



Summer Haikus

S.J. Pajonas

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"When it comes to fight or flight, I always choose to run like hell."

Isa planned the perfect summer:

Tokyo and the Summer Olympics — check.

Helping her best friend prepare for the marathon — check.

Forgetting she's in love with Masa — double check.

But when Isa's mother is hospitalized, she has to abandon her summer plans to run the family's Tokyo business. Masa's offer to help makes it impossible for Isa to ignore him — and the firecracker kiss they shared half a world away. Everyone expects the world of her, but the pressure to please them all is as oppressive as the Tokyo summer heat. The simplest answer to all her problems? Run.

Please note: This title was previously published in 2015 and that version is no longer for sale. This is a re-edited and republished version.

Summer Haikus Details

Date : Published (first published August 6th 2015)

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Author : S.J. Pajonas

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Genre : Romance, New Adult, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance

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From Reader Review Summer Haikus for online ebook

Ibukun says

4.5 stars

*I received an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Summer Haikus is the first and only S.J. Pajonas book I've ever read, and I must say, what a first impression. When I read the blurb, I expected a light, sweet read; but I didn't expect to like the story so much.

Isa is a Japanese- American college student, who lives and studies in the US because that's where her father lives. During the summer, she plans to stay with her family in Japan so that she can bond a little with her relatives and also act as a coach for her best friend (Halley) who is partaking in the Olympics. Her holiday in Japan is also an opportunity for Isa to spend time away from Masa, her other best friend, who she has been in love with for a while, but is scared to make a move.

There are lots of things about Summer Haikus that made me enjoy reading it, but the first thing I noticed and loved (apart from the cover) is the author's choice of words. The author clearly has a way with words, and her descriptive phrases are just so good, that before I finished reading the book, I was more than impressed and longing to visit Japan in order to see it all for myself.

Another thing I like about this book is the culture and diversity involved. The author has clearly done her homework when it comes to all things Japan- related, and it's clear from the descriptions and the inclusion of language and culture. The story is also filled with enlightening details of the Japanese culture, and I truly felt like I was in Tokyo with Isa, experiencing things alongside her.

I like the fact that although Summer Haikus is a love story, there is an actual plot besides the romance. There is the struggle with family obligations, unrequited love, and Isa's anxiety issues. The actions of the characters are very realistic, and the characters, themselves, are lifelike in their emotions. Masa's haikus are also a pretty great addition to the story.

My favourite aspect of the story is Isa, herself. She's a hard worker, who finds difficulty in being spontaneous, and tries to please everyone in her life. She puts aside her own needs most of the time to take care of her mother's business, and also to help Halley through her Olympic training. I also like the clear bond between Isa and Halley. Even though Halley is the pretty, popular one, Isa manages to be the "sidekick" without actually being the sidekick.

There is a lot more to be said about Summer Haikus as a whole, but I fear I'll be giving too much away. From the diversity to the sweet romance to the relationships to the haikus themselves, everything in this story adds up in the best way without being cliché or remotely unrealistic. If you are looking for a light read that includes diversity and realism, this is the book for you. :)

Edlyn says

I accidentally came across Summer Haikus and I absolutely adored it. It tells the story of Isa, a twenty year old half-Japanese college student who plans to spend the perfect summer in Japan visiting her mom and helping her best friend prepare for the Olympics while hopefully getting over a bad case of unrequited love.

Her perfect plans are ruined when her mom suffers an untimely accident and Isa must fly to Japan sooner than anticipated and help take care of the family business. Suddenly everything carefully scheduled in her

planner must be discarded. Just as Isa starts to feel like she might crack under the pressure, Masa, the object of her unrequited affection, shows up like a knight in shining armor ready assist her.

Isa must now deal with filling in for her mom at the family business while trying to figure out her relationship with Masa while trying not to have a panic attack.

I truly loved this book and although Summer Haikus is most definitely a lovely romance, at its core it is the story of Isa finding herself and finding a place where she belongs.

S.J. Pajonas says

Now available! Purchase information is available at <http://www.spajonas.com/summer-haikus/>

Note: This novel is NOT Young Adult. The protagonists are in their twenties and the story contains both sexual situations and profanity.

SUMMER HAIKUS is a modern story of best friends, family, and love in Japan, running for the thrill of the race and the accomplishments of a lifetime.

Emily says

I received this book for free as a First Read through Goodreads Giveaways.

