



Aisuru

Anma Natsu

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“You told me before that you’d never regret meeting me. Do you still feel that way now?”

Party? Cake? Friends? No, for Sakura Takeshi, her eighteenth birthday was spent meticulously preparing for her coming death. But all of her planning didn’t include meeting the star of her late guardian’s fairy tales in her garden one night.

Now she has a handsome yokai now sharing her house and her bed, a jealous young tengu living in her cherry tree, a cheerful classmate determined to push past her walls to be her first friend, and a heart in danger of being stolen.

Sakura’s stoic acceptance of her fate is slipping, but with the end of her life rapidly approaching, is there any point in learning to live again?

Aisuru is a young adult love story with a charming prince of hero, a sweetly conflicted heroine, a sprinkling of fantasy, and a little spice to warm the heart.

Aisuru Details

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Author : Anma Natsu

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From Reader Review Aisuru for online ebook

Miriam says

I received Aisuru on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Crosspost: TheReadingBelle.com

Honestly, I didn't know what to expect of Aisuru. I haven't seen many reviews on the internet, but I decided to go ahead and read it. What got me to read the book was the synopsis since it sounded like a blend of contemporary and fantasy. I was intrigued by the characters, especially Sakura. Aisuru reminded me a bit of Inuyasha and Kamisama Hajimemashita, just the whole human-yokai romantic relationship, but that's just it.

What I was expecting was an action-paced book filled with a lot of magical scenarios and political drama. Now what I got was different than what I expected. It was good, but it wasn't bad. I was a tad disappointed that most of the book focused on Hakodate, Japan rather than the magical kingdom of Throklana.

Alright, basic plot of the book is that Sakura is dying and has less than a year of life left. Sakura tries to be an ice queen to those around her. Most of her classmates have invented rumors about her due to her cold personality. Though Sakura puts on an act, she is actually sweet and caring. She has hidden her illness from everyone; she wants to be treated like a normal girl. She wants to do many things in her life, but knows she can't achieve those goals. When I was reading Sakura's pov, I did tear up. Sakura was very accepting of her fate in the beginning of the story. As chapters progressed, it became harder for her to accept her death. Though Sakura has little character growth in the book, she at least tried to live as a normal girl. She got to accomplish some of her goals on her bucket list. One of my favorite moments of the book was the introduction of Sakura's classmates that eventually became her friends. I have to say that this book did really great when it came to friendship.

I was actually surprised that this book was a bit dark at some times. Sakura's past was extremely sad, especially what happened to her parents. Though she was adopted into a loving home after the traumatizing events of her childhood, she grew up mostly independent. That's one thing that I really liked about Sakura, she always did her best no matter her limitations.

Moving on to Kazuki, I felt okay about him. Kazuki is the yokai prince who is supposed to take over the kingdom while his father is on his pilgrimage. Kazuki never wanted to be king. He is the oldest sibling, but he knows that his younger brother is far more capable of being the next crown king. The author didn't really give a great description of his features besides his long claws and white hair. So I imagined him like this that whole time:

Though Tomoe is a far more better character than Kazuki, just saying.

Kazuki was a good guy, but a horrible leader. Here's the thing: his kingdom is in turmoil and his brother turned against him. What does Kazuki do? Reside in the human realm and leaves his kingdom in hands of his advisors. He abandoned the throne, and though his duty is to the kingdom, he never really does anything to contribute anything. I can see why he is fascinated with the human world, but it annoyed me that it wasn't till 75% of the book that he decided to take action. As I've mentioned, he was a good guy...he did have some cute moments especially with Karasu. Now Karasu was one of my favorite characters in the story. He is a

yokai as well and very devoted to his master. He initially hates Sakura and doesn't trust her whatsoever. I found Karasu to be an adorable jealous little brother. He had a sad backstory that I wish got expanded more!

Anyways, I thought that Aisuru was going to have a lot of action, but I got more of a contemporary vibe. Most of the book was spent on Kazuki and Sakura doing normal errands such as cleaning, or cooking. It seemed that this was going to be a book filled with insta-love, but I am glad that the author tried to build up the romance. There wasn't much tension between the two characters and the kiss happened out of nowhere.

