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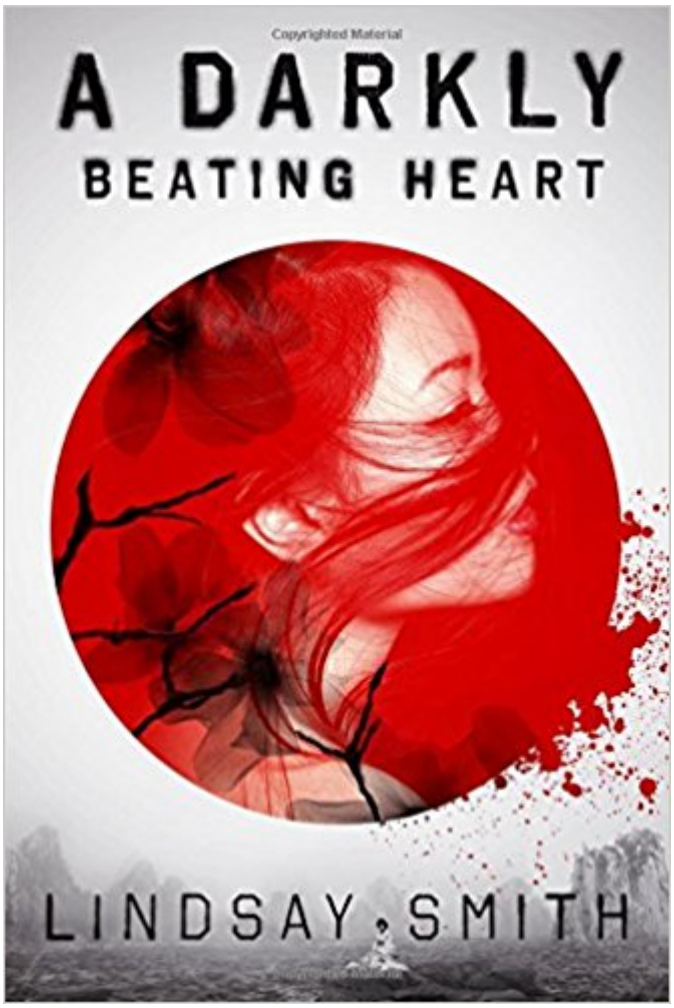
A Darkly Beating Heart



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Synopsis

A troubled girl confronts her personal demons in this time-travel thriller alternating between present day and 19th century Japan.No one knows how to handle Reiko. She is full of hatred; all she can think about is how to best hurt herself and those people closest to her. After a failed suicide attempt at her home in Seattle, Reiko's parents send her to spend the summer with family in Japan, hoping she will learn to control her emotions. But while visiting Kuramagi, a historic village preserved to reflect the nineteenth-century Edo period, Reiko finds herself slipping backward in time into the nineteenth-century life of Miyu, a young woman even more vengeful than Reiko herself. Reiko loves escaping into Miyu's life . . . until she discovers Kuramagi's dark secret and must face down Miyu's demons as well as her own.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Upâ ”After an unthinkable disaster occurs, Reiko's parents send her to live with her relatives in Japan to help launch her cousin's budding career in the Japanese entertainment scene. The change from Seattle to Tokyo fuels Reiko's resentment toward her family, and she spends her waking moments plotting her revenge against her parents, her brother, and now her cousin and coworkers. The young woman is filled to the brim with ideas of destruction and violence. Are these hateful feelings finally evidence that she has always been a true monster, or has something else taken hold of her? Smith weaves a unique tale of Japan and the paranormal in this work of vengeance and teen angst. She excels at transporting the protagonist and readers to a believable feudal Japanâ ”Smith has done her research about Japan during the Edo time period, and it is

impressive to see glimpses of the past so eloquently represented in a work of fiction. The author does not shy away from the darkness of a deeply depressed individual, frankly mentioning thoughts and attempts of suicide, self-harm, and assault, and uses these thoughts to successfully sustain a dark mood throughout. The portrayal of a non-Japanese-speaking Japanese American teen's sense of isolation in Japan seems authentic, though it takes a backseat to the paranormal parts of the novel. VERDICT Readers will enjoy this twisted ride, despite its slow start and overly tidy ending. However, with highly descriptive scenes of violence, it is not for the faintheartedâ ”DeHanza Kwong, Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, NC

