



# Cloud of Sparrows

*By Takashi Matsuoka*

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## Cloud of Sparrows By Takashi Matsuoka

Once in a great while a new novelist comes along who dazzles us with rare eloquence and humanity, with flawless storytelling and a unique understanding of another place and time. Takashi Matsuoka is just such a writer.

His magnificent new novel, set amid the violence and beauty of nineteenth-century Japan, takes us beyond the epic tradition of James Clavell's **Shogun** and into a majestic realm of samurai and geishas, ninjas and Zen masters. Brilliantly imagined, gloriously written, **Cloud of Sparrows** is at once a sweeping historical adventure and a love story of almost unbearable poignancy. It is storytelling on the grand scale from a novelist of astounding depth and grace.

## Cloud of Sparrows

It is the dawn of the New Year, 1861. After two centuries of isolation, Japan has been forced to open its doors to the West, igniting a clash of cultures and generations. And as foreign ships threaten to rain destruction on the Shogun's castle in Edo, a small group of American missionaries has chosen this time to spread the word of their God. Among them, Emily Gibson, a woman seeking redemption from a tormented past, and Matthew Stark, a cold-eyed killer with one more death on his mind.

Neither realizes that their future in Japan has already been foreseen. For a young nobleman, Lord Genji, has dreamt that his life will be saved by an outsider in the New Year. Widely reviled as a dilettante, Lord Genji has one weapon with which to inspire awe. In his family, one in every generation is said to have the gift of prophecy. And what Lord Genji sees has struck fear in many around him. As the Shogun's secret police chief plots Genji's death--and the utter destruction of his entire clan--the young and untried lord must prove that he is more than the handsome womanizer of legend, famed lover of Edo's most celebrated geisha, Lady Heiko, and that his prophetic powers are no mere fairy tale.

Forced to escape from Edo and flee to his ancestral stronghold, the spectacular Cloud of Sparrows Castle, Genji joins his fate with Emily and Stark, unaware of the dark forces that drive them. Together with Genji's uncle, Lord Shigeru, a legendary swordsman knee-deep in the blood of his own kin, and the enigmatic Lady Heiko, the unlikely band embarks on a harrowing journey through a

landscape bristling with danger--to prepare for a final battle.

Here, on a snowscape stained with blood, horror will mix with wonder, secrets will unravel, and love will duel with vengeance--as East and West, flesh and spirit, past and future, collide in ways no one--least of all Genji--could have imagined.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## Cloud of Sparrows By Takashi Matsuoka Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Following in the substantial footsteps of filmmaker Akira Kurosawa and *Shogun* author James Clavell is Takashi Matsuoka, whose action-packed debut novel, *Cloud of Sparrows*, unfolds as the age of the samurai warrior starts to wane. The year is 1861, and Lord Genji of Akaoka, last in line of the Okamichi clan, welcomes missionaries Emily, Matthew, and Zephaniah to Japan. Cut off from the West for more than 2,000 years, Japan is as completely unprepared for these outsiders as the missionaries are for geishas and honor killings. Genji, his geisha love Heiko, and the missionaries suddenly find themselves in the middle of several nefarious plots to overthrow the Okamichi leader from as far away as the shogun's palace and as close as Genji's own henchmen. Genji and his visitors journey together across treacherous terrain to seek refuge at the faraway Cloud of Sparrows palace. Although it's a rip-roaring yarn full of ambushes, swordfights, cross-cultural friction, love, and prophetic visions, the book does read a bit like a screenplay, cutting quickly from one scene to another. But the frequent shifts in the story's tempo succeed in making the novel all the more vivid, allowing simultaneous action and contemplation to deepen the story and its inhabitants. --*Emily Russin*

### From Publishers Weekly

Matsuoka's ambitious first novel is an epic saga of clashing personalities and ideologies in the tradition of *Shogun*, yet it distinguishes itself from its wide-eyed predecessor with a grimmer perspective on Japan's military culture. Set in Edo in 1861, the book chronicles the arrival of a group of American missionaries (two men and a woman, each hiding secrets) into a land bristling with feudal clans nursing ancient grudges and a central shogunate trying to maintain control in the face of corrosive Western influences (like Christianity). The young Lord Genji, a modern heir to the embittered Okumichi clan and its rulers' gift of prophetic vision, receives the missionaries as his guests. Their visit coincides with an effort by the Shogun's secret-police chief to destroy Genji, which leads to the accidental killing of one of the missionaries. In response, Genji, his mad uncle Shigeru (tortured with visions of "swarms of metallic insects," which presage the devastation of WWII), and Genji's lover, the devastatingly beautiful geisha Heiko, join forces with innocent American missionary Emily Gibson and Matt Stark, also an American, who is hiding under the mission's aegis while he hunts down a man who wronged him long ago, to stave off the imperial assassins and restore the honor of the clan. The novel boasts plenty of Edo-era pomp and pageantry, as well as some nicely convoluted court intrigue and lightly handled romance. But the author's central message appears to be a rebuke of the narrow-mindedness of the isolationist feudal tradition in Japan and its bloody track record: "It is our duty to ensure that all looting, murdering, and enslaving in Japan is done by us alone. Otherwise, how can we call ourselves Great Lords?"

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### From Library Journal

In 1861, as Japan is pried open by the West, Lord Genji has a vision that compels him to flee to his ancestral home, the Cloud of Sparrows Castle. Like Lord Genji, the publisher would seem to be blessed with the gift of prophecy: this first novel has been sold to seven countries and has been bought by Universal.

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## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

**Preston Sloan:**

This Cloud of Sparrows are usually reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The reason why of this Cloud of Sparrows can be one of many great books you must have is giving you more than just simple reading food but feed a person with information that maybe will shock your prior knowledge. This book is handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions in the e-book and printed people. Beside that this Cloud of Sparrows giving you an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you trial of critical thinking that we understand it useful in your day exercise. So , let's have it and luxuriate in reading.

**Virginia Villalon:**

Hey guys, do you wishes to finds a new book to read? May be the book with the name Cloud of Sparrows suitable to you? Typically the book was written by well known writer in this era. Typically the book untitled Cloud of Sparrowsis the main one of several books in which everyone read now. This book was inspired many people in the world. When you read this reserve you will enter the new age that you ever know previous to. The author explained their plan in the simple way, consequently all of people can easily to be aware of the core of this reserve. This book will give you a large amount of information about this world now. To help you see the represented of the world in this particular book.

**Kelly Thompson:**

The actual book Cloud of Sparrows will bring one to the new experience of reading some sort of book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. In the event you try to find new book you just read, this book very suited to you. The book Cloud of Sparrows is much recommended to you to study. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can quicker to read the book.

**Melvin Hayes:**

Cloud of Sparrows can be one of your nice books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocabulary, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to place every word into delight arrangement in writing Cloud of Sparrows but doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource information that maybe you can be one of it. This great information could drawn you into completely new stage of crucial contemplating.

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