

The Lost Ryu

Emi Watanabe Cohen

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In Emi Watanabe Cohen's family-oriented fantasy novel *The Lost Ryu*, a boy, with his miniature dragon, comes to grips with past tragedies and forges ahead with optimism.

Ten-year-old Kohei lives in Japan, where most people keep ryū or dragons, as pets. But while ryū are often small enough to perch on their owners' shoulders, Kohei is plagued by dreams involving his grandfather and giant ryū that resemble the dragons of ancient mythology. Convinced that he needs to find a large dragon when his grandfather falls ill, Kohei and his steadfast ryū Yuharu, set off on a quest alongside Isolde, the half-Japanese daughter of his new neighbors, and her dragon, Cheshire. Their search leads them to a temple where dragons are hatched and then to a palace hidden in the sea.

The Lost Ryu has fun puncturing clichés surrounding dragons: far from being an intimidating presence, Yuharu serves as Kohei's buddy and nagging conscience, with an encyclopedic knowledge of languages and history; even the giant dragons that Kohei encounters are sage-like in their personalities. The book also posits an intriguing alternate history in which scientists attempted to utilize ryū during World War II—an incident that left scars on Kohei's family.

Kohei's attempts to repair the uneasy relations between ryū and humans underline *The Lost Ryu*'s central message of coexistence and trust. While Kohei forges a connection with Isolde, an outsider to Japanese culture, he also comes to find forgiveness for his own family. The novel is adept at mixing these personal revelations with imaginative flourishes, and its hero is plucky and likable.

Gentle, humorous, and touching, *The Lost Ryu* is a fantasy novel whose full-blooded mythology around dragons helps to emphasize the humanity of its characters.

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