3.5 - A sweet YA romance and coming of age story. I appreciated that it was more than a romance and the female lead character gained insight and came into her own throughout the story

Ilonita50 says

I would like to thank you Lola's blog for giving me this book to provide an honest review.

I love the cover as much as I love the book. It's colors and photos suggest a summer romance but its more.

It's fabulous cross continental romance!

This book is about self-journey, growing responsibility, family relationships, and love in the middle. The book beautifully touches Japan & Japanese culture, I was filled with idea to buy a ticket and travel to Japan for more than just 2 weeks! And start running again! The writing is so smooth, it was hard to put the book down and I was sad when it was finished.

I highly recommend the book as must read for YA this year. I just got another book by the same author and I am looking forward to see the difference between the novels.

Christine says

This book is for anyone who has ever wanted to fall in love in Japan.

A refreshing blend of NA romance and travel fiction, *Summer Haikus* will make you want to fly to Japan and find a sweet Masa of your own to write romantic haikus for you.

Isa, a half-Japanese girl has to leave her college in Michigan and her American dad's family to rush to Japan when her Japanese mother is seriously injured in an accident. Isa finds herself taking over her mother's duties at the family's ryokan, a traditional Japanese inn. Isa is overwhelmed by her duties at the ryokan while struggling with guilt over leaving her best friend Halley who is competing at the Olympics in Tokyo (I assume the book takes place in 2020) while pining for Masa, the guy she ran away from after a disastrous drunken kiss.

Masa's a sweet, understated guy who woos Isa with action, not words. Masa rushes to Japan to help Isa at the ryokan, which is a huge romantic gesture that Isa fails to recognize due to her own insecurities. But his patient support and lyrical haikus show his true feelings.

I had issues with Isa's insecurities, panic attacks and sometimes out-right self-centeredness. But I had to admit that it fit with the theme of a young girl finding out who she really is and what she really wants.

Note: I received an ARC from Netgalley in return for an honest review.

Ashley Aponte says

I absolutely loved this book. You know a book is good when it makes you feel things, and this book definitely did that. Not only did it have me laughing, I was smiling through 90% of it. The relationships between the characters are relatable and the writing makes you feel like you're in the book. Definitely a book I would recommend to others, and would read again. The ending was perfect even if some of the characters didn't get what they wanted.

#TheUnratedBookshelf

Brianna says

I received an ARC from the author in exchange for an honest review.

S.J. Pajonas is an author who consistently writes books that I really like. She's got awesome heroines, great heroes, and there's usually some sort of Asian flair to her books. And this book was definitely no exception, since the majority of it was actually set in Tokyo, and there were characters to root for.

The heroine of this book was Isa. Since the story was told in her point of view, I definitely felt like we got to know her the best. Isa was a planner of pretty much everything. If she didn't plan at least the basics of an evening, an outing, a part of her life, she would have a panic attack. I found her struggle with this very sad, and I just wanted her to be okay. Of course, it helped that Isa was a genuinely likable main character. She was strong in emergencies, and very loyal to her friends and family. She's right up there with Laura and Sanaa in terms of how much I liked her.

Side characters are very important. They flesh out the story, give conflict, or just generally make things happen. This story had two very wonderful side characters, in the form of Halley and Masa. Halley was Isa's best friend. At first, I wasn't sure what to think of her, since she got all the spotlight because she was going to be running in the Olympics. People always asked Isa about Halley instead of Isa herself, so I was afraid that Halley would let that go to her head. But she didn't. In fact, she acknowledged that Isa came in second far too often, and what she did for Isa? I really loved that. As for Masa, I thought he was great for Isa. Sure, he annoyed me with his hot-and-cold behavior, but I definitely got over that. It helped that the two were pretty much best friends when the story opened, so they already had the ability to have honest conversations. The thing was, Isa had a huge crush on Masa. I'm not usually a fan of unrequited love, but S.J. really made it work in this story. It was nice to read about a really sweet and caring guy. Of course, it helped that when things got tough, he didn't let Isa run away, which she often tried to do. This means that the two of them never had any overly long misunderstandings, and always eventually talked everything out. I loved their relationship. Plus, Masa was a poet, and I loved his haikus.

The plot of this book kept me riveted. I literally read this book in one sitting, because I just needed to know what would happen next. The novel started out at Michigan State University, where Isa was helping Halley train for the upcoming Olympics in Tokyo. Isa was also dealing with her unrequited love for Masa, which she was too scared to reveal because she'd had previous rejections from crushes in the past. Then, it followed Isa to Tokyo, where she had to take over her family's ryokan in place of her mother, who had a broken arm and leg due to an accident. From there, things took off, and you got to see Masa and Isa grow even closer together, Isa deal with the pressures of her family's expectation, and how Halley and Isa's friendship was just so supportive. What can I say? I thought the whole thing was really well-done!!!

