



A Darkly Beating Heart

Lindsay Smith

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A time-travel story that alternates between modern day and 19th century Japan as one girl confronts the darkness lurking in her soul.

No one knows what to do with Reiko. She is full of hatred. All she can think about is how to best hurt herself and the people closest to her. After a failed suicide attempt, Reiko's parents send her from their Seattle home to spend the summer with family in Japan to learn to control her emotions. But while visiting Kuramagi, a historic village preserved to reflect the nineteenth-century Edo period, Reiko finds herself slipping back in time into the life of Miyu, a young woman even more bent on revenge than Reiko herself. Reiko loves being Miyu, until she discovers the secret of Kuramagi village, and must face down Miyu's demons as well as her own.

A Darkly Beating Heart Details

Date : Published October 25th 2016 by Roaring Brook Press

ISBN : 9781626720442

Author : Lindsay Smith

Format : Hardcover 272 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Young Adult, Lgbt, Science Fiction, Time Travel, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review A Darkly Beating Heart for online ebook

Dana says

Crazy Emo Girl moves to Japan to....be more emo. Whilst contemplating her existence she happens upon a literal link to the past and finds herself in the body of a fellow emo girl from centuries past.

The story itself felt like it would have been better served as a short story as not much happened in this. It had potential but the ending felt rushed, almost lazy to me.

For a character to have a huge change of heart, in my opinion they should experience something worthy of said change. Sudden and random epiphanies don't ring true for me.

Buy, Borrow, or Bin Verdict: Bin

Check out more of my reviews [here](#)

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

Lyn *GLITTER VIKING* says

Wow. I really wasn't expecting so many of the twists and the sudden changes. I really ended up loving this more than I thought I would. Lots of love for an unlikable MC. I just wish that there were a few more consequences for some of the actions. But overall, pretty solid story about hate and revenge.

Molly says

Huge thank you to Macmillan for sending me an ARC of this book for review!

Okay, so I know that this book doesn't come out until October, but I HAD to read it as soon as I got it. For those of you who DON'T know, I lived in Japan for seven years and I generally find a lot of issues with YA books set in Japan. I've kinda taken it upon myself to read them and pick them apart. So I went into this book both excited and leary because I don't believe that the author has actually lived or even spent a significant amount of time LIVING in Japan (I did read her author's note and she went there for a vacation, I know).

That said I REALLY enjoyed this book. This is the story of a troubled Japanese-American girl who goes to Japan to stay with her Uncle and cousin while she tries to work out her issues. She's waiting to hear back from colleges and planning her own perfect revenge against... well you find out later on who and why, but for most of the book you just get glimpses at those who wronged her.

Reiko is an angry girl. She's a cutter (trigger warning) and she spends A LOT of time thinking about how she's going to kill herself and get revenge on her ex-girlfriend, brother, parents, and later this extends to her

cousin and friends. We find out that Reiko had a passionate relationship with a girl named Chloe who unleashed Reiko's dark artistic side. Reiko is swept up in Chloe's orbit and does things that she normally wouldn't, which later gets her into a lot of trouble.

While in Japan Reiko works for her Uncle's web design company and spends time with her cousin and the other employees who are also employed by the cousin, Akiko, who is trying to become a J-Pop idol. Akiko has her own lifestyle brand that she's trying to sell via her youtube channel, blog, cell phone novel and website. The other employees are basically her entourage as she tries to find ways to get her name out there. And Akiko's boyfriend, who is a washed up idol himself, gets Akiko a gig at a culture festival in a remote Japanese village.

So the group travels to Kuramagi village where Reiko is swept away to another time, the Edo period, where she inhabits the body of a young woman who is filled with her own rage and revenge plots. Reiko loves being in Miyu's body and feeling all of Miyu's hate. At first, when Reiko time travels, she thinks that her antidepressants are making her crazy and she gets rid of them. But we later find out that something much more sinister is happening, something that happens every year at the festival, something that the village is desperately trying to stop.

