



## Dreamlands

*Felicitas Ivey*

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In one terror-filled moment, prisoner Keno Inuzaka is being attacked, and in the next, he's standing in the Dreamlands, a mirror of ancient Japan. To his surprise, he finds shelter in the magical world among strangers who swiftly become comrades.

Among them is Samojirou Aboshi, a handsome scholar who treats Keno with unexpected care and respect while openly pursuing his affections. To Samojirou, Keno is the embodiment of perfection, a man who could be his companion and lover forever.

When Samojirou offers him life and love as his companion, Keno realizes he may have finally found a home... but all that is threatened when a commando team from the real world arrives to steal the power of the Dreamlands and Keno's chance for a future of his own choosing.

## Dreamlands Details

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Author : Felicitas Ivey

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## From Reader Review Dreamlands for online ebook

### Sandra says

**4.5 stars** I was pretty excited for this one because the plot reminded me of Inuyasha... and I wasn't disappointed!

It starts from the POV of Mason, so of course my first thought is, "who the *fuck* is Mason." But don't worry, it'll all make sense. They easily could have given us a million POV's and I am *so* glad they didn't. It's just our two MC's, and then Mason for the added real world perspective. I hope we get more of him in book 2!

There's very little sex in this, although a lot of mention of rape and abuse. Despite how it initially seems when Tamazusa-sama presents Keno to Samojiro, he treats him with kid gloves and is so incredibly sweet. I really enjoyed watching their relationship develop.

I enjoyed all the feudal-Japan type stuff, and wasn't bored while Keno spent some quite time in the Dreamlands. I felt the cultural stuff was explained well without giving an info dump. Most honorifics, titles, or words were given a brief description when first mentioned, and then we moved on. It was done perfectly.

A great mix on fantasy, historical Japan, and science fiction (with the Stargate-esk pseudo-government group). My one complaint is probably that the Trust was a little too evil on a person-to-person basis. When they caught Keno hacking their database, wouldn't they say, "look, you can join us, or die," and then treat him like any other fucking employee. It was never really explained why he was a prisoner and treated *so poorly*, especially from people like McGann. So that was a little too convenient. But I'm glad we're going to keep up with Trust and hopefully see the few good guys again.

Small Warning: at the end there is a glossary, character list, and the first chapter of book two, so the actual story ends about 20 pages before the end of the eBook.

*Received from the publisher in exchange for an honest review, reviewed for Hearts On Fire*

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### Eneida Sanchez says

3.5 out of 5 Stars

Well well well!!

I can say that this book took me by surprise. First off I have a very slutty mind. If it's not Erotica then I aint reading it lol but for some reason I was very interested in this book. I got it then put it off for a couple of days and then when I finally started it I couldn't find it in myself to stop.

The Japanese story originated from a Japanese author named Kyoukutei Bakin who wrote the story from 1814-1842 which was named "Nansô Satomi Hakkenden" which translates to "Legend of the Eight Dog Heroes of the Satomi Clan of Nansô". I also watched a anime twice over named "Hakkenden : Eight dogs of the east" that surrounded the Satomi Hakkenden writings. Very good anime. High recommend it. Two seasons for those interested.

Back to business, as I said I have a very slutty mind but this story progressed so well and so smoothly that I didn't really care about sex scenes. The attraction between Keno aka Sakura-chan and Samojirou wasn't off the charts steaming where your just screaming "AHHHH COULD YA'LL JUST FUCK ALREADY AND PUT A END TO THIS TORTURE!!" Lol no it was very well laid out and I can tell that the deed is not really that far off but it also isn't close to home. I'm am so looking forward to some Keno/Aboshi loving!!

Other than that little kink I really enjoyed the plot of the story. I can't lie when I say I really fucking loved Mason!! Cause Omg his no shit attitude had me laughing tears lmaoo He's pretty much my twin in that department. It was really amusing to watch his reactions to things.

Another thing is Wolf needs to stop being so blind and open his eyes. Yeah I can see his country might have been more peaceful but it aint like that in America bud. Most people are pieces of shit and I feel like he just needs to accept not everyone is made of gold.

