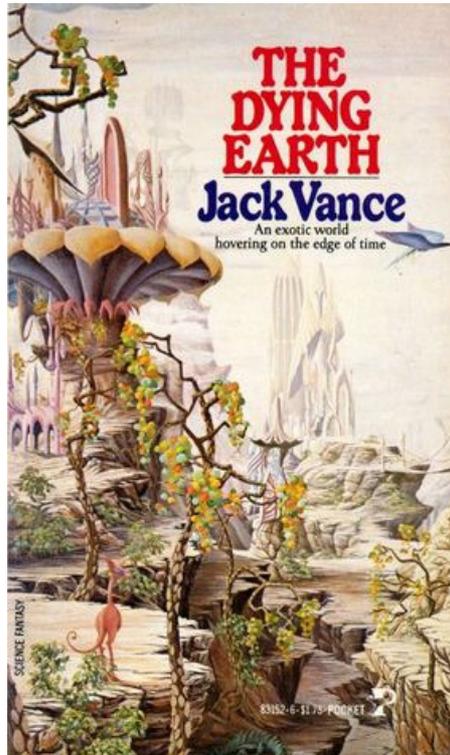


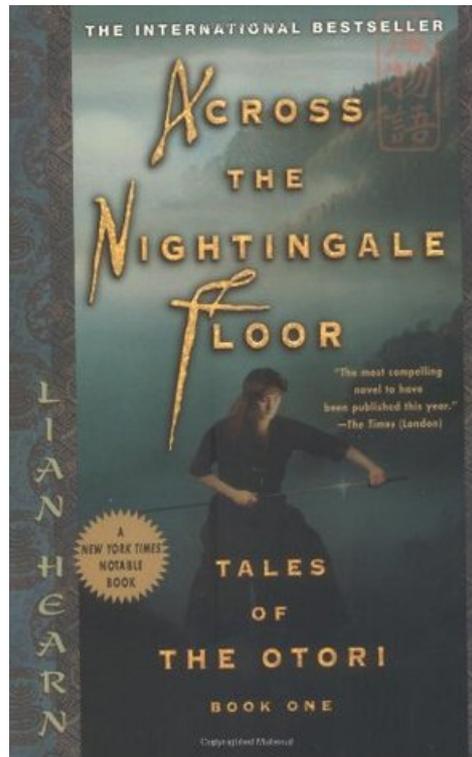
## Jack Vance - The Dying Earth



*The Dying Earth* is the first in a series of books by Jack Vance. The books are generally considered classics and a must read for any determined SFF fan.

The books are an odd collection of rather byzantine short stories and novellas. They are mainly admired for their wonderful style and atmosphere. The stories tend to be a bit surreal.

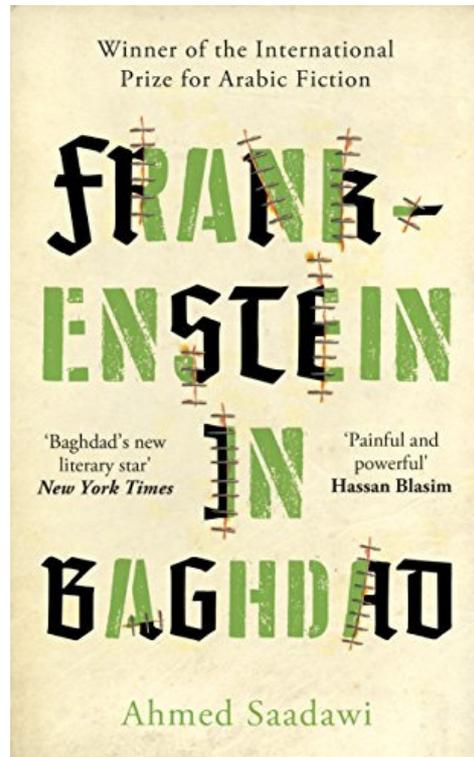
## Lian Hearn - Across the Nightingale Floor



In his palace at Inuyama, Lord Iida Sadamu, warlord of the Tohan clan, surveys his famous nightingale floor. Its surface sings at the tread of every human foot, and no assassin can cross it. But sixteen-year-old Otori Takeo, his family murdered by Iida's warriors, has the magical skills of the Tribe – preternatural hearing, invisibility, a second self – that enable him to enter the lair of the Tohan. He has love in his heart and death at his fingertips . . .

Lian Hearn's stunningly powerful bestseller, *Across the Nightingale Floor*, is an epic story for readers young and old. Set in a mythical, feudal, Japanese land, a world both beautiful and cruel, the intense love story of two young people takes place against a background of warring clans, secret alliances, high honour and lightning swordplay.