So the story was good, I really enjoyed it. As for the writing I thought that the whole "I walk the path of vengeance, I must get my revenge" parts were a LITTLE heavy handed. Like, we got it, Reiko is angry. And while I liked the glimpses of what had happened, and we do get the full story by the end, I was sometimes frustrated that I didn't have a full picture and was just filling in gaps and wasn't quite sure if I was even right.

As for the Japanese aspects a lot of them were pitch perfect. My only two nitpicks are:

1. Why in the world did Smith keep using the word "pallet" for a futon!? This boggled my mind to no end. She uses TONS of Japanese words (well) in the text with either direct translation or translation that follows not too long after. But the entire time they were sleeping on "pallets". And I really don't see why the word futon wasn't just used, defined, and then used for the rest of the book.
2. Names. In Japan it's Surname followed by Given name. There are many different honorifics that are used much like Mr/Mrs, Sir/Ma'am etc. Usually these name conventions fall away around foreigners. In the group and at work they should have ALL been referring to each other by Last name + san. Instead they all use first names. I chalked this up to them being around Reiko and falling out of the convention because of her, but from my own experiences even around myself the Japanese people (especially while speaking Japanese) would not have used first names. So while Reiko was being called Reiko and using everyone's first names, Akiko would NOT have been calling Kenji by his first name unless they were VERY good friends and even then she probably should have added "kun".

And then in the Edo period it was very odd that everyone was again using first names. Especially for Miyu who was so hated. And she would not have called Jiro by his first name from the very start. I'm not even sure if she would have used it after they got closer.

So yeah, those were my only two real issues. The rest of the Japan stuff felt very authentic and true to my experiences as well as those around myself. I enjoyed that Smith didn't get too heavy with the "weird" Japan and that she really seemed to have a grasp on the lifestyle brand culture that Akiko was going for. Major props.

ak says

So I beta read this for Lindsay because it's about a Japanese American bisexual girl who goes to Japan and doesn't speak Japanese. In other words: it me.

I loved this story. I love Reiko who was angry angry angry in a way I've never seen any girl in any book be and certainly never any Japanese girl (because we're all submissive AMIRITE????). Reiko's struggle with language and culture when she first shows up in Japan is something that resonated strongly with me.

My main quibble with the book is not something Lindsay has control over and is a publishing world problem not a book problem: I hate italicizing "foreign" words. HATE IT. Watch Daniel Jose Older about why <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24gCI...>

mith says

(hiya guys, you can also read my review on my blog if that's what you're into xo)

This book was weird. Not necessarily a bad weird, but not necessarily a good weird either.

I'm actually very conflicted on how (what, I suppose) I feel about this book. On one hand, it was a unique and refreshing read, something I'd never come across before. On the other, certain aspects of the story, such as characterisation and plot, kind of irked me.

Reiko is an angry girl. Things haven't gone well for her in the past and things aren't going well for her now. Ever since her ex girlfriend "dumped" her and got her in trouble, Reiko has been seeking revenge. And thinking about her death a lot, constantly saying it has to mean something.

When her cousin forces her to go to Kuramagi, a sleepy if old-fashioned, village, some weird stuff begins to happen. Because she's not Reiko, she's Miyu. And it isn't the modern world, it's the nineteenth century.

I don't know how many times I'm going to say this in the review, but Reiko is angry. Like, unhealthy angry. Like, I'm going to remind you twice, maybe four times, just how angry I am. And it doesn't even come off as edgy--it comes off as annoying.

I get it. Life's dealt you a fair amount of shit and you sure as hell don't want to just take it. You're in a country full of your history and you don't know the language. You're surrounded by people you hate with every fibre in your being. You hate your parents for not caring, your brother for not being there, your ex for being horrible.

