, I much preferred the smaller problems our characters faced in the beginning. Remember when Julius just had to prove himself to his mother?

The world building has been one of the strengths of this series and the explanation for how Nameless Ends work and seeing the future (potential futures) was really cool. It amazes me how she can add more to this world.

Series enders are tricky. Too often all of the build up feels anticlimactic. Here that wasn't the case. Defeating the Leviathan was appropriately difficult (maybe a bit too difficult) but I enjoyed the twists at the end.

Unfortunately, the fun of these books, the cute characters interactions was mostly absent from this finale.

It's sad that my favorite parts were the ones without the main characters. I love Chelsie, Bob, and Amelia! And we finally get Bob's POV! (However small, along with a tiny bit from Chelsey, and even a part by Fredrick!)

In the end, we learn what's next for Julius and it was absolutely perfect!

More needed to be done with Julius and Marcy's relationship though. My one complaint in the last book was that they went from, boom I like you to let's have sex. Unfortunately, afterwards they didn't have time to talk, what with the world ending. We're given little moments amongst the battle but there wasn't the time their relationship deserved after five books. (view spoiler)

I could've done without the epilogue. I rarely like umpteen years later. (In this case twenty.)

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

4 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2018/05/06/...>

There's a good reason why there's not an official summary for this fifth and final novel of the Heartstrikers series, and that the description you will find everywhere is a message to the reader from the author about how there's no way to write a blurb for this book without spoiling all the others. That's because it's true. So much has happened over the course of this series, with events and revelations piled up on top of one another, that to single out any thread would be a risk to unravel and reveal more information than I want to give. So, if you're reading this review, I'll assume that you are at least caught up to this point in the series, and if you're not, be aware that there are potential plot details for the previous four volumes.

Last Dragon Standing picks up right up from the events at the end of Dragon of a Different Color. But before the story starts up in earnest, readers are given a brief glimpse into the past with Bob, our favorite dragon seer, who is seen striking a bargain that will change the course of Heartstriker history forever. We are then zipped back to the present, catching up with all our key players who have all gathered around the Detroit Free Zone following the aftermath of what happened to Algonquin, the spirit of the Great Lakes. There have been happy reunions all around—with lovers, friends, family, and even enemies coming together again—and that also includes the return of a couple characters that everyone thought was dead. But the celebrations have barely begun, when a new threat comes looming on the horizon—quite literally.

As epic as this finale was though, I had some concerns. For one thing, I can see why now Rachel Aaron had

to make this a five-book series to wrap things up. Don't get me wrong, I think this final volume was absolutely required, but it irked me a little that so much of it was made up of nothing but talk. If I hadn't been so invested in the story already, I think I would have been bored to tears, and even then, there were times where the amount of talk really tried my patience. Up to this point, each Heartstriker novel has been a lot of fun, full of action and witty banter. It saddens me that I can't really say the same for Last Dragon Standing, because at least two thirds of it was filled with our characters doing nothing but just standing around, explaining the situation or discussing battle plans in a very dry, in-your-face tone. Not that this kind of information wasn't important to the plot, but it still felt an awful lot like blatant info-dumping.

I also think that's a clear sign of a book trying to do too much when you literally need to have a character chime in and explain what's happening every single step of the way. In a sense, one of the series' greatest strengths has become its biggest liability. I've always loved the incredible world-building in Heartstrikers and how every book has introduced new elements as well as bigger, badder, and more overwhelming threats for Julius and the gang to face. But now we've gotten to the point where the situation has ballooned into something barely manageable, and yet, we still have to tie everything together in one final volume that also happens to be the shortest book of the series.

Still, I don't know if things could have turned out any differently. As I said before, Last Dragon Standing completes the author's vision of Julius' journey, bringing everything full circle back to where we began, in the DFZ. Only now, our nice dragon is no longer alone or quite so powerless. Everything has been building up to this point, and at the end of the day, getting a satisfying conclusion that addresses all questions and conflicts is probably worth putting up a few pacing issues, or having to soldier through some lengthy sections of dialogue. Also, the last quarter of the book was amazing, which went a long way in making up for the tedious talk at the beginning. It was an emotional rollercoaster, and despite feeling confident that Rachel Aaron would leave us all with a happy ending, I still got extremely nervous there for a little while.