In the end, I definitely recommend this book to anyone who's even slightly intrigued by this blurb. Isa was such an endearing but strong heroine, and I loved Masa and Halley for being there for her, and just being awesome characters in their own right. In short, S.J. Pajonas has done it again!

Katie says

I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. This review was posted on the Reader's Handbook <https://katiecreativewriterblog.wordpress.com>

A book with the setting and its vivid descriptions so great I felt I had taken root in Japan, living alongside our young lovers, Isa and Masa. At first not knowing a great deal about the book I was unsure where it was going as Isa, and friend Haley, a runner set to participate in the Olympics, leave school for Japan one summer, with Isa's grandparents and mother living there. The Isa and Masa romance takes us from initial misunderstandings, forgiveness, first dates, talking about dreams and fears, sex, family keeping them apart, circumstances, arguments, living arrangements, and eventually, Spoiler Alert, a happy ending. Much happens in this one summer between the two, and the budding romance was a joy to read, as was the Japan culture, various family members, and the workings of a hotel. Isa too was actually quite a spunky protagonist, who grew increasingly bolshy.

On finishing Summer Haikus I think the front cover disappointed me. It doesn't reflect the story of the book and it wasn't what attracted me to it.

Summer Haikus reminded me of a Judy Blume story, a coming of age tale. Perfect for a quiet weekend read.

Donna Mitchell says

Love in denial

Isa is a student at Michigan State University because that is where her best friend, Halley, wanted to go to be on the track team, train for the Tokyo Olympics, and focus on sports medicine. Isa has been Halley's running partner for years, but she runs to destress. Because her mother is Japanese, Isa grew up speaking Japanese, which she loves. Although her parents divorced and Isa's mother returned to Japan to help run her family's inn, Isa has kept up her Japanese. She decided to have a double major of Japanese and linguistics. She has a blog where she posts videos of her activities while teaching bits of Japanese vocabulary. She also grades papers for a Japanese professor, along with another Japanese- American student. Masa is kind, tall and gorgeous, and Isa's other best friend. He composes haikus for her, gives her little gifts, and she has secretly been in love with him since they met two years ago. Isa's summer job will be going to go to Japan with Halley to help her train for the upcoming Olympics, while Masa will be staying in Michigan. Things change when Isa's mother ends up in the hospital after an accident, and her grandmother calls her to come to Japan immediately to help with the inn. She gets a little time off to help Halley with her training, and Masa completely changes his plans for the summer to help her at the inn. Isa struggles with a few panic attacks when she can't control her environment like she could at school. She and Masa both have a hard time expressing their feelings for each other, but her grandmother helps her to be more realistic in her expectations. This story made me want to stay in a Japanese inn, and it gave me a better understanding of panic attacks. I was rather bothered by what I felt was a rather excessive and unnecessary focus on sex. I have read other books by this author, also set in Japan, and I prefer the cozy mysteries. Although I loved the setting, I had a hard time relating to the angst of the main character.

Lola says

I received a free copy from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Ever since I first heard of Summer Haikus I couldn't wait to read it. And I can say it's been worth the wait. I

loved this book. It's a great summer romance read! I love Pajonas her writing style and I got quickly sucked into the story and didn't want to put it down. This is exactly the type of romance book that I love.

Summer Haikus follows Isa, who is half Japanese and half American. She has been studying in the US, where her father lives, but this summer she'll stay with her family in Japan and help prep her best friend Halley for her race during the Olympics. I liked how Halley was the popular girl and who you would expect to be the main character, but the focus was all on Isa and her summer. Things don't go according to plan and she ends up helping run the family Ryokan (a traditional Japanese hotel). I really liked the scenes in the ryokan and how Isa does her best to learn as much as possible.

Also while this book is part of a series it can be read as standalone. Both books in this series feature an Asian themed romance, but they are both standalones and feature different characters. They do have the same excellent writing style and feel though, so if you enjoy one of them I would recommend you give the other book in the series a try as well.