Also Keno is a strong character but he hides behind his tears way to much. I look forward to seeing him grow but if he doesn't and he persist with the whiny bullshit I can't see myself finishing this series.

Better descriptions would also be appreciated. Such as eye color, build, height, weight, and appearance. I feel like the descriptions were pretty vague here. All we mostly got was Tall, long hair and a mean eyes type of description. That doesn't really give a picture tbh. But they plot pretty much took you away from everything that was missing.

All in all I'd give this book a 3.5 out of 5 Stars. It sucks I couldn't give a full 5 stars but maybe we'll have better luck in the next book.

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### **LG (A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions) says**

I pretty much flew through the first half of this book. I loved the balance between the fairly dark storyline involving the Trust and Samojirou's attempts to win Keno's trust. I loved pretty much everything that went on in the Dreamlands: the way Tamazusa and Samojirou interacted, Keno getting used to his new life in the Dreamlands, and Keno slowly building up confidence as Sakura.

Since there are many, many authors I am unfamiliar with in the e-book world, my e-book buying strategies have gone something like this: make a list of all books that have a style of cover art I like, read reviews of those books, and then read the excerpts of any books that are still in my wishlist after I read reviews. Yes, my very first step involves judging books by their covers - it was the easiest way to come up with a short list of e-books to potentially buy, because so many e-books have covers that don't appeal to me.

Being a manga and anime fan, manga and anime inspired e-book cover art is almost guaranteed to put a book on my initial list. That's how things went with *Dreamlands*. The reviews I read indicated that the book would have some things I might like, but I was a little worried when I read that *Dreamlands* featured first person perspective, alternating from three different characters' perspectives. First person from one person's perspective is hard enough for a lot of authors - first person from three different characters' perspective seemed like a recipe for disaster. I read All Romance's excerpt, which gave me a taste of Ivey's writing from each of the three perspectives, Mason, Samojirou, and Keno, and decided I was willing to give this book a chance.

At first, I didn't mind the first person perspective, and even kind of liked it. Mason, Samojirou, and Keno all had very distinct perspectives. Mason was basically a good guy, but hardened by his experiences in prison and working for the Trust. He didn't have a whole lot of power in the organization, but he still wanted to do what he could for Keno, feeling guilty about his part in Keno's imprisonment, even though his only other choice would have been to kill 15-year-old Keno. Samojirou, too, was not an innocent, although he was a more subtle person overall than Mason. For a good portion of the story, Keno was frightened and damaged, having been raped just prior to the start of the book. He had been kept prisoner for over 4 years and, after being given to Samojirou as a gift, expected even more mistreatment.

In the second half of the book, particularly after Keno and Fuse were kidnapped, I became more intensely aware of just how bad a choice Ivey made when she decided to write the book in the first person. For one thing, it resulted in a lot of repetition. Often, the time periods covered by characters' perspectives overlapped a little. Sometimes this worked out very well - I enjoyed getting to see "Sakura" from Mason's perspective, before he knew that Sakura was Keno, and then getting to see the same scenes again from Keno or Samojirou's eyes.

Other times, however, I felt like the perspective choice didn't really add anything to the story and just resulted in me having to read about the same scene or about the same sort of things again for no particular reason. For example, there was one character who had a habit of making snide comments about Tamazusa and others in Russian. Samojirou picked up on this. So did Mason. In fact, in one part of the book, Mason noticed and was annoyed by the snide comments at least twice within just a few paragraphs. It got to the point where I started wishing Tamazusa would kill her, just so that I wouldn't have to read about yet another character noticing, once again, that she was saying something insulting (and incredibly stupid, considering she was without a weapon and completely at Tamazusa's mercy).

First person perspective always puts limits on what an author can show the reader. Three people might seem like more than enough to get over this particular problem, but did you read my synopsis? Some of these characters have incredibly complex pasts. Tamazusa and Fuse's entire histories were related as stories told to Mason or Keno. At least Samojirou's perspective was one of the three used, so his past with his former lover was worked into the book a bit better. I could barely follow along during the parts about Fuse and Tamazusa's pasts.

