



The Street of a Thousand Blossoms: A Novel

By Gail Tsukiyama

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It is Tokyo in 1939. On the Street of a Thousand Blossoms, two orphaned brothers dream of a future firmly rooted in tradition. The older boy, Hiroshi, shows early signs of promise at the national obsession of sumo wrestling, while Kenji is fascinated by the art of Noh theater masks.

But as the ripples of war spread to their quiet neighborhood, the brothers must put their dreams on hold and forge their own paths in a new Japan. Meanwhile, the two young daughters of a renowned sumo master find their lives increasingly intertwined with the fortunes of their father's star pupil, Hiroshi.

The Street of a Thousand Blossoms is a powerfully moving masterpiece about tradition and change, loss and renewal, and love and family from a glorious storyteller at the height of her powers.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In her ambitious sixth novel (*Dreaming Water; The Samurai's Garden*), Tsukiyama tackles life in Japan before, during and after WWII. The story follows brothers Hiroshi and Kenji Matsumoto through the devastation of war and the hardships of postwar reconstruction. Orphaned when their parents were killed in a boating accident, the boys are raised by their grandparents in Tokyo. In 1939, Hiroshi is 11 and dreams of becoming a sumo champion, and soon Kenji will discover his own passion, to become a master maker of Noh masks. Their grandparents, Yoshio and Fumiko Wada, are vividly rendered; the war years and early postwar years, centered in their home on the street of the novel's title, are powerfully portrayed. Hiroshi and Kenji reach pinnacles of success in their chosen fields as well as in love, and while Tsukiyama's close attention to historical and geographical detail enriches the narrative, she isn't as successful when describing Hiroshi's wrestling career; the matches all begin to blur together. The lingering effects of war, on the other hand, are clear, and these, combined with a nation's search for pride and hope after surrender comprise the novel's oversized heart. (*Sept.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Tsukiyama is a mesmerizing storyteller who focuses on family, tradition, and the solace of nature and art. Of both Chinese and Japanese descent, she has explored the history and culture of both lands, here imagining life in Japan during its most catastrophic time as experienced by the orphaned brothers Hiroshi and Kenji. Raised by their loving grandparents in Yanaka, a residential area of Tokyo, they are opposites. Big, strong, and confident, Hiroshi believes he is destined to be a sumo wrestler. Slight, quiet, and artistic, Kenji discovers his love for mask making and Noh theater by accident. They each secure mentors, but just as the good brothers embark on their demanding apprenticeships, war breaks out. Tsukiyama's spare prose reflects the clean-lined, distilled-to-the-essence aesthetic of Japanese art as she writes appreciatively and informatively about the arts of sumo and Noh, and piercingly about the horrific deprivations and tyranny of war, the firebombing of Tokyo, the American occupation, and the rapid evolution of modern Japan. As her endearing characters attempt to adjust to the new while preserving the old, Tsukiyama evokes a classic vision of a blasted world returning to life. Tsukiyama's historically detailed and plot-driven story of resilience, discipline, loyalty, and right action is popular fiction at its most intelligent, appealing, and rewarding.

Seaman, Donna

Review

“Tsukiyama has long been known for her emotional and detailed stories. This time, she has gone even deeper to explore what happens to ordinary people during frightening and tragic times.” *?Lisa See*

“A fascinating, intricate portrait of Japanese customs and rituals that ?oods the senses.” *?USA Today*

“Tsukiyama has the soul of a storyteller.” *?The Denver Post*

“A sweeping saga if ever there was one. . . . The spirit triumphant---whether of individuals or of nations---makes for an eternally rewarding theme.” *?The Washington Post Book World*

“[Tsukiyama's] Zen-like telling of the brothers' dramatic stories infuses this poignant tale with the essence of Japan.” *?Elle magazine*

“A writer of astonishing grace, delicacy, and feeling.” *?Michael Chabon, author of The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mark Gatling:

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Timmy Gallegos:

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