But it got repetitive. It got strange. It got unnecessarily dramatic. It had me both eyeing the page oddly or rolling my eyes. Reiko came off as a really unlikeable main character which makes me sad because it's not everyday where you meet a character like her. I mean, sure, you meet those full of revenge, but I was hoping Reiko would be a different character. And in the end, she was, but it wasn't a good kind.

You find out more about Reiko's past as the story progresses and that was kind of weird, seeing as how Reiko also spends time as Miyu. I sort of understood why Reiko used Miyu as an escape, but at the same

time, she just continually made things worse for her and for Miyu. Both girls are pretty fucked up but Reiko kind of just got free reign when she was Miyu. She made some questionable decisions and well, I did like that she thought about what she'd done after she got back to herself, but it was still a stupid move.

Also, I kind of expected a bit more from the time travel aspect of the story. It was just simply going back and forth between modern time and the Edo period and that just didn't interest me enough.

And that ending. What the hell? It was so abrupt, so quick and for a character who imagined blood running down her hands and everyone around her dying, that cookie-cutter ending was just a bad call. Everything was suddenly explained and everything went well and it literally made no sense to me.

So, overall, 2.5 stars.

Amanda says

All reviews are first found on [a cup of tea and an armful of books].

This is a book I wrote off as one I'd have to read after it was published. I was pleasantly surprised when I was given an ARC by the publisher and NetGalley, so this became an unexpected October read. Perfect for Halloween, because the book deals with a lot of darkness. *A Darkly Beating Heart* is going to be published next week, so now is the perfect time for a review.

(I love this cover.)

Reiko didn't go to Japan to enjoy herself. Packing herself away to a country where she doesn't speak the language, Reiko allows the rage she has inside about the events preceding her senior year to fester.

Consumed by thoughts of revenge, she manages day by day only because she is planning how to best get back at everyone. Comfortable with her routine, when her summer job requires her to go to an Edo-period town in Gifu prefecture, Reiko initially believes that leaving Tokyo is the worst thing that could have happened. It throws all of her revenge plans out the window.

Finding herself in a town with a curfew and deeply-rooted traditions, Reiko struggles with maintaining her revenge plot and coping with the anger that fills her head. Then she discovers a long-forgotten makeshift temple. It pulls Reiko back into the past into a time period rife with dangers. The connection that she feels with Miyu is immediate, her anger even more explosive than Reiko's. But Miyu is keeping things from Reiko. And if Reiko doesn't discover them in time, it's not just Miyu's time that will be affected.

This is a book that is odd to review. Lindsay Smith writes beautifully; the scenes she creates are so vivid that it's very easy to see them in my mind's eye. The setting just jumps off the page. Of course, it helps that I live in Japan. This book isn't one that is "set in Japan," where the setting isn't realized. This setting is, and I loved it. This would have made me really nostalgic for Japan had I already moved back.

The world of modern day Tokyo and that of the Edo period were so clearly written that I had a very easy time picturing them. I'm such a fan of the Edo period of Japan that I was thrilled to read a story set in it. Or half set in it. Reiko is connected to both, and the differences and similarities in the town she finds herself in—and the times—is done really well. I liked how they both kept getting closer together and the connections that were being discovered. Despite the speed of the plot, the setting was built slowly and when it made

sense for the readers to be given the information.

The writing itself is stunning. Each page seemed to have a beautiful description of a place or a spot on look at Japan or the characters that Reiko was spending time with. I was incredibly impressed with Smith's writing style. It wasn't too flowery or unnecessarily bogged down with details that didn't matter. It was an absolute pleasure to read. When I first started reading this I was sure that I would love the book. However, beautiful writing is not the only thing I look for in a book.

That isn't to say the story or premise wasn't interesting. I just found that I was more interested in the Edo period parts rather than the modern day parts. While both are incredibly detailed, I've found that historical fiction novels are increasingly becoming some of my favorite books to read. I understand why the plot was divided between the two times, but I ended up wishing that the novel was completely set in the Edo period and was about Miyu. That was the story I was really interesting in. Whenever it switched back to Reiko's point of view in the modern day, I was tempted to skim a little in order to get back to her.