As for the whole plot, I thought it could have been great if there was no conflict in the yokai realm. Since most of the book took place in the human realm, it felt a bit too much to have two conflicts because Sakura was the main focus throughout the book. The conflict in Kazuki's realm was ignored till the end!! But, despite Aisuru's flaws, I did find myself enjoying the book. The book did have a villain! Surprise, surprise it wasn't the brother. I assumed it was another character...since the villain didn't get introduced till 50% of the book. I won't give much away, but just wow.

What I liked:

- Sakura's pov
- Karasu
- The ending was cute

I feel that Aisuru could have made a good graphic novel since the author is inspired by Japanese culture. I was mostly thinking of anime when reading this book!

Final Rating: ?????? (3.5)

Les Chroniques Aléatoires says

Deviations était un magnifique récit bouleversant et très prenant. Avant de lire Aisuru, je ne pensais pas que l'auteure était capable de me captiver autant que Deviations, et pourtant, même si j'ai une nette préférence pour Deviations, Aisuru est une magnifique ode à la vie.

Sakura fête aujourd'hui ses dix-huit ans, mais elle n'en est pas heureuse pour autant. Dix-huit ans signifie pour elle qu'elle peut enfin faire valider son testament. Car depuis plus de huit ans, Sakura sait qu'elle ne verra jamais son dix-neuvième anniversaire. Son cœur est trop petit et trop fragile pour lui permettre de continuer à vivre. Mais cela ne l'atteint plus, bien au contraire, une fois morte, elle pourra retrouver Hiro Ito, son tuteur qui l'a élevée à la mort de ses parents et qui est mort trois ans plus tôt. La mort semble être omniprésente dans la vie de cette jeune femme, elle n'a donc aucune peur de mourir.

Kazuki est le prince héritier de son royaume, mais ne désire pas accéder au trône. Suite à une terrible confrontation avec son frère, il s'enfuit vers le seul endroit où il se sera en sécurité : dans la maison de son ami humain, Hiro.

Et c'est comme ça que Sakura découvre Kazuki, un Yokai, blessé dans son jardin. Après avoir repris des forces, Kazuki demande de séjourner quelques jours chez Sakura qui accepte. Kazuki pense que Hiro l'a envoyé ici pour prendre soin de la jeune femme. Et au plus ils passent du temps ensemble, au moins Kazuki ne veut partir, et quand il apprend que Sakura n'a que quelques mois à vivre, il décide de rester avec elle jusqu'à la fin.

Le récit est moins addictif que Deviations, pourtant, il y a une touche de poésie et de beauté malgré la

tragédie.

Sakura s'est exclue de toute vie sociale depuis qu'elle a frôlé la mort et qu'elle a appris qu'elle ne vivrait pas longtemps. Les seules personnes qu'elle laisse s'approcher ont toujours été Hiro, qui est décédé, et son médecin. Pourtant, l'arrivée de Kazuki va tout faire basculer, il va sans le savoir, lui redonner le goût de vivre et de désirer vivre demain, il va lui redonner le sourire et le plaisir de se faire des amis.

Avec ce récit, l'auteure pose une question aux lecteurs : doit-on arrêter de vivre quand on apprend que notre mort est imminente ? Parce que la mort est bien ici, et réapprendre à vivre ne fait qu'augmenter la peur de mourir.

Le roman est plutôt lent, l'auteure fait entrer petit à petit les personnages, à tel point que le récit pouvait être pénible. Mais la finalité est magnifique et donne une pleine satisfaction aux lecteurs.

Melissa Rose says

"The Thing about love is when we think it's been betrayed, the hurt can make us blind." [Aisuru]

After the death of her parents [an incident that caused Sakura to suffer severe organ damage], and her guardian, Sakura is left to live on her own. Knowing the fact that she too, will die soon, Sakura alienates herself from any form of relationship - allowing her to leave as little an impact on people when she does succumb.

In another world, Kazuki receives a letter to meet his brother at his mother's grave. When he arrives, Kazuki is brutally attacked - barely managing to escape with his life. When Kazuki regains consciousness, he is greeted by Sakura and the human world.

I must admit, I was taken by surprise with this novel - Aisuru is not a novel that I would have chosen for myself, had I seen it in a bookstore. The plot is quite unlike any other romance I have read. I loved that it contained romance, humour, fantasy, and a hint of mystery regarding Kazuki and his brother. My only nitpick with the plot was that I felt the circumstances of Sakura's illness a bit farfetched.

