



Fire Flowers

Ben Byrne

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August, 1945. Japan has been defeated in the Second World War. The country lies in ruins. Satsuko Takara and her teenage brother, Hiroshi, have lost their parents, and each other, during the firestorm that devastated Tokyo five months before. Hal Lynch, a haunted U.S. reconnaissance photographer, is now a photojournalist in Japan, where he stumbles upon a shocking story and is determined to bring it to light. And Osamu Maruki, a dissolute writer and once Satsuko's beloved, has returned from the South Pacific a broken and changed man.

As these characters' stories spin out and converge, the war-torn streets of Tokyo come alive in this dazzlingly observed novel. Cinematic, brutal, yet beautiful, *Fireflies* powerfully portrays the shock, the struggles, and the difficult choices that arise from the destruction of war.

Fire Flowers Details

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Author : Ben Byrne

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From Reader Review Fire Flowers for online ebook

Leah says

I won this book in a first reads giveaway, and it just arrived today. From the cover this book appears to be a romance, however the description makes it sound very historical and depressing. It looks like a book I'd love, but sounds like a book that would bore me. I am looking forward to reading it though!!

So the book starts off with an extremely biased historical recap. Makes it seem like the US started randomly attacking Japan....no mention of pearl harbour whatsoever.

I start reading after that little historical blurb and quickly notice we have another literary faux pas...confusing changes of POVs!! Also theres a little too much gore. Page 24 has a run on sentence, or maybe just a missing period. Either way, editing fail. Guy running around in the forest starving, stops to sleep/die at a subway station..am I reading Grave of the Fireflies? No, just a very similar story...

After 4 different POVs we are back to the original character. I've already forgotten her story, but now it looks like she will be becoming a prostitute...hmm...

Hal's story is definitely the most interesting so far.

I am now halfway through, and I definitely stopped caring about all the characters. its way too depressing. i probably won't finish it.

Final thoughts: skipped to the end and it was absolute shit. TERRIBLE ENDING.

Jasmine says

The story line seemed good, and I was prepared to give it a 4 rating but then I made it to the end and was severely disappointed. It just dropped off, the story didn't feel complete or tied together at all. It was told in 4 different points of view. Hiroshi, Satsuko, and Hal all tied in nicely, but Osamu was so out of place. I was left wondering what happened to Osamu? Does Hal never find out about his unborn child? Does He never see Satsuko again? How do Satsuko and her brother Hiroshi continue on with their life? No tied ends, you just assume that no, Hal never returns to Japan and never sees Satsuko or finds out they have a child together. Assume that Osamu veers off some unknown path because "who cares, he didn't seem that essential anyway"...

Janet says

It's about the misery and tragedy following the end of war. Likeable protagonists for whom I wished a truly happy ending. A compelling read. Thank you Goodreads First Reads for my free copy.

Djambe says

I won this as a first reads giveaway.

Great story lines. I loved how they intertwined.

Was rooting for all the characters my brain constantly working out who was innocent and who was guilty of multiple things that go on in the book.

Paula Hess says

This book takes place in Japan in 1945 after the bombs have been dropped. Hal Lynch a US reconnaissance photographer is now a photo journalist for Stars and Stripes in Japan. He makes a trip to Hiroshima and finds what total devastation has been left by the bomb. He takes pictures but upon returning to Tokyo the pictures are confiscated and he is fired from his job. I had high hopes for this read because I have read little about Japan after the bombing. It started off really good but then just kind of went to mediocre.

Charles says

An excellent account of Japan after the firebombing of Tokyo & the nuclear bombs & capitulation to the US. The story is told through several characters-Satsuko Takara & her brother Hiroshi who lose their parents & become separated- she will become a prostitute to survive, while Hiroshi becomes part of a child street gang; Hal Lynch who was a reconnaissance photographer for the USAF & becomes a photojournalist who tries to document the horror of Hiroshima & of the delayed radiation sickness which was being kept secret & denied by the authorities-but whose notes & photos are taken by the authorities & who is expelled from Japan & from his love Satsuko who cannot go to the US with him because her stint as a prostitute prevents her from getting a VISA(an agenda of the vengeful authorities he defied); Osamu Maruki a writer, once Satsuko's lover, but dysfunctional on his return from the front.

The horror of postwar Japan, and the heroic efforts to survive in the face of immense hardships is well put across. The hypocrisy of the Americans & the human face of the Japanese reveal the complexities of the situation-ie. good & bad on both sides.

Marina Sofia says

Depiction of defeated Japan after WW2, over-run by American GIs, lice, radiation sickness and prostitution. An eye-opening book, which does perhaps try to fit in too much, but stays clear of sentimentality.

Imtyrrell says

Outstanding read. I couldn't put this book down. Byrne leaves you hanging on the edge of your seat; deftly weaving his characters' war torn lives throughout the novel- so exquisitely, so heartfelt, with such detail and emotion....I fell in love many times over +over in this book, with his words, his protagonists, and his gorgeous story telling. Bravo !!!!

Lacy says

I'm always excited for Europa editions and this one did not disappoint. Byrne weaves together the lives of five characters in Japan following the end of WWII. A passage on the importance of shoes was particularly moving as a character longs for a pair of brown Oxfords to replace his boots from war. Byrne does a great job telling the story of what children's lives was like once the bombing and fires orphaned many children. One of the characters is an American reporter and we follow him as he attempts to learn the true effects of the atomic bomb.

Highly recommend this as an addition to WWII historical fiction.

Vivienne Strauss says

I was reluctant to read this but once I started, I couldn't put it down. Looking forward to more from this author.

Judy says

Fireflies is a well-written account of Japan after the drop of the atom bombs, told from several points of view. I found the author particularly sensitive to the conundrums of post war life, for Japanese citizens and also an American photographer attempting to tell the tale of Disease X, the existence of which was denied by The American army. I recommend this for anyone who wants to learn historical fact through the art of fiction.

Donia says

I would have preferred sticking with one character and one place in time. I can't get hooked into a story that jumps around from character to character setting to setting.

Aimee Mosseri says

The beautiful writing and sympathy for the characters pulled me into the book. At times I thought the character's voices could be more distinguished and certainly less archetypical (western), but overall it was well done.

Fiona says

Great social history novel set in Japan after the war. Found it hard to like and enjoy but it kept me hooked. Thanks JA
