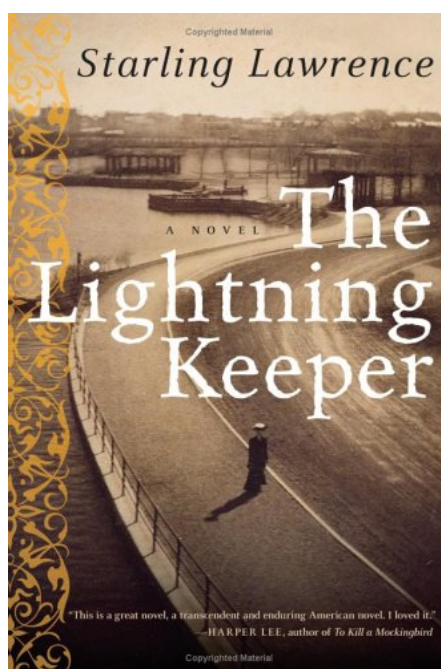




The Lightning Keeper

Starling Lawrence

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

The Lightning Keeper

Starling Lawrence

The Lightning Keeper Starling Lawrence

The Lightning Keeper is a sweeping epic novel of ambition, love, and enterprise in America. It is the story of an unlikely Romeo and Juliet romance at the dawn of the electric age, with the nation balancing on the brink of world war and a scientific revolution.

In 1914 Toma Pekocevic is a penniless immigrant in New York recently escaped from the bloody politics of the Balkans that have claimed most of his family. He is also a gifted inventor who designs a revolutionary water turbine while working with Harriet Bigelow, scion of a proud Connecticut iron-making dynasty now fallen on hard times. Their attraction is immediate and overwhelming, but every circumstance is against them.

Toma is eventually drawn inside the industrial empire of General Electric, his machine an essential cog in its grand scheme to provide electricity to the entire country. His invention is all he has after losing Harriet to a wealthy politician, but Toma is determined to win her back, setting the stage for a confrontation that could change not only his life but the course of scientific progress.

Deeply evocative and utterly engrossing, *The Lightning Keeper* is a rich tapestry of technology, romance, and war -- an unforgettable and distinctly American saga that establishes Starling Lawrence as one of the most talented writers at work today.

The Lightning Keeper Details

Date : Published March 28th 2006 by Harper (first published January 1st 2000)

ISBN : 9780060825249

Author : Starling Lawrence

Format : Hardcover 405 pages

Genre : Fiction, Novels, Historical

 [Download The Lightning Keeper ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Lightning Keeper ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Lightning Keeper Starling Lawrence

From Reader Review The Lightning Keeper for online ebook

Alecia Achimovich says

Okay, so I think this 4 star rating (3.5 if I were allowed to give half stars) needs a bit of an explanation. (Spoiler Warning)

I was so darn frustrated through three quarters of this book. I detested Harriet: I understand that you're having a rough time with the iron company failing. I also understand that you're not really in love with the big-shot you married, you're just seizing an opportunity to keep your family afloat. I understand less your necessity to continually torture Toma, who I guess, more or less, is accepting of the situation.

Yet, as time goes on, I began to get angry with Toma and his passivity. The lack of reciprocation by Harriet became divinely justified after Toma's life in Serbia is shed light on.

The ending, though, just drew everything together nicely. Toma finally took charge (pun intended) very eloquently, may I add. Harriet finally stops listening to the call of society and what everyone thinks she must do.

If there was anything else lacking in this novel, I wanted more elaboration in the epilogue, perhaps an actual depiction of interactions and reactions to the outcomes of the plot. Also, the random vivid sex scenes weren't appreciated (although, I may be very Harriet-esque in this particular critique). I understand that the class/race division and the major difference in culture were huge reasons for its placement. I just think it could have been portrayed more tastefully or didn't need to be written in at all. I digress.

So, give it a try. Not my favorite book ever, but I'm glad I stuck with it until the end.

Chris says

I hated this book and didn't finish it.

And I hate to not finish a book.

I loved the idea of this - the early years of scientific discovery, engines, electricity, turbines and power stations.

But the story was bogged down with history that felt removed from the characters and the story. The story danced around so much that 200 pages in I still was wondering what was happening. I started to not care about the characters.

It got to a point where I knew I was not going to be satisfied and just put this aside.

Nipuna says

There is a lot of technical information in this book about the development of subways, turbines, iron works, patents, scientific progress, and so on. I sometimes got bored reading about it but was also fascinated by how things worked during this time in US history. I like the author's style. The writing is tight and deliberate. The tone of the novel is tragedy with hope from the prologue to the very end. He starts off many of the scenes with a statement about how it has already turned out so you read through dreading to find out. That tension actually kept me reading the book all the way through. I wanted to have more about the romance but the author admits at the end that he's better at writing about tension and discovery and invention and will leave the rest to others.