I adored the characters Anma Natsu has created - I felt that the main characters were sweet, and easy for readers to connect to. I believe that whilst many aspects of this novel were purely fantastical, that Kazuki's wish for Sakura to live was very real - as was Sakura's wish to distance herself to keep from hurting everyone around her.

In terms of the setting, Japan was an amazing choice. Whilst reading, the reader picks up an introductory insight into the culture of Japan [even learning a few of the words - aided by Natsu's footnotes].

Ultimately, Aisuru is a gorgeous story with an equally gorgeous cover. Without a doubt, I can picture this novel as a animated movie [or Anime in Japan]. The Characters were wonderful, the plot was wonderful, and the setting was wonderful - my biggest problem was that it came to an end. I hope that the author plans to write more in the future - I want to know what the future has in store for our two paranormal lovers.

Cary Morton says

I received a copy of this book directly from the author/publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Aisuru by Anma Natsu was a bit of an odd experience for me. I'm a huge anime drama fan, and I'm a huge romance novel fan as well—and it isn't often that those two things cross as they did in Aisuru. As an anime, this book would have been excellent. It was jammed pack full of the Japanese culture and language, and felt like it had been well researched. The writing style very much fit the Japanese stereotypes of the genre (and I don't mean that in a bad way). The problem is, that didn't always work in novel form.

Technically speaking, the book was well written. The narrative was clean and easy to follow. I ran across 3 typos in the whole book, and only one that made me pause and re-read a sentence. That's pretty fantastic for an Indie book. The world building was interesting, and not so complicated that I felt lost, and I really liked Sakura as a main character.

Unfortunately, not all was puppies and rainbows. Despite my genuine affection for the character of the book, they were pretty 2-dimensional as a rule. For an anime, it worked... for a book? Not so much. There was no real reason for most of the characters to even exist—the love story could have been told without them (especially Karasu. (Gomen!) Worse yet, they were all pretty stereotypical and familiar. White-haired, handsome Yokai are a dime a dozen in popular Japanese culture (Inuyasha? Kamisama Hajemashita? Anyone? No? Just me? Okay then.), as are fictional female characters that are frail and kind, and on death's doorstep. The plot and characters of Aisuru have all been done before, and I found the book predictable overall.

Does that mean I didn't like the book? No, actually I really enjoyed it—but I think I would have enjoyed it more had it had more depth to the characters and plot. Overall, I'm glad I read the story. It was entertaining, and it made a quick read. Would I go out of my way to recommend it to others? Eh... only if you really like Anime maybe. It didn't blow my mind. On a side note: This book is marketed as YA, but YA readers should be aware that there's a pretty explicit sex scene contained within the book, and a little bit of murder/suicide/gore. Most of the book is clean though.

Ruth B says

"Aisuru" is an intelligent story about learning to live when your hopes are down. Set in Japan, this is a colorful and intense story. If you are looking for a different story and one that leaves you feeling inspired and light, you should read this one.

Sakura has a deadline, she has been living with the knowledge that her days are counted. She has lived secluded and her social interactions are non-existing. However, everything changes when Kazuki appears in her garden. Kazuki comes from another world and shakes her life forcing her to live.

Sakura is a really nice character. She had to endure some terrible things in the past and she did her best to move on. She is in a position where hope seems a faraway dream. I like her hopelessness because it sounded real, she is a bit dark but she finds another part of herself when Kazuki appears. He is also a great character. He has a curiosity for the human world that makes us appreciate things we take for granted.

This story has some fantasy elements but the focus is on other things, it teaches about humanity and love. The romance is very sweet and mature. We see it grow until it becomes a beautiful relationship that can

achieve the impossible.

I have to mention the incredible work and research done by the author. Every detail has been taken care off. The author knows the Japanese culture and we can see this by all the elements used in the story. Her love for this culture transcends the pages and we can feel it.

** I received a complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review. **

Maud says

1.5 stars since I only give 1 star to books that I really disliked. This one was just extremely boring. Check out my review here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfiJz...>

Serena says

It was just so basic!! The fantasy element wasn't necessary, the romance wasn't necessary and it was sloppy, the MC's internal monologue was boring and had no emotion, the friends from school were just plot devices at best, the integration of Japanese words/element into the story wasn't smooth, with too many footnotes that could've been in the actual text. Ultimately it felt like the author just wanted to show off how much she knows about Japan, I don't even think she's Japanese. The guy who could shapeshift into a crow was literally called Karasu. That means crow in Japanese. I just finished Haikyuu you can't expect me to not realize you threw the first name you thought of here.

Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

Check out more reviews @ Perspective of a Writer...

Sakura is dying. A soft hearted girl but extremely strong she does not want to burden others with her friendship when she will be dead by the end of the year. She stays true to this philosophy until a yokai drops in her garden with several stab wounds. By befriending Kasuki it opens her up to other overtures in the form of two of her classmates. These friends won't change her fate but as she falls in love and learns to rely on them Sakura finds she isn't so accepting of her death after all.

I'm a total fan of Japanese culture and folklore, in fact I love most Asian based stories or at least am willing to try them. I knew what a yokai was and yet haven't read many books about them, mostly they are featured in manga (which is cool because it comes with drawings...) I loved the explanation of the honorifics and any Japanese terms she used through the story. So I was super excited for this book! And in the end I was not disappointed. My review may sound as if it is a trifle hell and you may agree but I cried several times through the book and that NEVER happens! It was quite inexplicable but also wonderful how these characters struck me so...

Sakura and Kasuki are perhaps exactly what you expect from a girl dying and a yokai who falls in love. It wasn't the extreme specialness of these two characters that wowed me so much as their quiet, regular lives

and how they chose to go about living. Some might call this book slow but I really was totally into the story every page. Sakura really sucked me in with her hardships and how she was making the life she had left so much harder on herself than she needed to. I wanted to see her loosen up and get a chance at life. Kasuki was not the sharpest tool in the shed but he had people he cared about and even though he didn't want the kingdom he was willing to do what was needed until the situation could be resolved. You might call these two special snowflakes or Mary Sues and while they might rightly fit in either of those categories I wanted to see them be happy. There was a rough transition between the setup and when other events start happening (i.e. the plot starts) that smacks of insta-love. Really there needed another couple weeks to pass before their thoughts go from friends to lovers. (This is minor but it is my major problem with the book!)

Here is what I said when they first met: *"There is something delightful about their first interactions. Simple but peaceful and understanding. I like that she dragged him inside thought it could kill her... I thought it very cute how he teased her about the bed. Loved how important she thought it was to tell him of Hiro's death before they eat. He's so excited at the books and tv she left for him."*

Here is what I said at 25%: *"I'm loving this book though it's slower than some might like. I had the feeling at 22% of the story just now starting. I think most writers would not have such a slow beginning but I like that the status quo was setup well. They shop for his clothes and he's so cute looking around and fearing cars. I like he got her to buy herself a dress..."*

My thoughts once the setup was complete: *"We get the whole story of why her body is failing her...it is terribly sad and all due to a mental illness. Her poor mother! Kazuki doesn't want to leave her now but also wants to find a cure for her in his world. It smacks a bit of insta-love the way he is acting... I like it anyway. This author has thought out everything so far..."*

Akari, Hina, her two friends and Karasu, Kasuki's young servant were such a great addition to this relationship. I loved Karasu's problem with Sakura. I loved Akari's reservations. I loved Hina's curiosity. For a relatively small group of characters they were used well to add dimension to Sakura's plight without feeling like accessory characters. Karasu's transformation from a hater to a little brother particularly touched my heart!

The plot once we hit 40% really hits its stride. It's a long buildup to this point but if you hang in there you are so invested in them all. I loved the bucket list, the dohame and Kasuki's problems with Yuji his little brother. The villain is a silent threat that I enjoyed as I wondered about the little details dropped through the whole book. The stories within the stories really worked for me too, they really added the yokai kingdom aspect to this human world story.

This at its heart is a romance novel set in Japan. It's a touch supernatural and quite heartbreakingly sad at times. The end was super exciting and while the twist is quite obvious it was also unexpected! You'll have to read it to see what I mean...

BOTTOM LINE: An incredible glimpse of Japanese Folklore.

On a side note, my only other problem is the next book in the Hakodate Hearts series is not about yokai! Why spend all that time setting up that world and not explore it more? (I was hoping for a book about Yuji or Reito or even the father's romance with Kasuki's mother!) I have zero interest in this very modern turn, which is so disappointing!!

Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ Perspective of a Writer. See my special perspective at the bottom of my reviews under the typewriter...

Jael says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a review

I love paranormal romance, I love Japanese anime. So when I got a combination of both in one book, I thought it was a dream come true. Except that I was wrong. Let me start off by making a list of what I found to be good and bad about the book before I move on to analyzing the world building, character development and plot.

The Good

Good writing

Set in Japan, complete with Japanese culture and all

No love triangle

Happy ending

The Bad

Poor character development

Romance progress is too fast to feel solid and natural

Plot is virtually non-existent

World building 4/5

When you base your story in a real world setting, there's really not much to talk about in term of world building. Aisuru is set primarily in Hakodate, Japan and I thought that the author did a good job introducing us to the culture of Japan and the city. The footnotes that she added were extremely helpful and I felt like I had a better understanding about Japanese culture after reading the book.

That said, we also explore an alternate universe where yokai (or demons, however you want to put it) lives and this is the place where our male protagonist, Kazuki comes from. Unfortunately, this world was neglected on the most part, with barely enough information given just to drive the plot along. As a secondary setting, this really shouldn't be a problem, though I can't help but feel a little disappointed that we don't get to know more about Kazuki's homeworld.

Character development 1/5

Chapter One did a splendid job introducing us to the main protagonist, Sakura. Chapter Two introduced Kazuki, our reluctant crown prince who nevertheless did a pretty good job. So far so good. Then, we were introduced to the little family drama going on in Kazuki's household and everything went downhill.

When Kazuki was severely injured, he used his transportation stone to transport himself to the house of his old friend, Ito Hiro, only to find that his friend had died a few years back and his adopted daughter, Sakura is living there alone now. What does he do next? He decided to stay put in Sakura's house and avoid the brewing conflict back home. I mean, I know Kazuki was supposed to be a wimp who doesn't like governing and all, but after demonstrating to us what a good job he was doing despite his obvious dislike for politics, I expected him to be a little more responsible than to just wash his hands of the entire matter and enjoy himself

living with a human girl in the human world. It felt a huge inconsistency in his character. In the next three quarters of the book, nothing happens. Kazuki simply lives with Sakura and his adopted younger brother, Karasu and does nothing but go shopping, eat, order takeaway, explore Japan and eat some more.

It comes Sakura, our typical anime-esque character who is dying of a fatal disease and decides that her best option is to push everyone away by acting cold and aloof because "it is better for them". I can't emphasize on how much this plotline annoys me. Anyway, on top of Kazuki's endless (and meaningless) exploration of Japan, we're also fed the story of how Sakura finally made friends with two girls, Hina and Ayuri.

Hina and Ayuri are what I would call the best friends to have in the world? Why? Because they're so damn convenient. They only ask the right questions at the right time and don't even bother to ask questions that would be inconvenient or difficult for Sakura to answer because they "trust" her. Best friends with absolute trust in our main protagonist? They're my favourite people on earth. Unfortunately, there's a huge difference between "absolute trust" and "not doubting because it is convenient for the author". Aisuru obviously falls into the latter. I mean, if your dying friend asks you to plan a trip that involves overexerting herself at every turn, are you sure you're just going to go ahead and do the planning for her and not ask her why and how she's planning to do it because you trust her not to overdo it? The least Sakura's friends could do is to express doubt and concern. Nope. That would be too tedious to write, so why not just make them roll along with this seemingly insane idea?

Anyway, back to Sakura and Kazuki. One of the most annoying things about young adult paranormal romance is how fast the characters fall in love. One day, our characters barely know each other and the next, they're thinking about getting all hot and sexy together. I love it that Sakura isn't the kind of girl who freaks out at the sight of sharp claws and teeth but I also felt like their love story was too rushed and too shallow to be called "love". The feeling I got was that Sakura had been alone for so long that she decided to fall for the first random guy that entered her life.

To cut a long story short, character development was bad. There's not enough conflict to drive our characters along and they're pretty much the same people at the end of it as they were in the beginning. I don't see them growing and I don't feel any connection with them. If any one of the characters died at the end of the story, I wouldn't care.