The connection of the past to the present in this little Gifu town was done really well. There are a lot of places in Japan that place importance on the past, but Kuramagi takes it to the extreme. Something isn't quite right about this town. They bury power lines (which actually does happen in some of these Edo-period towns), have a curfew, and place an emphasis on keeping the town as period correct as they are able. I liked that the town was the center of why the two different time periods were converging. I just felt like a great story was rushed.

A Darkly Beating Heart is a relatively short story, and that is where it fell a little flat for me. Because it's short, a plot that I personally think should have been drawn out more feels rushed and half realized. In a book where the setting, writing, and emotions of the protagonist are written so well, a rushed plot (especially one that is actually really interesting) was disappointing. I did appreciate the element of Reiko missing half of Miyu's story—I enjoyed that she only knew what she learned when she was in Miyu's body and had to figure out what she had missed when the story had progressed without her—but ultimately I thought that it jumped back and forth too much without giving readers enough information about the two time periods and the conflicts in them.

I thought that the way that Reiko was pulled back into the past was really well done. There's always an element of eeriness that I have when I go into a book that involves some form of time traveling, but I thought that the two story lines and the different time periods were perfectly intertwined. The time travel remained consistent throughout the story and it wasn't made overly complicated just for the sake of making it complicated. More is revealed as Reiko shares a body with Miyu and becomes more comfortable with the past and I appreciated the effort that Smith made to show that there are consequences for every action.

Reiko as a character is...interesting. The entire time she is plotting revenge: on her family, the people around her, her former girlfriend. Things have happened to her that are given to readers IV drip like, and that was part of my eagerness to read. I really wanted to know where all this anger came from, because I have never read a book where the protagonist is this angry. It was really uncomfortable at times because Reiko is constantly thinking about harming herself and others. Yet, I found myself continuing the book, despite this darkness. Her anger wasn't swept under the rug when it became inconvenient or when the novel ended. She is able to work through some things but also realizes that her life is far from perfect. But she learns how to manage her anger even as she still has it.

It makes sense that she connected so quickly with Miyu because of her anger. Miyu also functions as a way for Reiko to understand that holding in all of that rage will consume her to the point of no return. Although

Miyu is also a different character, because they shared had shared experiences I felt like they were the same. That's a reason why I wish the book had been longer. I think it would have benefited the plot to explore more of what Miyu was going through.

Smith also had a handle on the sometimes dual nature of those who are bilingual. Reiko overemphasized the negative nature of bilingual characters because she is so blinded by her rage. Moments where Reiko is treated kindly (in English) but later is treated cruelly or like a child (in Japanese) is unfortunately familiar, though rare. This is an element of passive-aggressiveness that foreigners sometimes experience. However, I do think that Reiko is being overly judgemental and Akiyo and Mariko are viewed harshly through this lens of anger she has. Reiko reconciles with this issue by the end of the novel, suggesting that much of her interactions with these characters had been so tainted by anger that she wasn't getting a proper read on them. There was closure with the promise to try harder to resist these moments in the future.

A Darkly Beating Heart had amazing words that had it sitting at a 5 star rating. Due to the rushed nature of the plot and what I believe could have been a longer story, I'm rating it a bit lower than that. I really recommend this for readers because it does have a very vivid setting and an interesting story that is plotted well. The only caveat I give is to be prepared for Reiko. Maybe I don't read many stories with dark protagonists, but her nature was hard to read at times. She had a lot of issues that were very serious and may turn off some readers.

3 stars.

I received a copy of *A Darkly Beating Heart* from NetGalley and the publisher. *A Darkly Beating Heart* will be published on October 25th, 2016.