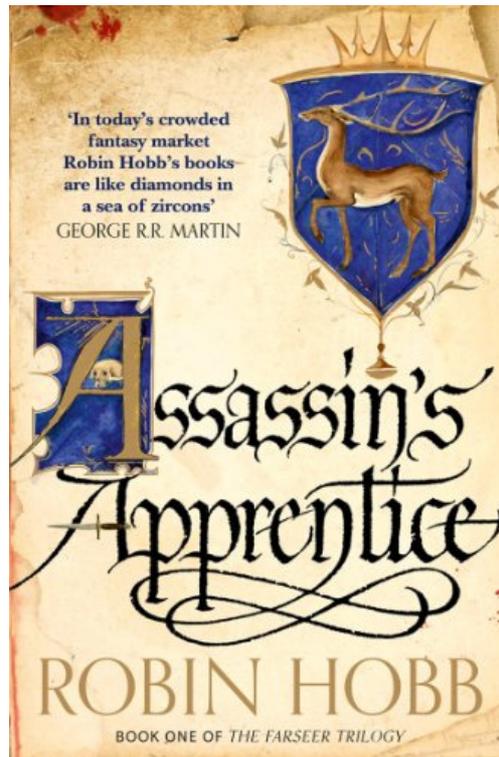
## Ahmed Saadawi - Frankenstein in Baghdad



From the rubble-strewn streets of US-occupied Baghdad, Hadi – a scavenger and an oddball fixture at the local café – collects human body parts and stitches them together to create a corpse. His goal, he claims, is for the government to recognize the parts as people and to give them a proper burial. But when the corpse goes missing, a wave of eerie murders sweeps the city, and reports stream in of a horrendous-looking criminal who, though shot, cannot be killed.

Hadi soon realizes he's created a monster, one that needs human flesh to survive. As the violence escalates and Hadi's acquaintances – a journalist, a government worker, a lonely older woman – become involved, the havoc it wreaks assume a magnitude far greater than anyone could have imagined. An extraordinary achievement, at once horrific and blackly humorous, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* captures the surreal reality of contemporary Baghdad.

## Robin Hobb - Assassin's Apprentice



The kingdom of the Six Duchies is on the brink of civil war when news breaks that the crown prince has fathered a bastard son and is shamed into abdication. The child's name is Fitz, and his is despised.

Raised in the castle stables, only the company of the king's fool, the ragged children of the lower city and his unusual affinity with animals provide Fitz with any comfort.

To be useful to the crown, Fitz is trained as an assassin; and to use the traditional magic of the Farseer family. But his tutor, allied to another political faction, is determined to discredit, even kill him. Fitz must survive: for he may be destined to save the kingdom.

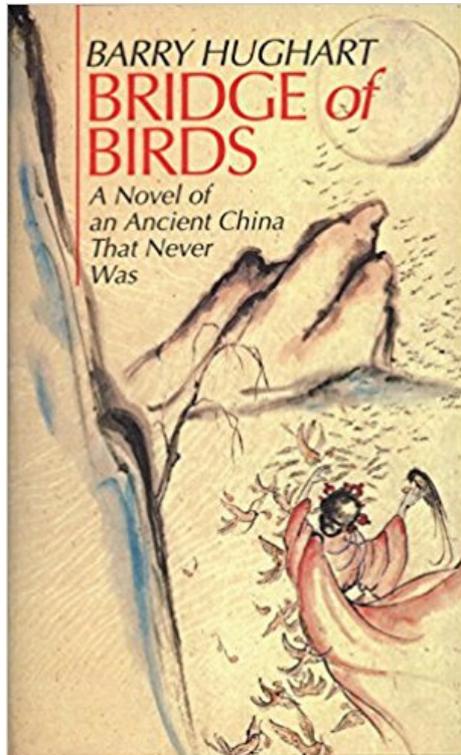
Editorial comment: the description above makes the book sound like just another rote fantasy, but the book is much more than that. Hobb's world building is wonderful, and the book is full of ideas, but what really makes Hobb's writing stand out is the sympathetic treatment of her characters. Fitz is a wonderfully written character and the reader is quickly swept up in his story – both the highs and the lows.