Plot 1/5

This is where I got really, really annoyed. We're told right from the start that Sakura is dying. We know that it has something to do with her parents from the blurb. We spend the next half of the book dying to know what condition she has that requires an 18-year-old girl to take both an emergency bronchodilator pump (most likely MDI salbutamol) *and* and sublingual nitroglycerine spray. Yes, you read that right. She needs sublingual GTN. What on earth would a girl her age need GTN for? GTN works by dilating blood vessels, thus increasing blood flow to the heart in people whose coronary arteries (blood vessels of the heart) are blocked due to atherosclerosis. I'm sorry but I can't think of any medical condition where you'll need GTN after receiving injury to the heart. Also, Tenma-sensei, her doctor, doesn't deserve to graduate from med school. A year one medical student would know that you NEVER, EVER give a patient with airway problems beta blocker. Then, after what felt like an excruciatingly long time, we're finally given the big revelation of what her medical condition is. Only that it makes no sense whatsoever. Gosh. Since we're talking about a book with fantasy elements in it, if the author is too lazy to get some research done, why don't she just make up some story on how Sakura contracted a fantasy illness from our fantasy world? Goodness knows she'd cooked up a lot of similarly hard to believe plot just to drive the story along.

Oh, and remember that conflict we're introduced to in Chapter Two? Well, it's not going to get addressed

again all the way until the last few chapters of the book. Really, despite my ranting that the romance between Kazuki and Sakura is too rushed to be properly developed, this book is 95% about their budding relationship, with the "fantasy" part added in just to give the story a false sense of conflict to drive the plot along and also present our heroine a Gary-Stu to love. Also, the big revelation during the climax is just so lame, it beggars belief. If I thought that Kazuki was a wimp for running away from his duties before, I now know that he and his brother, Yuji, are both complete idiots. Did they get any the wiser after this fiasco? Well, I'm not really convinced but let's give them the benefit of doubt, okay?

Then, after driving ourselves to a deadend, the author conveniently employs a deus ex machina to give us a happy ending. Hurray! No, seriously. After all the frustration this book gave me, I would burn it in hell if I got a sad ending.

Conclusion

For a self-published book, Aisuru has one of the best writings. That said, I think that this book is 40% entertainment and 60% frustration, which just doesn't seem worth it.

Will I recommend it to a friend? No.

Will I read it again? Maybe, but that's just because I have nothing else to read.

kariny v says

free copy from author

MY REVIEW

Sakura has had a rough life. Her father had been mentally ill and had killed her mother and after stabbing Sakura in the heart and lungs, killed himself. Sakura managed to survive and went to live with her father's friend. But she's lived with the fact that her organs would fail soon because of the punctures caused by the stabbing. When her guardian dies, Sakura is left more alone than she already was. She doesn't have any friends at school because she doesn't want people to hurt when she passes away, and so she lives a lonely life.

Kazuki is the heir to the throne of his kingdom. He however does not want to be king and promises to give the throne to his younger brother. But one day, his brother tells him he will never forgive him and disappears. Kazuki has no idea what he did to his brother and with his father missing, the kingdom is left in his care. But then one night, Kazuki receives a letter from his brother to meet him. But instead of reconciliation, Kazuki is attacked by his brother and escapes, beaten and bruised into the human world where his old friend, Sakura's late guardian, had once lived.

Upon learning of his friend's death, Kazuki is curious about Sakura and hides in her house while his brother is still out there. Slowly, the two discover each other and the love they could share.

Sakura has got to be one of the sweetest characters i've ever read about! Kazuki's innocence about the human world and child-like behavior was amusing and then he would just be completely mature!! *sigh* Loved the characters and world build up. I would say the story focuses more on the love story than Kazuki's kingdom and all but i think it balanced out perfectly! There was a steady amount of suspense maintained throughout the book so that the reader doesn't get too lost in the love story and stray from the mystery regarding the

attack.

I am a BIG FAN of manga! and throughout this novel i was envisioning it like i was watching a manga and wow i can just see this becoming one!! The setting was gorgeous, i loved learning about the culture in Japan and how they live. The writing was beautiful and gave you the impression you were listening to a faerie tale!

