



The Moonflower

Phyllis A. Whitney

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The wife of a scientist fights for her marriage—and her husband’s sanity—in postwar Japan in this novel by “a superb and gifted storyteller” (Mary Higgins Clark).

When Jerome Talbot’s brilliant career as an atomic physicist leads him once again to Japan, his wife, Marcia, knows it means yet another long separation, but she hopes to reunite with him soon. Confidently awaiting word to join him, she is blindsided when she receives a letter demanding divorce. Stunned and hurt, she leaves their home in Hawaii to confront Jerome in Kyoto, certain she’ll get an explanation to heal her wounded heart. But when Marcia arrives, she can’t be sure of anything . . .

Jerome has become a stranger—obsessed, cruel, unhinged, and resolved never to return home—committed only to his work, which reaches back to World War II. Even more peculiar, he’s living in unusual intimacy with a close-knit, unnervingly private Japanese family whom Marcia is forbidden to talk to and to whom Jerome seems not only beholden, but enslaved. Marcia resolves to stay in Kyoto until she discovers the secret driving her husband mad—and the truth behind a terrible legacy that could threaten both their lives.

A “brilliant, absorbing, [and] moving” novel of romantic suspense by a *New York Times*–bestselling, multiple award–winning author—who was herself born in Yokohama—*The Moonflower* is an authentic exploration of life in postwar Japan, as well as a chilling tale of guilt, family secrets, and a marriage at risk in the never-forgotten shadow of Hiroshima (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*).

This ebook features an illustrated biography of Phyllis A. Whitney including rare images from the author’s estate.

The Moonflower Details

Date : Published July 4th 2017 by Open Road Media Romance (first published January 1st 1958)

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From Reader Review The Moonflower for online ebook

Misfit says

Eh, all that build up for such a quick ending and no epilogue at that to round things out. The Japan setting post WWII was very well done though.

Cathy says

While some of the portrayals of Japanese culture and speech would be considered not-politically-correct today, the rest of the book was a decent read. I'm still not sure that I believe the dramatic personality change undertaken by Jerome, and I could have used an epilogue. Not sure there was enough to qualify it as a suspense or romance.

Diane Lynn says

What a strange little book. No surprises here. Lots of information on Japanese culture. Very light on mystery and romance.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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? I read this for the Unapologetic Romance Readers' **New Years 2018 Reading Challenge**, for the category of: *Non-Western Setting*. For more info on this challenge, click here. ?

I've only read one other book by Phyllis A. Whitney and I didn't like it, but the idea of a Gothic romance set in Japan was way too good to pass up. I went to Japan last summer for the first time and it was a total culture shock because it's so different from American culture, and I loved learning about the history, the people, and the art. One of the last places we visited was Hiroshima, and given that we learn a distinctly biased version of WWII, it was great to hear it from the perspective of those who lost the war -in a horrific way.

I bring up Hiroshima because WWII plays a key role in THE MOONFLOWER. It's a contemporary gothic - or was, when it was first published in 1958 - and with the War having occurred just over a decade before, it's still very much fresh on every one's minds.

Marcia married a much older man who was a scientist. He went to Japan from his work and came back changed - irritable, haunted, cruel. Then he goes back and she basically stops hearing from him, so Marcia takes her young daughter Laurie and goes to hunt him down in Kyoto. The man she sees there isn't at all glad to see her; he wants her to return, and says all kinds of terrible things to her and their child. Their Japanese neighbors who share their duplex are unfriendly, and the wife of the man who lives there, Chiyo, seems oddly frightened of Marcia and her daughter.

Mysterious and awful things keep happening - ugly and possibly haunted masks, ghostly specters roaming at night, things going missing, dark secrets, and of course, the husband's complete personality change. Marcia is utterly puzzled and wonders what could have possibly happened to give her husband Jerome such stubborn ties to this alien country that is still slowly recovering from the devastating blow of the bomb.

THE MOONFLOWER moves at a slow and grueling pace in typical gothic fashion but the atmosphere more than makes up for it. There are some dated descriptions that seem a little racist, but honestly this is one of the best portrayals of Asian culture for the time that it is written (and even in some contemporary literature I have read, which is sad) that I have ever seen. Whitney was obviously very interested in Japanese culture and had a stake in doing it well. Many of the cultural references are on point, even to this day, and I loved the descriptions of places I've actually been to, like the Kyoto shrines, Nijo Castle, and Miyajima Island (which is one of the most beautiful places ever).

I'd kind of guessed what the twist might be, and it did make a lot of sense. I think people who saw the effects of the Hiroshima bombing and felt responsible had a lot of residual guilt. It completely destroyed the city. I went to the Peace Museum there and was lucky enough to hear some of the survivors speak (they were only babies/young children when the bomb fell) and discuss the effects that it had on them and their families. People react to tragedy in odd and frightening ways, and even though I hated Jerome by the end of the book, I could at least understand why he did what he did.

If you like vintage books but don't want to commit to the horror that is bodice-ripper, this is a good jumping off point. It has the colorful settings and flowery writing that is typical of books written at this time, but is also vivid and surprisingly insightful. I enjoyed it a lot.

3 to 3.5 stars

Deborah says

See Quicksilver Pool.

Sue says

My second most favorite novel of her's and have re read it many times. Again I read this one in high school and that was 50 yrs ago!!

Amanda says

This book contained many elements of the traditional gothic romance, accentuated by the setting and culture of Japan. The descriptions of the environs, people and traditions were wonderful, and would provide a satisfying read to a lover of the gothic and of Japanese culture.

Emotionally, the story left me rather cold. The plot involves a woman who travels to Japan with her young daughter to reunite with her estranged husband. His terrible personality alienates her quickly, leading one to believe she found some independence from him during their separation. A romance develops between the heroine and a man she meets aboard the plane to Japan, but it is almost incidental compared to the larger suspense plot.

Though well-written and admirably researched, the story does not move quickly. The ending is depressing, though things turn out well for the heroine.

Kathi says

Set in Japan after several years after World War II, this book is a romance and a mystery. Yet there is more to it, as the main character learns about post-war Japan through the other characters who experienced prison camps and the dropping of the atomic bomb.

Veronica Lindsey says

Beautiful and sad. Set in Japan years after the bomb, but still with repercussions.