And, since I'm on the subject of confusion, I might as well mention that I'm still not sure what an avatar is - at first, I thought "avatar" meant "one of Fuse's sons, reborn," but then a couple of Fuse's sons (all their names start with Inu - don't ask me to remember who's who) met their avatars, so obviously that's not the case.

While I enjoyed the storyline involving the Trust, up to a point, I would have loved it if the book had showed Samojirou and Keno interacting more. For me, some of the strongest scenes in the book were the ones where Keno and Samojirou were getting to know each other and keeping each other company. I was really surprised when Keno began learning how to become a woman named Sakura - I don't think any of the reviews I read mentioned cross-dressing, or, if they did, that detail slipped my mind - but once I got over the shock I actually found that I liked Keno better when he was Sakura. Keno as Keno was tense and frightened. Keno as Sakura was more confident and relaxed. Although I've read a lot of manga and watched a lot of anime that features cross-dressing, I don't think I've ever read a book in which one of the main characters cross-dresses. I thought Ivey handled it well, and I hope that the next book features more scenes with Samojirou and Keno/Sakura.

Don't expect this book to have much in the way of sex - I think there's only one scene that qualifies as a sex

scene. By the end of the book, Keno is still limited in what he's willing to do with Samojirou, even though he trusts him and knows Samojirou won't purposefully hurt him the way his rapist did. *Dreamlands* focuses much more on the emotional aspects of Keno and Samojirou's relationship, rather than the physical.

Overall, this book was...frustrating. I wish I could say it was a really wonderful book. I think it could have been, had some things been handled differently. Some aspects of the story were extremely complex and, as they were written, very hard to follow and remember - thinking about it now, I wonder how much of the complexity was really necessary. I can only assume that things like that one telepathic character (whose abilities, as far as I could tell, weren't used at all in this book) and the revelations about Mason and Wolf's connection to Fuse will be getting more attention in the next book - unfortunately, in *this* book, all things like this did was confuse me.

Even though there were things I disliked about the book, I really loved reading about Samojirou and Keno's relationship. I would have been happy if there had been fewer passages from Mason's perspective, and more from Keno and Samojirou's perspectives. I wanted to know how things would turn out for them. So, while I worry that the second book will suffer from some of the same problems this book did, I look forward to reading it because it will give me more of Keno and Samojirou's story. I'm crossing my fingers that things go well for them - the next book's description sounds ominous.

**(Original review, with read-alikes and watch-alikes, posted on A Library Girl's Familiar Diversions.)**

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### **Antonella says**

In fact it is 3,5, but I put 4 here because I don't know how much I should let my total dislike for male characters acting as female teenager influence my rating. Maybe it is believable in that contest (Keno, still very young, discovers a side of himself) or deliberate (a kind of sh?nen-ai?).

Incredibly complex world building (the Dreamlands, not Boston, the other place the story is set), lots of details about ancient Japan. It looks like an accurate research went into that.

There is almost no sex, because Keno doesn't want it (view spoiler)), This is necessary for the story and it is a positive point for me, I dislike gratuitous sex.

There are a bit too many characters, many of them with similar Japanese names. The "bad" are stereotypically bad, and stereotypically stupid.

The story is narrated through the voices of 3 characters, one of them (Mason's) is weaker. Maybe because he is trying too hard be witty?

It was a nice read.

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### **Lola says**

Ok, I give it 5 star. I may find the overtly effeminate keno to be too japanese girly from the 17th century, but the whole story is good. So bumps it up.

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### **Ozlem says**

3.5 stars. It reminded me of yaoi novels. I had fun but that could have been better. I wasn't drawn into the world which is a rare thing for me. May be that's because I couldn't anticipate with Keno. I don't like weak heroes. I would like to see him get his strength and jump in the active fight.

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### **Heather C says**

#### **4.5 Stars**

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, but I must be honest and say that this is not something I would have ever chosen for myself to read. I'm really glad this was picked for me as a reading challenge.

Normally, I do not like to read stories with androgynous characters, but Keno was so adorable there was no way I could not love him. I loved how the relationship evolved between him and Samojirou. Samojirou was so patient and loving to Keno and I was so happy when Keno was finally able to trust him and return some of that passion. The ending was so perfect, in my opinion, that I'm a little scared to read the sequel.