## Juliet E. McKenna - The Thief's Gamble



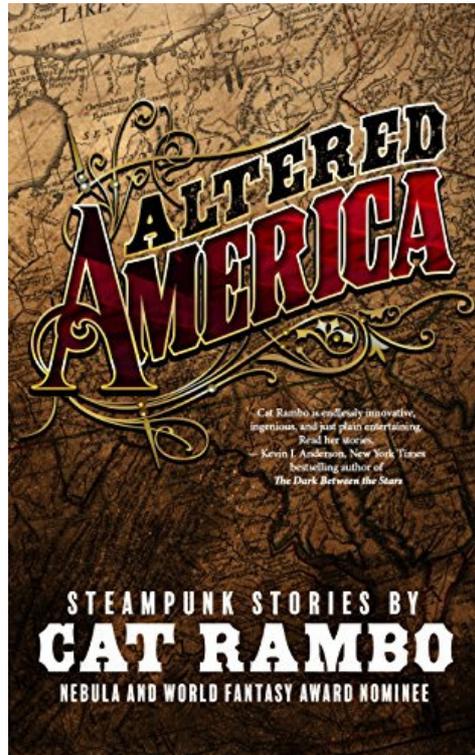
Livak is a part-time thief and full-time gambler, long accustomed to living by her wits and narrowly avoiding serious trouble. When she attempts to sell a stolen antique to a passing merchant, she finds herself pulled into a new and dangerous world of political intrigue in which the stakes are higher than anyone involved can imagine. For the antique she has acquired dates from a particular period in the history of Einarinn about which little is known, but much has been speculated. When the truth begins to emerge, Livak decides to take the greatest gamble of her life.

## Barry Hughart - Bridge of Birds



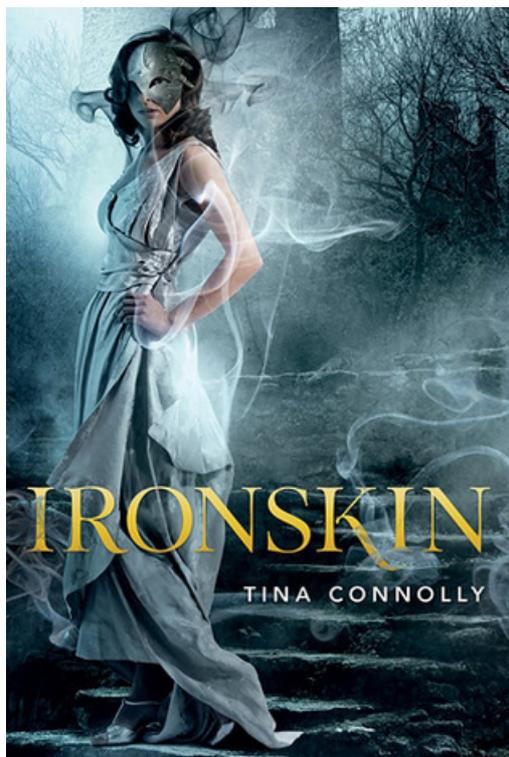
When the children of his village were struck with a mysterious illness, Number Ten Ox found master Li Kao. Together they set out to find the Great Root of Power, the only possible cure, and together they discover adventure and legend, and the power of belief.

## Cat Rambo - Altered America



Steampunk fans will rejoice in the appearance of *Altered America: Steampunk Stories*, collecting Nebula and World Fantasy Award-nominated author Cat Rambo's steampunk fantasies, including "Clockwork Fairies," "Snakes on a A Train," and "Her Windowed Eyes, Her Chambered Heart," into a single book. Rambo's wry humor, precise and evocative descriptions, and ability to create a world with a few deft touches are showcased in these ten tales.

## Tina Connolly - Ironskin



Jane Eliot wears an iron mask.

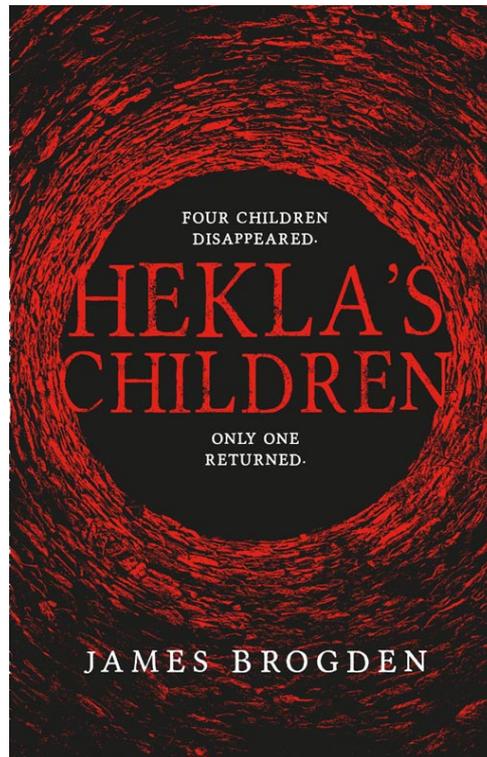
It's the only way to contain the fey curse that scars her cheek. The Great War is five years gone, but its scattered victims remain—the ironskin.