I instantly connected with Isa, from her planning and her anxiety issues, I could relate to her and she was such a likeable character. She's madly in love with her best friend Masa, but doesn't dare make a move on him. She's a nice person who doesn't hesitate to help others. I also liked how the author handled her panic attacks and anxiety, it was felt very realistic to me. Her panic attacks never go fully away, it doesn't solved, but always will be a part of her life. It also wasn't the focus of the story, but just another aspect that was present. Isa did her best not to let it rule her life and did her best to make sure she didn't get her panic attacks by planning everything. When things don't go according to plan though, she has trouble adapting.

I also liked her bond with her best friend Halley. Halley is a happy person filled with energy, who's gearing up for the Olympics. She has limitless energy and was a great friend to Isa. I did thought the Olympics would play a bigger part in this book, but it's really a minor part and almost felt like just another race. There are a few mentions of the Olympics and quite some scenes where they are running and training for the race, but there was only one scene that actually took place at the Olympics towards the end of the book. I did like how the author wrapped up the race and on the other hand I guess it was fitting the Olympics wasn't a bigger part as this is Isa her story.

Masa, the love interest, is almost too perfect and he's a great character. He loves arts and liked to paint and write haikus. Those haikus pop up a lot in the story and were a fun addition. He never had the freedom to really pursue his passion and I felt sorry for him. His parents want for him to get a good job and doesn't believe he can make it with his arts, which was a very realistic struggle. He's also a genuinely nice person and he's perfect for Isa.

The romance was one of the best parts of this book. Isa and Masa are perfect for each other and there are these little gestures that meant so much and Masa's haiku's which are woven into the story. I loved seeing them go from friends to lovers. I love a good friends to lovers romance and this one was well done. Their relationship isn't always easy, but I enjoyed seeing them figure it out. There was one scene where I got a bit annoyed at Isa as she kept something a secret from Masa and it felt really out of character as she usually shares everything and I just knew things would go wrong when the truth comes out. They have some small fights, but I liked that they did their best to get through it and apologize if they were wrong. They are just perfect for each other and their romance was so sweet!

While it is a romance novel and the romance plays a big part of the book, there is also a lot of story and other plot points around it. Like Isa her job at the Ryokan, her grandparents, her mom who's in the hospital, living in Japan, Japanese festivals and the other characters she meets. There's also a lot of focus on the future and

trying to figure out what they want from their life and future. Oh and Isa has her own youtube channel, which was a fun addition. I almost wish it was real so I could check it out. There are a few more hints like this that makes it obvious it takes place around now with all the modern technology we have and I liked what that added to the story. And the ending was just perfect

Most of this book takes place in Japan and I loved the setting. I really learned a lot of new things about the country and culture. My favourite part was the Ryokan and how they treat their customers. I really liked seeing this view of Japanese hospitality. The book is also filled with little details that make you feel like you really are there in Tokyo with Isa. It's obvious the author knows what she's talking about and I could easily imagine the setting. The setting really came alive and I loved spending time in Tokyo with Isa. It also deals with some typical Japanese issues, like how it is to be a Hafu (Half Japanese) in Japan, the Japanese hospitality and traditional Japanese arts like flower arrangement.

To conclude: This book is exactly what I am looking for in a romance. It had a great story, awesome characters and a setting I fell in love with. The characters were likeable and I liked how Isa her panic attacks were handled, very realistic. It's a sweet friends to lovers romance, with a few hotter scenes as well. Isa and Masa are just perfect together and I liked those little gestures that showed they really got each other. The romance was well done and it felt realistic. The Tokyo setting was really done well and I could vividly imagine how it all looked. There is a lot of Japanese culture that is addressed in the story and I enjoyed learning more about Japan. If you are looking for a great romance book to read this summer, with focus on Japanese culture, I would certainly recommend you give Summer Haikus a try.

Truusje says

I loved the Japanese setting of this book. The attention to detail was incredible. But apart from, I'm not sure what to think of this. I struggled to suspend my disbelief at some of the fundamental assumptions of the story (e.g. why doesn't Halley seem to have a proper trainer? why does Isa have to take over her mum's responsibilities when the hotel has staff? why does running the hotel mainly means visiting the baker and fishmonger every day?). However, my main problem with this book was that didn't really seem to be going anywhere. It just gently flowed through the events in the story. There was no clear goal or motivation. As for the romance, the continuous misinterpretation of each other's actions in the first half of the book drove me crazy. Once Isa and Masa were together, I didn't really feel a real relationship between. It seemed as if they were the same friends as before, except now there was some sex (behind closed doors). Isa came across as very young, even when she had all those grown-up responsibilities.

