



The Samurai's Garden: A Novel

By Gail Tsukiyama

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The daughter of a Chinese mother and a Japanese father, Tsukiyama uses the Japanese invasion of China during the late 1930s as a somber backdrop for her unusual story about a 20-year-old Chinese painter named Stephen who is sent to his family's summer home in a Japanese coastal village to recover from a bout with tuberculosis. Here he is cared for by Matsu, a reticent housekeeper and a master gardener. Over the course of a remarkable year, Stephen learns Matsu's secret and gains not only physical strength, but also profound spiritual insight. Matsu is a samurai of the soul, a man devoted to doing good and finding beauty in a cruel and arbitrary world, and Stephen is a noble student, learning to appreciate Matsu's generous and nurturing way of life and to love Matsu's soulmate, gentle Sachi, a woman afflicted with leprosy.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set in Japan just before WWII, Tsukiyama's novel tells of a young Chinese man's encounters with four locals while he recuperates from tuberculosis.

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From Library Journal

Seventeen-year-old Stephen leaves his home in Hong Kong just as the Japanese are poised to invade China. He is sent to Tarumi, a small village in Japan, to recuperate from tuberculosis. His developing friendship with three adults and a young woman his own age brings him to the beginnings of wisdom about love, honor, and loss. Given the potentially interesting subplot (the story of a love triangle doomed by the outbreak of leprosy in the village) and the fascinating period in which the book is set, this second novel by the author of *Women of the Silk* (St. Martin's, 1991) has the potential to be a winner. Unfortunately, it is sunk by a flat, dull prose style, one-dimensional characters who fail to engage the reader's interest, and the author's tendency to tell rather than show. Libraries with comprehensive fiction collections might consider, but others can pass.

Nancy Pearl, Washington Ctr. for the Book, Seattle

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From [Booklist](#)

Praised for her lovely first novel, *Women of the Silk* (1991), Tsukiyama has extended herself even further and written an extraordinarily graceful and moving novel about goodness and beauty. The daughter of a Chinese mother and a Japanese father, Tsukiyama uses the Japanese invasion of China during the late 1930s as a somber backdrop for her unusual story about a 20-year-old Chinese painter named Stephen who is sent to his family's summer home in a Japanese coastal village to recover from a bout with tuberculosis. Here he is cared for by Matsu, a reticent housekeeper and a master gardener. Over the course of a remarkable year, Stephen learns Matsu's secret and gains not only physical strength, but also profound spiritual insight. Matsu is a samurai of the soul, a man devoted to doing good and finding beauty in a cruel and arbitrary world, and Stephen is a noble student, learning to appreciate Matsu's generous and nurturing way of life and to love Matsu's soul mate, gentle Sachi, a woman afflicted with leprosy. Tsukiyama is a wise and spellbinding storyteller. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lawrence Gregory:

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