



## Spirit of the Fox

*Matthew O'Connell*

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She's lost her mother and her memory. And if she fails to escape... she'll lose herself.

Meiko Wright wants nothing to do with the mother who abandoned her nine years ago. Spending a year in Tokyo, where her mother lives, won't change that fact. But when she takes a nasty fall in a Shinto temple, she wakes with no memory of her mother... or anything of her past life. Without any idea who she is, she must rely on the kindness of a local priest who offers to help her as best he can. When the amnesiac Meiko wakes with a strange suspicion that something isn't right, she vows to escape from a bond she doesn't truly understand.

After years apart, Meiko's mother Chieko is determined to make up for lost time. But when her daughter mysteriously disappears, Chieko promises she won't lose her again. Along the trail of clues, the detectives working Meiko's case discover a pair of suicides linked by a strange seductress and matching fox tattoos. Afraid her daughter may be next, Chieko visits a local shaman who tells her dark spirits could make her attempt for a rescue impossible.

With time running out, Meiko and her family must uncover the mystery of her mental captivity before she loses herself and her only way home forever.

*Spirit of the Fox* is a cerebral mystery novel. If you like Japanese culture, riveting suspense, and the power of family, then you'll love Matthew O'Connell's intersection of science, spirituality, and folklore.

[Buy \*Spirit of the Fox\* to puzzle out a mind-bending mystery steeped in Japanese folklore today!](#)

## Spirit of the Fox Details

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# From Reader Review Spirit of the Fox for online ebook

## Patty says

### Fantastic Japanese mystery

To say wow seems to be putting it mildly! Here we are introduced to Meiko, a young woman who has recently moved to Japan with her father while he teaches at the university. During this she also has to deal with being in the same country as her mother Chieko, who left Meiko and her father a decade ago. While out traveling one day, Meiko suffers a fall while visiting a temple and wakes up with no memory. The priest that discovers her renames her Hana and wants to help her but she feels that not everything is as it seems. During all of this her family tries to uncover what has happened along with the detectives that are investigating the mystery of her disappearance. This is a fantastic read for any mystery lover or anyone fascinated with the Japanese culture.

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## Shani says

I have had zero experience and knowledge with Japanese folklore, so I wasn't sure at first if it would be something I would enjoy. I'm very open minded so I thought it would give it a shot. Meiko's journey made me stop a few times and question the possibilities of what she was dealing with. I couldn't imagine losing your memory but then to be thrown into a twisted and crazy journey? Yikes! Meiko is uncertain of whom she is and what she is supposed to be doing and has to blindly accept help to figure out what to do. What she doesn't know is that the people she's engaging with don't necessarily want good. The adventure is a fine line between mythical lore, psychological confusion, and the fact that is woven together by the author and the incredible cast of characters. I loved the depth of the layers in the story. What's even better is being introduced to a world as a reader that I had never even heard of. Fantastic!

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## Cath says

An interesting twist of a young woman visiting the place of her mother's birth, with her father, for a year in Tokyo while he works. Meiko hasn't seen her mother, Chieko, since her parents split up nearly ten years before. Living in the States with her father and now being in Japan, she still feels that she somehow belongs in neither. She spends part of her visit by sightseeing and one day travels to see a famous Shinto temple. Whilst there, she is spooked by a fox crossing her path and falls, hitting her head and is found by one of the priests. The only problem is she comes to and can't even remember her name!

Her mother and father become frantic when she doesn't return as expected and start to try and find her. The police don't seem too concerned to start with, until a couple of suicides occur, linked by a fox tattoo. A tattoo is not something regular people get in Japan as it is too closely linked to the Yakuza and criminals. The men were both seduced before committing suicide. There seems to be a link to Meiko and now the police get involved, but see her as a part of the crime, not a victim.

The story links in old Japanese legends and myths, a shaman, dark spirits and someone with an evil plan. Great mystery storyline, bringing about wonderful descriptions of different areas of Japan and the cherry

blossoms in particular. It is somewhere I have always wanted to go and this made me want to go even more. There is an interesting twist of myth and mystery, mixed in with mixed race experiences of a young woman trying to find her place in the world.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and was lucky to receive an ARC copy of this book from Hidden Gems and I have freely given my own opinion of the book above.