Ava says

Ooh! I liked this one. I didn't love it, which is why the rating is as it is, but I would definitely recommend it. It's unlike anything I've read before. Featuring a bisexual Japanese-American (I think? I'll check) protagonist with self harm issues and set in Japan, *A DARKLY BEATING HEART* is dark. It's violent. But it's intriguing enough that you can't put it down. RTC.

Caleb Roehrig says

A DARKLY BEATING HEART offered me a lot of exactly what I look for in a good, spine-tingling YA thriller: an intriguing protagonist, a unique plot, and beautiful prose -- in particular, Lindsay Smith delivers in spades on this last item. Her style fills this book with compelling imagery and atmosphere, making even the downbeats contribute to the sense of consistently growing tension as the story progresses.

The main character, Reiko Azumi, is a hard and brittle person -- a girl with a lot of damage, who reacts with anger to even the slightest of provocations. I LOVE characters like this. Dark, barbed, and antisocial, she is deliberately difficult to like in the traditional sense; but from page one, Smith engages the reader in Reiko's entrenched resentfulness, making you care about her, and making you like her in large part because she *isn't* soft or warm or uncomplicated. There's a pernicious mentality in YA lit that expects female characters to fall in line with the Manic Pixie Dreamgirl trope, and it is so, so refreshing to find a heroine (antiheroine?) that is

all unapologetic sharp edges and messy internal conflict. It's also really great to see a bisexual protagonist whose attraction to both men and women is explored with frankness and accuracy.

Last but not least, I cannot say enough about how thoroughly Smith immerses her reader in HEART's fantastic setting. She really brings Japan to life on every page, both in the contemporary parts of the novel and the scenes set in its Edo-period history. As someone who lives to travel and craves writing that transports me to new places, this was such a rewarding read.

joey (thoughts and afterthoughts) says

Nope.

Made it 124 pages in. Not enough was happening and it felt as though there was a degree of information being withheld from the reader (aside from the continual reminders of anger) which deterred the overall reading experience in getting behind the protagonist. Additionally, the inclusion of the the setting re: English romanization of Japanese phrases was a bit much and rather a catch-22 situation; to include felt weeaboo-ish and to not include it might see the lack thereof of "Japanese" context (aside from structural world building).

I tried.

-- I read the ARC. Full review to come.

Rashika (is tired) says

*****This review has also been posted on Xpresso Reads**

I don't write in books and have become too lazy to keep an actual notepad by my side while I am reading but recently I decided that I wanted to do a better job of keeping track of my feels so when I write a review two weeks after I've read the book, I have something to jog up my memory. Sticky Notes were the answer. And while I did not tab the shit out of this book (or really any book because I am more of a reader than a note taker), I did tab a scene in this book and write OMG!!!

You were probably wondering where I was going with the whole insight into my reading process thing weren't you? I AM SORRY. I felt like backstory was important just so you could kind of begin to understand the kind of book *A Darkly Beating Heart* is. One that inspires OMG!!! stickies.

Reiko is an unlikable MC. I did not like her for most of the book because she is not a nice person. She does not do nice things and has hurt people in the past just because she believed it was justified. To be fair, she has been wronged a whole lot in her short life but her approach to making things 'even' is NOT the best. The thing is, Reiko IS a well-written character. Even when it seems impossible to support or justify her cruelty, it is easy to understand her and see that underneath all the awfulness, she is just a girl who has been hurt by people who she should have been able to count on.

This however is not the story of how Reiko realizes that she needs to deal with her feelings in a healthy way, at least not at first. Reiko's parents ship her off to Japan to stay with her relatives for the summer and hope

that the change might help her feel less hatred in her heart. That doesn't quite work because when Reiko and a bunch of people are visiting the village of Kuramagi, Reiko gets transported into the life of Myu, a girl living in 1862 who has even more anger issues than Reiko does. Instead of being a tad terrified by Myu, Reiko is comforted by the anger and finds herself seeking out this alternative life more and more until well... that would be a spoiler.