"Intriguing. . . there is genuine spookiness in Reikoâ ™s slow discovery that her choices are not really her own, and readers will definitely want to see Miyu stopped.â •BCCB

I really enjoyed this book. Women in fiction are always expected to be sweet, the caretakers, etc. If they're troubled, then they're the 'strong, independent' type. Reiko's type of character is always relegated to villain, and usually has all the depth and interest of a wet sheet of paper. But Reiko was hella interesting. She's angry, she feels trapped and unappreciated, like the freak and loser everyone puts up with. Her parents are rigid, and their attitudes led to her and her brother treating each other horribly. She made impulsive choices, bad choices, and trapped herself in a dark spiral. I loved how the end played out, I really really did. This was a great example of unreliable narrator and I loved that to death.Women in society are always taught to be anything pretty much anything but angry. We bury it, choke on it, etc. The moment our anger comes out we're labeled crazy, overreacting, 'that time of the month' etc. So I loved seeing a young woman who was hurt and angry, for reasons right and wrong, and ultimately figured out how to deal with her problems on her own terms, in her own way.I also love and adore she's bisexual, and that it was never some awful, poorly-portrayed Issue that became the story rather than being a wonderfully done component of her story.I just really really loved this book, Reiko is a great character and I couldn't put the book down.

After letting it sit, this has become one of my favorite books of 2016. Amazing job and I really enjoyed Reiko and Miyu and all the work Lindsay put into creating the world and history between the two girls. Absolutely loved it.

bisexual Japanese American girl revenge thriller. A lot of anger. I love Reiko. More angry girls in

books please.

Combine angry and hurt girls + diversity + Japan setting (present and historical) + time travel + everything awesome, and you get the incredible A DARKLY BEATING HEART. From the first page, this gritty and dark novel consumes you, and it doesnÃ¢Â Â™t stop until the last page (and if youÃ¢Â Â™re me, youÃ¢Â Â™re still going to be thinking about it months after).There are few things I love more than a story that isnÃ¢Â Â™t afraid to get intense, specifically when talking about the protagonist. ReikoÃ¢Â Â™s journey is incredible, full of self discovery, pain, and finding hope. She starts the book suicidal, eager for vengeance, and eventually, obsessive about MiyuÃ¢Â Â™s life. She goes through a lot before she reaches where she needs to be, and her path will make you frustrated, leave you in tears, give you a few laughs, more than a few swoons, and overall, make you want to flip back to page one and follow her journey again.The writing is lush and brilliant, capturing modern day Japan and historical Japan wonderfully (and 10/10 will make you want to travel). The imagery is especially solid, and the visual descriptions paint a clear picture. This was my first Lindsay Smith novel, but I am absolutely going to go back and read her other books because of this incredible writing.Final Verdict:Evocative, powerful, and simply magnificent, Reiko and her story will tear into your heart and stay there for a long time.

I found this standalone tale to be extremely dark. I was a little wary of Reiko’s character at first, for the vengeful, murderous hatred growing in her twisted heart...not exactly a character I could imagine myself in the shoes of. This story starts out a little bit slow, but really picks up just before the middle, and as the end draws closer the pace seems to go even more quickly, a little rushed even. I feel that it ended a bit abruptly...I was literally shouting at the book, "Really?!?" I felt there could have been a bit more to the end. I digress though, as I did indeed enjoy the story. I found Reiko’s backstory to be interesting, as more of it unfolded with the story’s progression. I enjoyed whenever Reiko would slip back into Edo-period Japan to "inhabit" Miyu. I very much like Lindsay Smith’s fluid writing style...her descriptions and characterizations are incredible, and even though I couldn’t imagine myself in Reiko’s place, I easily imagined this story from a third person view in my mind. I found A Darkly Beating Heart to be a mostly enjoyable read. This YA Dark Fantasy was sent to me for my November Fantasy box through my subscription to BooklyBox. I’m glad that they chose this book, because now I’m interested in reading more by Lindsay Smith in the future. 4/5*

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