When a carefully worded listing appears for a governess to assist with a "delicate situation"—a child born during the Great War—Jane is certain the child is fey-cursed, and that she can help.

Teaching the unruly Dorie to suppress her curse is hard enough; she certainly didn't expect to fall for the girl's father, the enigmatic artist Edward Rochart. But her blossoming crush is stifled by her own scars, and by his parade of women. Ugly women, who enter his closed studio...and come out as beautiful as the fey.

Jane knows Rochart cannot love her, just as she knows that she must wear iron for the rest of her life. But what if neither of these things is true? Step by step Jane unlocks the secrets of her new life—and discovers just how far she will go to become whole again.

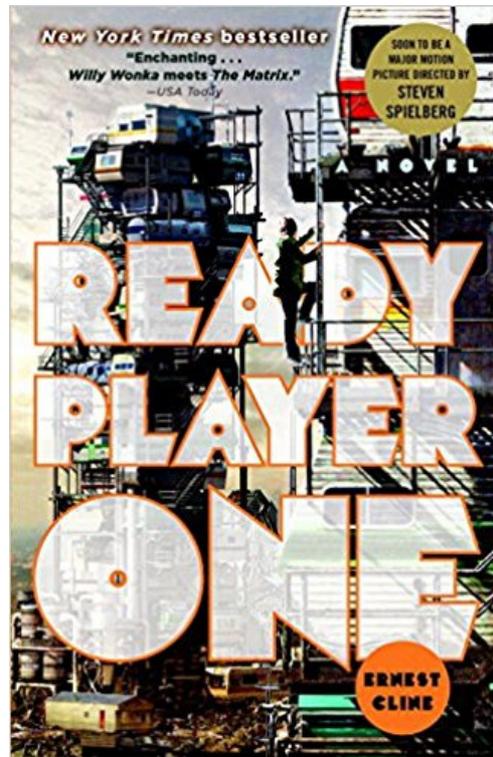
## James Brogden - Hekla's Children



Ten years ago, Nathan Brookes led a group of teenagers on a hike through Sutton Park in the Midlands, and four of them disappeared. One girl, Olivia Crawford, turned up the next day, confused and in shock. Nathan has blamed himself for the incident ever since, and when mummified remains are found in a peat bog near the site, old wounds are reopened. Osteoarchaeologist Dr. Tara Doumani is called upon to examine the mummy, dubbed the Rowton Man, and he's thousands of years old, but shockingly, one of his legs seems to belong to one of the boys who disappeared. Olivia, in desperation, kidnaps Tara to convince her to rebury the Rowton Man, and soon Nathan, Tara, and his old flame Sue Vickers are thrown together. An evil being called the afaugh (who can take over people's bodies) has been released by the mummy's exhumation, and it's very, very hungry. Olivia reveals that the group was taken by a man called Bark Foot to the in-between world called Un, and Nathan realizes he must travel to Un and stop the events set in motion 10 years ago. Un, moored in the Bronze Age, is a brutal world shaped by imagination and mood and steeped in myth and legend. Nathan must return the afaugh to its prison, even if he dies trying. Although Nathan seems to be the focus at first, it's Catharine "Scattie" Powell, who has made her own way in Un, who gives the story its heart and soul. The afaugh's rampage through the modern world is genuinely scary, and the race to stop it will keep readers enthralled. Brogden's U.S. debut is a wonderfully odd mix of dark Bronze Age fantasy and modern-day thriller, and it works.

An exciting and bloody read with teeth.

## Ernest Cline - Ready Player One



It's the year 2044, and the real world has become an ugly place. We're out of oil. We've wrecked the climate. Famine, poverty, and disease are widespread.

Like most of humanity, Wade Watts escapes this depressing reality by spending his waking hours jacked into the OASIS, a sprawling virtual utopia where you can be anything you want to be, where you can live and play and fall in love on any of ten thousand planets. And like most of humanity, Wade is obsessed by the ultimate lottery ticket that lies concealed within this alternate reality: OASIS founder James Halliday, who dies with no heir, has promised that control of the OASIS - and his massive fortune - will go to the person who can solve the riddles he has left scattered throughout his creation.

For years, millions have struggled fruitlessly to attain this prize, knowing only that the riddles are based in the culture of the late twentieth century. And then Wade stumbles onto the key to the first puzzle.

Suddenly, he finds himself pitted against thousands of competitors in a desperate race to claim the ultimate prize, a chase that soon takes on terrifying real-world dimensions - and that will leave both Wade and his world profoundly changed.