(view spoiler)

The world building in the Dreamlands was complex, but I didn't have much trouble following and never found myself *too* confused. Most of the Japanese terms were translated and easy to remember. I never was able to tell all of the "brothers" apart and I don't think I ever will.

4.5 stars instead of 5 because I found the pace to be a bit slow and was often bored with the parts from Mason's POV. I know his POV was needed, but I was never bored when it was told from Keno or Samojirou's POV.

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### **Paul says**

#### **3.5 STARS**

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### **Mary says**

The author's writing style was so fluid that I was midway through the book before I realized it. She gives you a look into the beauty and violence of ancient Japan in the setting of this story, the Dreamlands.

Keno is a bright young man that due to a careless mistake is kept captive in a covert government agency that deals with the monsters and we're not talking about werewolves and vampires here, but oni (demons). Badly mistreated he finds a freedom of sorts when he ends up in the Dreamlands where he meets Samojirou-an oni. Their relationship grows slowly but steadily and is threatened when Keno's captors find their way into the Dreamlands intent on its destruction.

There are mentions of violence and abuse but although there is mild petting there is no actual intercourse between the main characters which, for me at least, enriches their relationship making it a real love story. It brings to the forefront that sometimes true evil wears a human face and that just because it looks like a monster doesn't mean it has the heart of one.

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## Genre says

*Dreamlands* is told by three different first person points of view. Firstly, there is that of Mason, an African American man working for a Boston based secret agency called Global International run by 'trustees'. Mason is in security and his job is to protect the building and its inhabitants from attacks from the Dreamlands. These attacks are usually in the form of monsters who get through portals and reap havoc when they do. Secondly, there is Keno, a young Japanese man who was dragged from his college dorm room and kidnapped by the agency for accidentally breaking into their computer system. Keno is then held captive and forced to work as a IT technician whilst also being verbally and physically abused by his coworkers. Thirdly, there is Samojirou, a Japanese demon or Oni who lives in the Dreamlands after being banished by a lover.

The book begins in confusion as Mason recounts a breach in the building caused by one of the agency workers, Heiseg, who is able to use magic. Monsters pour in and devour many of the technicians and in the chaos Heiseg goes mad and rapes Keno who was unfortunate to be caught up in the situation. Suddenly a beautiful woman appears and sets her 'reapers' on killing the monsters and then disappears, taking Keno with her. The view switches to Samojirou. He is the consort of the beautiful lady, Tamazusa, who gifts Samojirou with Keno to be his companion and lover. The story then follows Keno as Samojirou attempts to gain his trust after his horrific experience and also switches backwards and forwards from the Dreamlands to Boston as Mason and his co-workers attempt to open a portal to the Dreamlands to find out what happened to Keno.

One of the ongoing themes of this book is the contrast between the so-called monsters or demons in the Dreamlands and the civilised humans in the real world. Every single one of the humans, including Mason come across as selfish, conniving and generally unpleasant. The demons, however, treat Keno with courtesy, kindness and compassion. They strongly observe the traditions from ancient Japan and to them honour and esteem mean a lot. There's a lot of black humour to be derived, through Mason, when the demons and the humans eventually meet, especially in the way that both parties conduct themselves. I found this part of the book, set in the Dreamlands to be the most interesting and well written section.

Whilst the interweaving first person narratives were certainly one of the most unusual things about this book, it was also perhaps its weakest aspect. This was not because of a lack of individuality in the voices of the three characters - quite the opposite in fact, but rather that the changes in voice often heralded a change in scene which made some of the book seem a little choppy. The three first person point of views allows more perspective than a single first person pov, but it is still limiting enough that you are never quite sure of the motivations of the other characters. Whether you will enjoy that will depend on your opinions of books written in the first person. I thought it worked well, especially with Keno and Samojirou. However, I found Mason, in particular, to be difficult to understand in the way that he spoke and didn't really like the sections where we had his point of view, especially as it was often used to break up the story of Keno and Samojirou. I found myself getting impatient and tempted to skip on back to the Dreamlands setting as I was more interested in those sympathetic characters than the humans in the real world. This got better when all the characters got together in the Dreamlands. Another side effect of having all the humans as unsympathetic

characters was that I didn't particularly care for any of them, even Mason, which meant that any of the dramatic tension in the all-action end section was lost as I was hoping that all the humans, apart from Keno, would come to a sticky end. One other confusing aspect was that three of the human characters had names that began with the same letter - Mason, Murphy and McGann - whilst this is only a minor annoyance, it did make it slightly difficult to work out who was who at first which may be another reason why I didn't warm to the humans as much as the demons.