A Darkly Beating Heart does have a PNR element to it and the transition into 'believing' is actually beautiful. Reiko is completely thrown off when she is transported in time but she connects the dots little by little and in a realistic manner so it was easy to believe her and even easier to get behind the whole time travel aspect (because the way it works in this book is a little odd). For those of you who like a little bit more sci-fic in your time travel and less paranormal, you might have that aspect of the book a tad unsatisfying because it isn't really explained. It kind of just happens and to immerse yourself in the book you have to let go of the fact that there is no real reason for why she is being transported in time (there is a pnr explanation but not anything more grounded in science.)

There is a slight romance factor to the book that is important in some ways. Reiko has a crush on a girl who works at their bed & breakfast and when Reiko is Miyu she is in love with this dude (I am so good with names. I remember everythingggg.) **BASICALLY** Reiko has a love interest but no real romance which makes sense because Reiko really isn't ready to be in a relationship since she really cannot relate to other people.

The best part about this book is the plot. I say this as a plot person though and there are LOTS of things to appreciate about this book. I love that *A Darkly Beating Heart* doesn't necessarily fit into one genre category. Its got time travel, a little bit of a mystery, a coming of age, HORROR! The various elements work well together without losing their essence (I totally feel like I am judging food right now) and are combined perfectly. I LOVE the nail-biting, fast-paced nature of this book and I love the horror aspect that makes me want to curl into a ball but most of all, I love the journey of Reiko as a character (does this make me a character person? WHAT? I am a confused banana).

I do feel like this review is turning into a rambling mess so I am going to stop BUT you should definitely check this book out when it is out in the world and hopefully you'll love it as much as I did.

Note that I received an advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Chelsea says

Really dark and twisted Japanese time travel story.

Looking for diversity in all forms? This is the book for you. We follow self-harming, suicidal, bisexual, Japanese-American, Reiko in this story. Did that cover all forms of diversity? I believe so.

Reiko is one angry chick. She would have all ready offed herself if she didn't want her death to exact some serious vengeance on those who have wronged her and brought her to this point. Serious wrath there. So obviously we are dealing with some tough mental issues in this story about a 16 year old girl who, after a dramatic break up with her art camp girlfriend and some serious offense committed by her older army brother, is shipped off to her relatives in Japan to sort her shit out. (I'm going to leave that run on sentence in there as a tribute to my third grade self...get all the thoughts out in one breath tiny Chelsea!)

While in Japan she follows her aspiring J-Pop star cousin around to video shoots and is all around mopey and dismal. When they go to a music festival in a small and run down town she somehow transports herself back into the body of Miyu, another angry 16 year old girl in the Edo period of Japan. After experiencing both her own miserable life and the lifestyle of a teenage girl who has brought shame upon her family in 19th century Japan she decides exactly how she wants to exact her revenge in her own life and attempt to continue on as Miyu. As her plan progress we learn more about what made Reiko the way she is and that Miyu may not be the better option and is in fact an even more bitter person than herself.

Eery, dismal and off-putting, this story claws its way into your head and spits you out on the other side in the best possible way. I know this review makes it sound like a terrible experience but it haunts you when you're not reading it and it was also short enough to not push you into your own mental cycle. Satisfying ending and innovative short(?) story concept.

ALEXA says

I'm torn between a 3.25-3.5 stars. While the story in this novel is something I could totally see as an anime, it is actually Reiko that I found super interesting. She's angry and confused and hellbent on revenge for the stuff she's gone through, and while it made her very prickly, it made me curious about who she was. It does resolve a bit too quickly, and it plays out in a way that I guessed out. But I found it impossible to stop (unless I had to), and I liked the depiction of Japan, and I thought it was a very different read :)

Emily May says

"I am nothingness. An empty vessel. The core of me is rotted away, and I can never get it back. There's nothing left to fill me but anger. There's nothing left for me to sense but pain."

1 1/2 stars. **What a weird, weird book.** And not in a good way.