So this book didn't really work for me. Yet, I finished it, and like I said, I loved the setting. So 3 stars.

Kristin Davison says

available for free via: <https://www.instafreebie.com/free/7U3xx>

Trish at Between My Lines says

This review was originally posted on [Between My Lines]

See how cute and romantic that cover is? Well feel free to judge this book by the cover because it IS cute and romantic and I absolutely loved it.

First Line of Summer Haikus by S J Pajonas:

“Ripples of energy shoot up my legs as my feet hit the pavement, one stride in front of the other.”

My Thoughts on Summer Haikus by S J Pajonas

I don't hand out 5 stars easily and when I picked up this one, I thought I'd get a light, summery read but I never expected it to be 5 stars. There were so many things I loved though that there was no way it deserved anything less than that.

Things I loved about Summer Haikus by S J Pajonas:

Location, location, location: It's mostly set in Japan. Isa who is American Japanese is going to spend the summer with her mother who relocated to Japan a few years previously. And the setting was fab, I feel like I learned so much about Japanese culture and customs by reading it. Now it's firmly on my list of must-visit destinations.

Planner Girl: Isa is a planner nerd just like me. She carries her planner everywhere and the descriptions of her stickers and washi tape collection made my little planner heart beat faster. I had planner envy! And would love to have seen some pages from it!

Isa is a grafter: I loved how hard-working Isa is. She helps train her Olympic bound friend and makes sure she is well taken care of to help towards her college costs. She has her own YouTube channel. In Japan, she works at her mother's ryokan (inn) and she puts her heart and soul in to her job. I love that about her.

Knotty Family Relationships: Family life is never perfect, we all have drama and some family members are irrational. That's life and Summer Haikus captures that perfectly. You never doubt the love but that doesn't stop the arguments and the misunderstandings. It never felt over dramatic, it just felt very real and quite painful at times.

Sweet romance! The romance was perfect! No insta-love, no overly-possessive-bad-boy vibe, no game playing. It managed to be both tender and passionate and gave me all the feels.

Overall this book is super kawaii cute. The characters felt very lifelike and I felt that by the end of it that I knew them personally. So much so that I even wanted to watch Isa's YouTube channel and felt a little sad that it only existed within this book. Highly recommended!

Who should read Summer Haikus by S J Pajonas?

Strongly recommended to you if you are looking to add more diversity to your reads, if you like hard-

working, likeable, realistic characters and books with complex family relationships. Oh and a sweet romance! I think it's perfect for fans of books such as *Party Girl* by Rachel Hollis or *Connectivity* by Aven Ellis.

Tonyalee says

See this review and more on my blog, *After Hours* at [Lilybloombooks](#)

4.5 stars

Summer Haikus came on my radar after a fellow blogger brought it to my attention. This is just one thing I love about being a blogger -- finding new books, new authors and coming together to help promote their work, as I've said about a thousand times. That's not to say that I wouldn't have picked *Summer Haikus* otherwise -- I would have.

There is so much I want to discuss about this book! While it IS a romance, it has so much more to offer. I loved Isa and Halley's friendship. They supported each other through everything, and while Isa has always felt like she lived in Halley's shadow, Halley pushed Isa into coming into her own and helping her shine. The strong family too, is one I want to mention. There is tension for sure, and my heart broke for Isa on more than one occasion. But every family has issues and they bounced back quickly.

I loved the setting. I have always wanted to visit Japan, and Pajonas did a remarkable job with the descriptions. It's vivid and detailed; leaving me longing to see the beauty myself. Bonus -- I loved getting more details about Japanese culture, too.

By far though, Isa was my favorite part of *Summer Haikus*. For most of the book, Isa is put through many different situations that not only cause her to have her anxiety attacks, but forces her to come out of her shell. While she is strong through and through, she has a vulnerable side as well and I loved watching her come into her own and take charge of the Ryokan and ultimately, her life. She had to make MANY tough decisions, some weren't always handled well, but who's perfect?

The romance too, was super sweet! It takes a lot to sell me on best-friends to lovers scenario and boy, was I sold. Their relationship started out rocky, at best. Masa is sweet, caring, kind and hello! left America at the drop of a hat to be there for Isa in Japan. He too, is battling his own tough decisions and dealing with a rocky situation with his father, yet still is there for Isa. The back and forth between the two was KILLING ME, which made everything that fell into place that much sweeter.

Overall -- I loved *Summer Haikus*. Romance, strong friendships & family set in beautiful Japan, it's the perfect summer romance. Highly recommend!