One aspect which was done extremely well was the world building which was rich and intricate. The Dreamlands, in particular, contained a wealth of information and history, not just in the main characters but in secondary characters (of which there were many) and even the land itself. The Dreamlands follows a pattern similar to ancient Japan with many hierarchies in terms of position in society and although I'm not entirely familiar with Japanese history, I knew enough that the place seemed familiar but still retain its mystery as a good fantasy setting should.

If you like fantasy and urban fantasy (of which this book seems to be a mix), then I would highly recommend that you read this book. There is enough in *Dreamlands* to satisfy those with a taste for gentle romance, for action sequences, for character driven stories and also (as a brief warning) mindless violence, especially towards the end of the book. Felicitas Ivey is a new author and I'm very impressed with this book as a first novel. I shall be keeping a look out for her books in future.

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### **Kassa says**

This debut novel from a new author is a stunning piece of work. Intricately plotted with fascinating world building and creative characters, this story captures interest immediately and carries it through to the end. This is one of the better written books in the genre, offering a look at ancient Japan and all its wonder and glory. Unfortunately the book does try too hard in places and jumps into the action so fast there is a continual low level of confusion and muddled detail. However, the world building and fast paced story mostly makes up for this and the result is a solid, riveting tale.

The story is told from three different first person points of views and two different worlds. The first world depicted is Boston, however there is no time reference given. It could be modern day or it could be futuristic but there is no additional detail, which is an unfortunate flaw. The second world is the Dreamlands, which is a mirror for ancient Japan but incredibly vast and filled with beings. There are portals that can be opened through a variety of dark magical ways, leading between the two worlds. The story opens when one such portal has been created to allow monsters to infiltrate an underground bunker for an international organization based in Boston. This organization is very classic government, killing evil monsters under a guise of troubleshooting. In the chaos of this attack one of the prisoners ~ a young, computer hacker named Keno ~ goes missing.

Keno has been taken to the Dreamlands to be given as a present to a powerful demon there, Samojirou. Unfortunately the organization is not ready to let Keno and the monsters go, thus starting the action and complexity of the story. Told from Keno, Samojirou, and Mason's perspective, the story follows the action as the government organization seeks to recapture Keno and destroy the monsters while Keno is learning that not all monsters are evil. Alongside this is an incredibly complex plot regarding Samojirou's past and his life before and after arriving in the Dreamlands, a past which has serious implications involving Keno.

The plot itself is very complicated and contains several important subplots happening simultaneously. For

the most part, the deft writing keeps each storyline moving and without too much confusion but the sheer volume of information presented is overwhelming. The intricate customs of ancient Japan from the manners to political structure are fascinating and well depicted but muddled by the somewhat confusing storyline of Fuse and her sons. While this information is important to Samojirou's past, the high level of involvement of Fuse and her sons is repetitious and distracting. Adding to that are the numerous names of the various men, which blend together indiscriminately at that point.

The world building itself is stunning with the level of minute detail regarding ancient Japan. Unfortunately that same level of detail is sacrificed in the Boston world, where several inconsistencies are present showing that the main focus and effort was put into the world of the Dreamlands. Since most of the action does happen in that world, it's not to the detriment of the story but shows the unevenness of the world building. However, the level of research and complexity involved is incredible and worth reading for alone.

The cast of characters is rather large from the important and well crafted men and women from the Dreamlands such as Keno, Samojirou, Fuse, Tamazusa, to the muddled, stereotypical Boston cast. Even Mason, one of the muscle bound trouble shooters who has a soft spot for Keno, is without much depth and predictable. This dichotomy is very interesting and serves to heighten the differences between the two cultures. Although the Dreamlands are filled with monsters, demons, and non living, non human beings – they are showed to have more depth, more culture, more breeding, and more intelligence than the one dimensional and predictable actions of every member of the “real world.”