This was definitely a unique and heart felt romance story that every manga/YA reader should try! It has a 'the fault in our stars feel' but much sweeter and the book is not actually focused on the dying part. It's more focused on love and sacrifice. The ending was bittersweet for me and yet just perfect. It leaves the ending to the reader's imagination but it is a happy one with endless possibilities!!

iamjenai says

This is my first Japanese-themed novel and I loved it soooo muchooo! While I tremendously enjoyed reading this (the romance part), it also gave me extreme sadness, hopelessness, and depression. I hate to include my illness in the review but I have to. I started reading this in May 2015, but couldn't get to finish as I was too busy with lots of doctor visits. When I was diagnosed having lymphoma (cancer of the lymph nodes) in June, it became hard for me to go back reading this. The main character, Sakura, is dying and I have cancer. So just imagine me reading the story. Suddenly, Sarura became me.

I managed to finish the story, with or without cancer, I found the book sooo good. What I loved most is that how the author provided info about the Japanese culture and tradition. The setting of the story was likewise written well.

I highly recommend this to readers who are into Japan-themed novels.

Steve Lindahl says

The footnotes in *Aisuru* by Anma Natsu are fascinating by themselves. They are a tour of Japanese culture, describing among other things: Japanese expressions, food types, and place descriptions. For example - “Honto no sumimasen” has a footnote which provides the English definition of “An extra apologetic apology, usually translated to truly, I am very sorry.” Another example defines “yakisoba” as “Fried ramen-style noodles, made from wheat flour, with a thick, sweetened sauce, vegetables, and a protein.”

Yet, this is not a tour guide. It’s a fantasy about a young Japanese woman named Sakura. She is a high school student who suffered damage to her internal organs when her father had a violent mental breakdown described as “integration disorder,” the term used in Japan for schizophrenia. Sakura has been told she will die soon and has decided to live out her life as a normal Japanese student. To achieve this goal and to avoid hurting people she knows too well, she has kept to herself and has told none of her friends.

Sakura is visited by a yokai, who was a friend of her adopted father. Yokais are “a class of supernatural monsters and spirits in Japanese folklore.” (from Babylon NG) This one, Kazuki, also has royal blood. The story continues with love and adventure.

Early in the book Sakura says, “Yes, sometimes I wonder if textbook writers actually like history that much.

They always write it in such a boring fashion." I think Anma Natsu had this thought when writing her novel. This is a wonderful picture of Japan mixed in with a fun fantasy.

Steve Lindahl - author of *Motherless Soul*, *White Horse Regressions*, *Hopatcong Vision Quest*, and *Under a Warped Cross*.

Katelyn Powers says

I received a copy of this book from the author herself, so thank you for letting me read your work!

I would rate this a solid 4.75, leaning towards 5 stars. I LOVED this book. I loved the Japanese culture, which she put into footnotes as you read, so you can easily click and read the references. I loved the imaginative world that she created, and the vivid characters. I ADORED the story line, and its likeness to fairytales without being over the top or sappy.

Honestly, why isn't this book more popular? I want to go buy it in physical form and read it again!

Definitely, definitely recommend this book.

Shannon says

Star level mostly due to it not being my genre. (not a fan of romance or ya/na) over all a nice quick novel.

Likes - Well written, well edited. Nice over all narration voice. Gorgeous setting. Interesting lore. Nice ending, not too cliche or sappy.

Peeves - not listed because they amount to being romance and/or young adult.

? jamieson ? says

I received this book from the author in exchange for an honest review!

When I was approved to read this book **I was so excited**. I've recently been to Japan and safe to say I LOVE IT and I want to get back there A.S.A.P

I was **SO KEEN** to read a book set entirely in Japan, featuring an all Japanese cast of characters which heavily incorporates Japanese culture and traditions.

Like ... I was **SO READY** for this book
which is why
I'm so annoyed
it was really
clenches fist
.. *disappointing* in the end

I REALLY WANTED TO LOVE THIS BOOK

trust me I did
but I had so many issues *cries*

THE PLOT

So what is this book actually about? Aisuru is the story of a girl named Sakura, who due to an incident in her past is now terminally ill. After the passing of her guardian, she lives alone and friendless in Hakodate Japan.

Kazuki, meanwhile, is a Yokai and crown prince of the kingdom Throklana. Some troubles force him to seek shelter from an old friend, the man who used to be Sakura's guardian. Instead of meeting Ito Hiro, he meets Sakura and his life and hers begin to intertwine

At first the plot began really nicely, chapter one and two set it all up quite nicely. Kazuki is nearly murdered by his brother Yuji and must flee thus meeting Sakura.