Bottom line, as the finale of one of my favorite series, I wish Last Dragon Standing had been a little more fun to read. However, if you've been following the books thus far, you probably won't be too bothered by the lack of action. While this one was mostly full of talk, all of it still went towards building up to the stunning climax. As befitting a series conclusion, the antagonist was an insurmountable threat requiring all our characters coming together to defeat, and that part of the battle was handled in a truly epic fashion. Everyone—and I do mean everyone—we've come to know and love in this series will have a part to play, and I really enjoyed the feel-good, fist-pumping energy in the final showdown. All in all, that ending makes this a must-read book in a must-read series, and Heartstrikers will always have a special place in my heart and on my shelves. I can't wait to see what Rachel Aaron does next.

Audiobook Comments: Vikas Adam has become the voice of this series, and I think I'll always know him for the incredible performances he has given for these books. He was so good that I'll even miss his "Bob voice", which is really saying something! I definitely wouldn't hesitate to recommend Heartstrikers in audio; I've had just as much fun listening to this series as reading it, and both formats have been greatly entertaining and rewarding.

Daniel says

Odlican zavrsetak za ovaj vrlo zabavan serijal. Ocekivano imamo dosta ozbiljnijih momenata, vecina misterija je odlicno objasnjena i moc prijateljstva i razumevanja pobjedjuje na kraju. Sa te strane je sve ocekivano ali opet put koji likovi predju jeste neocekivan pa samim tim i interesantan.

Sem toga sta reci, zabavni likovi sa puno humora u razgovorima, pricom koja drzi paznju i dobrim krajem.

Svaka preporuka.

Ezinwanyi says

Enjoyment: ♥♥♥♥♥

Narration by Vikas Adam: ♥♥♥♥♥

Plot: ♥♥♥♥♥

Writing: ♥♥♥♥♥

What an amazing ending to such an awesome series. Narrator Vikas Adams really brought this Heartstrikers series by Rachel Aaron to life and solidified this series as one of the best Urban Fantasy series I've ever listened to. The range of voices from Julius to Svena to Justin etc, was brilliant and I was completely transfixed from book 1 to the end of this book.

Imagine the vermin hunter Julius Heartstriker from book 1 to this confident leader in book 5, the growth in Julius astounded me. This is what I look for in books, character development, creative storytelling and chemistry amongst the characters. All of that and romance was everything in this series, so I was not let down by this final installment.

The culmination of all of Brohimir's schemes is the battle for his life as well as all of the earth as Algonquin relinquished her life to the Nameless End. This book saw Julius, Marci, Amelia The Plainswalker, Bob the Great Seer, Svena the White Witch and their consorts attempting the impossible, preventing the Nameless End from consuming their land. What a ride. I found this book to be as angst filled and dramatic as the prior books. The writing was so smooth, creative and riveting that I listened to it in one sitting. The ending was so satisfying that I just felt like I took a ride on an awesome rollercoaster at Disney World.

In addition to Julius continuing to lead by being himself, I loved the subplots, the relationship between Marcie & Julius, The Plainswalker (Amelia) & The White Witch (Svena), Frederick & the Heartstrikers etc. There is so much more story to be told here and I hope the author continues to explore this world as she laid a great foundation for more. I certainly hope the author will explore the subplots and keep this world alive.

This is a series that must be read in order but I recommend it to fans of great writing, fun characters and creative world building. I absolutely loved listening to this series

Kaitlin says

This series has been great! Truly epic throughout and I am so very happy with how it all finalised too. This is book #5 in the series, so of course I can't really say too much about what happens, but suffice to say the stakes are the highest they have ever been in this book, and there's a lot of trouble ahead for our main characters.

This story once more follows Julius and the Merlin and the adventures they have trying to save the world and convince people to work together. The world is divided into humans, mages, dragons and spirits (mortal and natural). None of these groups want to get along usually, but we see that the fate of the world is relying on them all doing just that. If Julius can't get them all to work together, then the whole entire world may collapse, with all of them inside it...

What I love about this series is that it's a super light and upbeat story, and yet it has so much scale and drama too. You certainly feel like the action is fast and furious, and the characters are powerful beyond belief, but the dangers are too so everything scales and matches accordingly, leaving a really awesome story.

I love the way the issues were resolved in this, and I also really enjoyed seeing how the Seers fitted in and the new spirits were forced to understand more about themselves too. There was a lot that came together in this book, and some of the mysteries from previous books were also explained and we got to see how they were resolved (e.g. who is this pigeon? who is the next Seer etc.)

Overall, this was a great series ender, and yet there is room to go back to the world and the ideas Aaron has created here. I can't wait to see what happens next, even though this story is over, and I will for sure be buying whatever Aaron brings out here. 4.5*s from me :)