This plays into the problem with Mason as a narrator. Although his voice is entertaining and enjoyable, there are too many scenes from his perspective and actually slow down the pace of the book and its interest. The most interesting and well written parts are those from the Dreamlands from Keno or Samojirou's point of view, thus when the perspective shifts to Mason and the real world cast actions and manipulations, this eventually starts to bore and grate. The lack of interest and originality in these characters creates very little interest in their action. From the racist comments of numerous members to the predictably evil actions of the leaders and even Mason's irreverent constant commentary offer little imagination and creativity to what is otherwise a wildly interesting and riveting tale. This had me hoping the narrative would quickly move from Mason and the predictable actions of the organization to the more interesting reactions of the Dreamlands inhabitants. Even the somewhat confusing and muddled family of Fuse is better written.

Overall this is a wonderful story with the coming of age for Keno and his slow acceptance of his chosen world. The Dreamlands world and inhabitants steal the book with a vibrant energy and stunning beauty that more than overshadows the weaker aspects of the real world organization in Boston. There are minor missteps in the writing such as confusing action and inconsistent detail, but these are minor in the face of the Dreamlands wonderful world building and creativity. I doubt many readers will be bothered by the bland, predictable real world villains and it's easy to overlook those issues to continue with a fascinating story. I really enjoyed reading this story and can't wait for more ingenuity from this new author.

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### **Theodora IK says**

4.5 stars

It's weird, the first time I read this story a few years ago, I expected romance so I skimmed a lot when the story was told in Mason's point of view. The story did not impress since I was expecting romance and love story was not the dominant part of this book.

A few years after, this book was republished by DSP Publication as fantasy and I did a reread. My opinion changed a lot! The story got a lot more enjoyable and interesting. It seemed the change in my expectation influenced my opinion of the story. I appreciated the plot a lot more and invested in more than the main couple's relationship development.

Now I'm curious. The story is not finished and I'm going to buy the sequels a.s.a.p!

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### **Siobhan says**

I actually really liked this book! Keno was realistic in his fears and concerns regarding intimacy after his traumatic experience at the beginning of the book (to those worried about triggers, the description is vague and never used graphic detail) and the pace was just fast enough to keep me reading, but slow enough that I wasn't trailing behind scratching my head. Although there were points where I was angry with Samojirou for his sometimes forceful nature in regards to some forms of intimacy, he is later forgiven when you get his point of view and when he realizes he needs to slow down.

On the other hand, in the non-romance part of the plot, it might have been a little confusing. There are some parts/chapters where I couldn't see why we were getting a certain characters point of view. I'm not a huge fan of switching POV unless those characters are going to be sticking with you through out the series (I have not read this entire series, so maybe they do, maybe they don't).

I really liked the whole divided universe, and the magical side of it. I can't wait to read into the other books to see where this takes me.

A good read for the weekend! If you're a fan of anime/manga (m/m) this could be your book! If you know nothing of Japanese culture/language, you might be left confused by all the Japanese words thrown in and may find this book less enjoyable.

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### **Nikyta \*Miss Forgetful\* says**

I thought this book was very well developed. I loved how even though Samojirou didn't have to, he still acted like a gentleman and allowed Keno to get used to him instead of just taking what he wanted from Keno. He allowed Keno to make his own decisions on whether they would be intimate and always understood when Keno said 'no'. I especially liked the fact that there wasn't much sex; no penetration at all but I thought it worked well with who Keno was. I thought Mason was rather funny with his sarcasm and dark humor and I'm interested to see what happens in the sequel with all these avatars showing up.

At first, I was a little confused because you learn everything upfront but then the more I read, the more I understood and soon I was sucked into it, zipping through the pages quickly. I'm not all that good with weird names so I had to shorten everyone's name. Samojirou became Samo, Tamazusa became Tama and so on. After I did that, the story flowed better for me.

This was a very delightful read and I'm looking forward to sink my teeth into the sequel *Back to the Dream*, which came out a few days ago.

For spoilers go here.

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