I really liked thing but then but then **LOOK ALL THIS BAD SHIT IS GOING ON IN THROKLANA AND NOTHING HAPPENS WITH IT UNTIL LIKE THE LAST FEW CHAPTERS ??**

Like supposedly the kingdom is in turmoil, the king is missing, the princes are fighting, the people are in uproar and *it literally gets mentioned at the start and then not again until the end*

like wtf **PLEASE** don't tell me ur kingdom is on the edge of actual war and/or uprising then leave me hanging ?

Also, I found the plot twists a little bit predictable, and I guessed most of them very early into the book which was a bit ://

PLUSSES on the plot though, I liked the ending! I liked it was not too cliche, was a bit realistic and left everything a bit open ended **GOOD SHIT**

But basically, this book is **boring**. NOTHING HAPPENS. And while that would have been fine if the characters could carry the story .. they just weren't interesting enough to do so

thus leading me to

THE CHARACTERS

I just .. I just didn't like them.

No wait, fall back. Let me explain.

I liked them, but I hated they had such little development and were not very complex characters.

Sakura I liked more than Kazuki, but I felt Sakura had

1: Hazel Grace Syndrome

2: Was stereotypical anime'ish

But overall she was okay. I liked her tone for describing the events, and I liked she was quite no fuss, I didn't even mind how weepy she was. I just found her kind of boring, she wasn't particularly complex or flawed and she was just a little bit *too sweet, too perfect*

Kazuki was he was ... **so annoying**

he's the kind of character a lot of people like

he's very Dorian from Tog

Or Nikolai from Grisha

(I cannot w/ those types)

((Ok I can with Nikolai my bb))

ANYWAY he just annoyed me so much, and I found him a tad bit creepy. He just *irritated me* like holy shit fam leave Sakura alone AND GO DEAL WITH YOUR BROTHER AND YOUR KINGDOM WHICH IS LITERALLY FALLING TO PIECES !!!

Like sheesh !!!!

I can understand why the people are gettin a bit salty at their rulers tBH

I liked Karasu though !! I wish he had more story and backstory because I liked him as a character much more and I felt he had the most character development

I also liked Akari and Hina as friends to Sakuru, and I loved the friendship between these girls. It was cute and nice and I love to see girl friendships blossoming in books!

ps. did not mean to use the term blossom in this book review full of cherry blossoms but now I see I did it and I'll take it.

THE WORLDBUILDING

wooo hooooo !! Now I get to talk the good stuff.

I LOVED THE WORLD

I loved the development of Sakura's area of Hakodate, and all the explorations of that area. I felt that the images of Japan were really vivid, and even though I was never fortunate enough to go to Hakodate myself, I feel I could easily picture and understand what it looks like.

I also loved how so much authentic Japanese culture and tradition was involved, and I loved that the book utilised the traditional patterns of Japanese speech. It made it seem much more authentic and I really appreciated that

All throughout there are links to see translations and explanations for the use of the traditional Japanese terms and I loved that. I am really so glad the author kept in so much cultural elements in the story.

I was super disappointed with the worldbuilding of the fantasy Throklana though, but that sort of been covered in plot. I just felt the magic system didn't make sense and the entire situation was ignored. Also, there was a bit where even the character was saying they didn't know how their magic worked like whaaaat !!??

ROMANCE

openly weeps. I hated it

IT CAME OUTTA NOWHERE. Like, ok they *were* crushing, but the next second they were 100% in love and doing da nasty. It was fuckin too much

esp since

- 1: Kazuki is like Sakura's dads bffl
- 2: Kazuki is hundreds of years old
- 3: and Sakura is like 17 which is gross
- 3: IT CAME OUTTA NOWHERE

Also there was a sex scene AND IT WAS GROSS like I just didn't like it sorry (I think others may) ?? I am not a huge erotica fan so I was like

nope

nope

nope

NOPE

at least there was no love triangle

IN CONCLUSION

Despite everything the cover is still bomb af I LOVE IT

The writing was fine, if not a bit simple at times I don't really have much to say there

THE BOOK IS GORGEOUS ON THE INSIDE. The use of the cherry blossom headers is top notch 10/10 approve

I am just so ...

why couldn't it have been better tho000

OVERALL 1.5* FOR AISURU