Bookmarks Magazine says

Starling Lawrence, editor in chief of W. W. Norton, has written a sprawling, old-fashioned novel with lessons for us all about the "miracles" of technology, personal progress, competition, and happiness. It is also about love, an inventor's mind, the battle between small businesses and corporations, and the electrification of America. Gorgeous language, rich period details, and an elegant plot impressed critics; clearly, Lawrence did his research, even if he offers up some dense passages. Photographs and the inclusion of historic figures round out the compelling story. In sum, *The Lightning Keeper* "draws us in and allows us to live briefly, magically, marvelously in the world as it once was" (*Chicago Tribune*).

This is an excerpt from a review published in Bookmarks magazine.

Mike says

I almost took this book back to the library before starting to read it. Once I started, I was oddly fascinated. But not in a way that would lead me to give a strong recommendation.

It's well written (as you'd expect from a Norton editor-in-chief). But it moves slowly, and has a 19th century feel; sections begin with a chapter of scenery-setting that's reminiscent of George Eliot. That's a bit of an anachronism in a novel that takes place in (roughly) 1916. The narrator's "this is a history, not a novel" framing gets tiresome, particularly when he brings it back at the end.

As to the story itself: despite the Romeo and Juliet remarks on the back cover, I don't see any Romeos and Juliets here. It does have a pair of young lovers, who despite their magnetic attraction, never seem to be made for each other. Yes, Toma is a better match for Harriet than her husband, but that wouldn't be hard. Potentially more interesting is the problem of invention, creation, and systems thinking. As one of the characters says repeatedly, invention isn't the issue; it's building systems. But system building ends up with Toma caught up in a patent problem that involves both GE and Nikola Tesla (who doesn't appear in the novel). And the way Lawrence handles this problem is hardly compelling; it's a minor thread that occasionally comes to the foreground. So are other potential themes, including race, class, the status of immigrants.

Race, class, and immigrants play an interesting role in the book's language. When Toma (a Serbian immigrant) is with Harriet (New England heiress of a failing iron foundry), the language is decidedly late Victorian, where a lock of hair only has to brush against skin to elicit the repressed longing and desire of a late-19th century heroine. But when he's with the mulatto girlfriend he inherited from his Black boss, the language is proto 50-shades: "she bit him on the nipple. He was immediately ready." It's an important contrast, but it never gets more than interesting. Those two worlds, different as they are, never intersect. And Toma ultimately goes with suppressed desire, rather than real passion. Too bad for him.

I'm not saying that I didn't enjoy it. This is the real Steampunk: inventors making stuff work at the start of the electrical age. But while *Lightning Keeper* is an OK book, it's not a memorable one.

Text Addict says

So I was thinking about early 20th century industrialization (doesn't everybody do that sometimes?) and for some reason I remembered this book, which I hurled at the wall several years ago. It wasn't that the main character was so obviously inspired by Nikola Tesla. It wasn't the historical details - those seemed good, and I enjoyed seeing slightly-reworked locales that I'm familiar with from real history. And the writing was quite good.

No, it was the treatment of a major secondary character, an extremely talented African-American machinist. He was portrayed as morally suspect at first, then switched into morally unindicted (so to speak), and then killed in a particularly grotesque and undignified manner - which gave the white protagonist unimpeded access to his very light-skinned (de facto) widow.

Fuuuuuuck you, Lawrence, said I, and didn't actually throw the book - I'd gotten it out of the public library, and besides, it's a hefty tome and might've damaged the wall. But it went back with the rest of it unread.

Mark says

This is a wonderful historical novel, set around the time of World War I in northwestern Connecticut. It combines a lifelong unconsummated love affair with a realistic story of industrial progress and struggle, revolving around the Bigelow Iron Company, a maker of railroad wheels, which eventually is transformed into an experimental electrical research outpost of the General Electric Co.

The author, Starling Lawrence, is editor in chief of W.W. Norton, and his sophistication and erudition shine through in this novel, without ever making it preachy or didactic.

At the heart of the story is Toma Pekocevic (soon Americanized to Thomas Peacock), a Serb who has come to Beecher's Bridge to help the Bigelow company produce subway wheels, but who is really drawn there because as a young tourist guide in Europe, he had met and fallen in love with the ironmaker's daughter, Harriet, as she had with him, and now he had a chance to be near her.

Toma's work on the wheels will end in disaster to the enterprise, but eventually, he will invent a turbine that is so valuable for electrical power generation that he will be wooed and bought out by General Electric, with the help of powerful senator Fowler Truscott.