A Darkly Beating Heart is about Reiko, a bisexual, American-born daughter of Japanese parents. As we are repeatedly told, she is "full of hatred" and longs for revenge. The book opens with Reiko in Tokyo, Japan, where she has been sent to deal with her issues after attempting to hurt herself. Seems like questionable parenting to me, but whatever. When she visits the historic (and fictional) village of Kuramagi, she finds herself pulled back in time into the life of Miyu - someone whose lust for revenge may be even greater than her own.

Smith spends the first 10% of the book listing every Japanese stereotype and buzzword you can possibly imagine. *Ramen, sushi, karaoke, manga, chopsticks, pachinko, Asahi beer, J-pop, playstation, kimonos, more ramen, sake, ikemen, cosplay, kawaii, shinto shrines, gyoza, white gloves, Gothic Lolitas, Final Fantasy, Malice Mizer, ema prayer boards, Suntory Boss, platform boots...*

It's very awkward. It feels like the attempts of an American author to convince an American audience that the book is set in Japan. Rather like Kristoff's Stormdancer, though maybe worse. I'm not Japanese and have never been to Japan, but I find it very hard to believe that everyone just eats ramen and sushi (or sashimi) and drinks sake. Every single day. Oh, and Reiko's father works in tech, obviously.

But I think I could have overlooked that. The worst thing, for me, was how **comically melodramatic Reiko's narrative is**. The book doesn't give us reasons for anything for a long time; we are simply reminded every few pages that Reiko is burning with rage or some other dark/fiery/bloody metaphor for anger. She's unlikable and super angsty. Between her violent artwork and her like for black metal music, there's something so **simplistic and cartoonish** about her villainy.

"I will master Hideki's path of vengeance. I will make everyone listen to the dark pounding of my heart."

"So what if I like boys and girls? What if I don't like anyone at all?" The darkness flashes through me - the rivers and rivers of blood. I raise my hand in front of me and imagine it drenched in red.

Jeez. Calm thyself, oh angsty one. The atmosphere of the book simply isn't dark enough to carry Reiko's inner narrative. It feels out of place and just kind of funny.

As I touched upon above, very little is given up for a long time. I'm not a fan of most books that keep the reader completely in the dark until the very end - it's not compelling to me. I found it hard to care about Reiko when I had no idea why she was seething with hatred and plotting the deaths of everyone around her. And - to be honest - I still feel her reactions to be melodramatic and unwarranted.

Everything is revealed in the last few chapters and the story ends rather abruptly. It's messy, and some things were too neatly tied up without being adequately addressed. For such a dramatic book, it was hard to believe it could just end like that.

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Dahlia says

Holy shit, this was so dark and *so* good. Obv I'm friends with the author etc. etc. but let's not pretend that always results in super book love. I pulled the "Just five more minutes!!" with this one about a billion times because it is just *so* compelling and unique and the two storylines interweave so well so that you're dying to know what's gonna happen next on both sides, and oh man as obsessed as I am with *Sekret* I think this miiiight be my new #1 Lindsay book. (Also, I've never been to Japan but I felt phenomenally well transported, which is my personal reading crack.)

Sabrina says

Checkout my full review on my blog!! <http://omgbooksandmorebooks.blogspot....>

I loved how dark this book is. The main character, Reiko, is brewing her own darkness and destruction. She was the master of her own downfall and she wanted to fall. But she wanted to bring everyone else with her. I loved how this book alternates between modern day Japan and Imperial Japan. After taking a humanities class all about East Asia, I was thrilled to read *A Darkly Beating Heart*, and I was not disappointed. Though the beginning was a bit slow but the middle and ending really picked up. I was flying through the pages

towards the end. Miyu was an interesting twist to the story. She is full of rage and revenge, like Reiko. However, Miyu is a spirit that has inhabited others who share her rage and revenge. I found this aspect quite fascinating. Overall I really enjoyed this one. It is the perfect standalone about a girl wanting her revenge.
