



Hiroshima Boy

Naomi Hirahara

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LA gardener Mas Arai returns to Hiroshima to bring his best friend's ashes to a relative on the tiny offshore island of Ino, only to become embroiled in the mysterious death of a teenage boy who was about the same age Mas was when he survived the atomic bomb in 1945. The boy's death affects the elderly, often-curmudgeonly, always-reluctant sleuth, who cannot return home to Los Angeles until he finds a way to see justice served.

Naomi Hirahara is the Edgar-winning author of the Mas Arai mystery series, including *Summer of the Big Bachi*, *Blood Hina*, *Strawberry Yellow*, and *Sayonara Slam*. She is also the author of the LA-based Ellie Rush mysteries, published by Penguin. Her Mas Arai books have earned such honors as *Publishers Weekly's* Best Book of the Year and one of the *Chicago Tribune's* Ten Best Mysteries and Thrillers. The Stanford University alumna was born and raised in Altadena, CA, where her protagonist lives; she now resides in neighboring Pasadena.

Hiroshima Boy Details

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From Reader Review *Hiroshima Boy* for online ebook

Laurel says

This is the last and best of the Mas Arai series. Naomi Hirahara did a fantastic job of bringing Mas' story full circle, ending his adventures where they began: in Hiroshima.

Willy Williams says

In 1994's *Summer of the Big Bachi*, Hirahara introduced an unusual amateur sleuth, an elderly Japanese American gardener and survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima during World War II. Mas Arai's first case involved secrets connected to that terrible August day in 1945, and now in the seventh and final mystery (after *Sayonara Slam*), he must return to a city that still holds painful memories for him. The octogenarian had come home only once before—to find a bride 50 years ago—but now Mas is delivering the ashes of his best friend Haruo (and fellow survivor) to Haruo's sister, who lives in a nursing home on a small island near Hiroshima. On the ferry to the island Mas notices a teenage boy sitting alone; the next morning he discovers that boy's body floating near a jetty. Was his death an accidental drowning, suicide, or something else? As Mas is reluctantly pulled into the investigation, he must also deal with the theft of his friend's ashes. In the process, Mas reevaluates his life and his family. "This trip to Hiroshima had changed the course of his life, or what was left of it." VERDICT Hirahara completes her Edgar Award-winning series with a quiet and melancholy mystery that explores the tragic legacy of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. Not surprisingly, she dedicates this novel to the hibakusha, the survivors. (LJ 2/1/18)

Richard says

Billed as the last of the series, in this book the protagonist and retired gardener Mas Arai goes back to Hiroshima, at the age of 86. Lucky man, still spry enough to get about on his own and in better shape than his suitcase with a wonky wheel. His errand is to deliver the ashes of his old friend Haruo to the family. Mas hasn't been back to Japan for at least 50 years, and the last time he lived there was as a teenager. (If you haven't followed the series, he was born in the USA, educated in Japan, and is a survivor of the A-bomb in 1945. He moved back to the US immediately post-war. He has dwindling family ties to Hiroshima.)

Naturally there some mishaps along the way, which include the discovery of a dead body in the water, and Mas feels compelled to investigate. The book has all the elements that I love about Mas—he's an unlikely detective, a bit crotchety but with a big heart, and he ruminates a lot while speaking little. If he were in my family, he'd certainly be my favorite uncle. I loved the way everything unfolded in this story, bringing together a lot of Mas's life threads that have run through the series. It's not a very long novel, and the action unfolds over only a few days.

The writing and editing are excellent throughout. I spotted zero typos. I paid full retail price for the e-book.

Susan says

This is billed as the last of the Mas Arai series. Since retired Japanese-American gardener Mas is 86, that would be understandable, however regrettable. Mas has been asked to travel back to Hiroshima, where he experienced the bombing, to deliver his best friend's ashes to the friend's elderly sister, now in a nursing home on an island near the city. But the ashes are stolen from his room before he can deliver them. He finds the body of a young boy, considered a suicide by the police, but cannot stop his curiosity from pondering the strange death. He--with the help of a few others--does find the secrets behind the boy's death, but more importantly he learns more about himself and his relationship, long dormant, with his Japanese family. The series as a whole is immensely moving as Mas, who does not feel wholly comfortable in either of his worlds, gradually opens himself up to the feelings he's repressed virtually all his life.

Karen says

As always this is top notch writing. A very interesting mystery set in Japan as Mas returns the ashes of his good buddy to their childhood stomping grounds.

His trip is strictly in service to Harou's wife Spoon, who has agreed to split the ashes of her dead husband with her husband's sister who is dying in an old folks home on Ino Island.

He witnesses the antics of some boy teenagers on the ferry and later discovers the body of one of them floating in the water. He extends his stay and quietly investigates.

There are a lot of disturbing descriptions of the area post A Bomb. Naomi does not pull any punches, nor does she point blame. A very difficult fine line.

I usually share my books with my reading group, but I don't know if any of them will want to walk this path.

I won a copy of this paperback through the Goodreads Giveaway.

SideNote: I think that this is one of the worst covers I have ever seen. I NEVER would have picked up this book based on the cover. This did not affect my rating of the actual book.

Grace says

I am very sad to reach the end of the series. But, I am glad that I got to meet Mas Arai/Arai Masuo and spend a little time with him.

No spoilers, but Hirahara does a wonderful job of tying threads together across the Pacific Ocean. She deals very sensitively with selective memory and misunderstandings/misinterpretations.

Carol says

RTC

Meg says

A boy's death; a tutorial on Japanese culture; and the ramifications of the atomic bomb make this mystery a captivating read. I recommend this novel. I received it as part of the Goodreads Giveaway program.

Ronald Barak says

Given to me by a new friend, HIROSHIMA BOY is what one might refer to as a "gentle mystery," as much about Japanese, if not human, tradition and culture as about the mystery itself. It tugs at the emotional heartstrings of the reader. One can only imagine the mixed feelings of the author in penning this final in the Mas Arai series. Well done. An enjoyable and worthy read.

Paul Holman says

Challenging.

This book was interesting but unusually challenging because of the frequent references in undefined Japanese words which made it difficult to understand.

Monica says

Will miss this flawed character.

Andrea says

I have not read any of the other books in the Mas Arai series, but felt like I could easily step into this final installment. The beginning has a leisurely start, getting Mas situated in Hiroshima and on Ino Island. As the story progresses, you realize Hirahara has laid a number of threads, and as you read further those threads come together into a really nicely woven plot that features murder, character development, and history. It was interesting to see Mas in his hometown to which he had not returned for 50 years, and especially interesting for it to intersect with a Hiroshima bombing memorial that he felt conflicted about. And finally, to have the mystery of the dead boy tie into cultural norms and shame around the bombing.

Sara says

A touching finale to this series about Mas Arai. This one has Mas traveling back to Hiroshima. I will be looking forward to see what Hirahara writes about next.

Virginia Walter says

Mas has reluctantly left his home and wife in Altadena to bring his dear friend Haruo's ashes to his sister on a small island in Hiroshima. The visit brings with it memories Mas has tried to bury -- and also the discovery of the body of a young boy.

Rdr says

I'm sad that this book will be the last I read of Mas Arai. Ms. Hirahara wrote these mysteries from the perspective of an outsider that was not as much in opposition to the authorities as he was aware of how irrelevant they are. Goodbye Mas.