And what of his love for Harriet? His hope of marrying her will lose out to Truscott, and you'll have to read the book to find out if they are ever able to be together. The tenderness and longing of their love, even while each has agreed to stay apart, is palpable throughout the book, but equally compelling is the introduction of a real historic figure, the German electrical genius Charles Proteus Steinmetz, who is the General Electric agent who convinces Toma to take over an experiment to channel the power of lightning strikes into the electrical grid (thus the title). This work will set up the climax of both the industrial and romantic story lines, and will keep the tension building steadily until the end.

A truly fine work, one worth indulging yourself in.

Shelly says

With a name like "Starling Lawrence" as the writer I was expecting Epic and it was Epic. However, I wish Mr. Lawrence would have stuck to the epic story and stayed away from the romance. With few exceptions, ie Sidney Sheldon, Nicholas Sparks, men can't write TRUE romance. It always ends up graphically sexual. Romance is what girls dream about; from Cinderella dresses and rescues to flower deliveries on anniversaries after spouses die and for some reason male authors have a difficult time translating this to the written page. Having said that, I really enjoyed the story about the science and wish there had been a little more of that human drama and struggle imagined and written about. I have a feeling that if Mr. Lawrence hadn't tried so hard to tell the "romance" it would have come through on it's own. I can only recommend this to brave readers that can stand to grimace through some parts and/or skip large amounts of writing altogether. If not for that this would probably have been a 3 star review.

Kristen says

When reading a book begins to feel like a chore, it's time to stop. This is actually my second attempt to read this novel; I tried again because the premise - industry and invention in northeastern Connecticut in 1914 - interests me. This time I forged on through the first third despite a paucity of both roller derby and boyfriend. Things picked up for a while in the technology department, but the mid-book twist - the spectacular and ignominious death by misadventure of an important character (the characterization of whom I did not like much to begin with) - threw me completely out of the book. I want to like this novel, but I don't. I peeked at the end and found it was going to go more or less as I expected: and that's it. No reading-as-a-chore around here except for academic purposes.

Me says

I tried, but I could not get "into" this book at all. The style of writing bored me to the point where I no longer cared what happened to the main characters.

Lydia says

This book was really wonderfully written, kudos to the author; it was obvious right off the bat that he is educated and knows what he is talking about. That being said, I found the story slightly interesting and a little boring at the same time. Set in new England around the year 1916, the story is about a young inventor toying around with electricity and what it could do.

Like I said, a little boring. I truly believe that anyone who actually enjoys science and tales of the woes of early inventors, then they would really enjoy this. It was a good book, just not something I would normally read. But it did keep me coming back until I finished it, in fact I was desperate to finish it; mainly because of the love story between the young inventor, Toma, and his employer's daughter. Thank God for the love story. I wouldn't recommend this book to just anyone only because I believe a majority of my reading friends simply would not be able to get past chapter one, but I think a select few might actually enjoy it because it makes you think and keeps you involved.

Diane Nichols says

I must admit I got sucked into this book by the review on the back cover by Harper Lee but the reality was the book fell well short of her extravagant praise.

I was expecting excellence in the vein of "Isaac's Storm" but this grandiose novel was seriously long bouts of boredom interspersed with episodes of domestic turbulence.

Laura says

I was trapped with the opening paragraphs where Toma meets Harriet while she is on vacation with her family. Fast forward and one day Harriet sees this same person in New York where he is escaping from the politics of the Balkans. He is a gifted inventor and ponders over the workings of water power. Setting in the early 1900's shows his interest results in patent of a water turbine which caught the interest of General Electric who plans to provide electricity to the entire country. Interesting how one small inventor can be true to his design. Throughout invention time his interest in Harriet never waivers and her interest in him. Even after an arranged marriage of Harriet, Toma still hopes. Harriet is an individual in her own rights being the keeper of books for her father's iron work company in Becher's Bridge, Connecticut. Her actions show the love she has for family when she tried to take care of her father when his hearing loss and decline into senility. The ending fulfills the longings of these two people.

Lisa says

This book, as others have said, is laden down with too much explanation about water turbines and the early workings of General Electric. I prefer to learn things by accident while swept up in an engaging fictional story. This book is the opposite - almost non-fiction and the author deigned to craft in a fiction story line. Those of you who really like non-fiction might appreciate it more than I did...

I cannot give it only two stars, though, because the writing is so well done and exquisite. Mr. Lawrence is a master of his craft, and the book swept me along, although I confess to skipping over large sections of technical detail. The writing is good enough for me to wish to give it more stars, but....not so.

Sara Russell says

I actually listened to this as an audio book and really enjoyed it. The story is very interesting with the twists or industrial cheating as a back drop. I believe if I had been reading this I may have gotten bogged down in all the turbine/ invention descriptions, but with the audiobook it seemed more like a side note for the story teller to the listener. If you enjoy historical fiction and don't mind some awkward sex scenes then you may really enjoy this. The characters are well developed and interesting.