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### **Marissa says**

Goodreads Kindle Copy Win

A Japanese woman who has lost her memories and her mother after a fall in a temple and wakes up to a feeling that something is quite right. She relies on the kindness of the temple priest who offers to help her.

Meantime her mother seeks to find her with the help of detectives. They soon find a pair of mysterious suicides that included matching fox tattoos that point to her being the next victim. Will she be able to find her daughter before it is too late?

A fascinating story especially if you like Japanese folklore.

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### **Tarina says**

I was given a copy of *Spirit of the Fox* by Hidden Gems for a review. I love folklore and this story did not disappoint. It is a mystery that uses a Japanese folklore of the Spirit of the Fox. I enjoyed the storytelling and how the author uses the folklore to weave his tale. I found the characters believable and complex.

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### **Wally Wood says**

In *Spirit of the Fox* by Matthew O'Connell, a brief Prologue shows a family is being driven out of their remote, rural Japanese village in 1945. The unnamed point-of-view character is a young girl who has a younger brother. She has no idea where they are going, but any place would be better than where she's been.

Jump to present-day Tokyo. Meiko Wright has just finished her undergraduate degree in psychology at UC Santa Barbara, is taking a year off before deciding what she wants to study in graduate school, and has come to Japan with her father David to spend a year teaching English. David is a professor of anthropology with a special interest in folklore, who will be teaching in a Japanese university for a year. Meiko's mother, Chieko, is Japanese and a successful Tokyo psychologist. Chieko divorced David nine years earlier and returned to Japan, abandoning Meiko, at least in Meiko's eyes.

The story really gets going when Meiko goes to Kyoto for a weekend on her own. She visits the Fushimi Inari Shrine, a real place famous for its tunnel of red torii gates. Inari is the god of rice, fertility, sake, tea,

and prosperity. The god's messenger or avatar is the fox and every one of the more than three thousand Inari shrines in Japan has one or more statues of a fox. The Fushimi Inari Shrine parent shrine of all Japanese Inari shrines.

Walking alone in the woods near the shrine, Meiko sees a fox, falls, and hits her head. When she wakes up, she has no memory of who or where she is (although she can still speak Japanese and English). She has no purse, no cell phone, no wallet, nothing to identify her. A priest from the shrine assists her, gives her his card, a prepaid cell phone, ¥50,000 so that she can eat and find a place to stay, a good luck charm to wear, and a special tea blend she should drink regularly to calm herself. The priest gives her a name, Hana, and sends her off to a nearby soba restaurant for a meal.

In short order, Hana, who radiates pure sexual desirability and erotic opportunity, has seduced the married restaurant owner and persuaded him to buy her sexy lingerie; expensive, brand-name clothing; and put her up in a hotel.

Back in Tokyo, David grows concerned when Meiko does not return to their apartment and does not answer her cell phone. Because he is not fluent in Japanese, he has to join forces with his ex-wife, who is after all a native. They contact the Kyoto police, who are not particularly concerned about a young foreign woman who may be shacking up with an attractive man and is not answering her phone.

The police however are interested in a soba restaurant owner who kills himself by jumping off a building. A handwritten note in his pocket says, ". . . My life is ruined. If I had never met you, Hana, would my life be better? . . . Now that I can't be with you, what's the point of living? . . ." We readers know that Meiko/Hana has moved on to another target. Could it be that Meiko has been taken over by a fox spirit? Would that explain the fox tattoo on the dead man's ankle? What has happened to Meiko? She herself does not know.

David, the anthropologist, wants to keep an open mind about the possibility of spirit possession. Her mother, the psychologist, has no sympathy for spirits, shamans, or fox possession. Chieko's mother, Aiko, has her own ideas. And the Kyoto detectives are on the trail of a seductive young woman who is leaving a trail of death and destruction and Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, and Chanel boxes behind her.

Spirit of the Fox is an interesting story that incorporates Japanese folklore and culture in a mystery for which I was willing to suspend my instinctive disbelief. I do have some quibbles. O'Connell devotes an entire chapter to a class David gives at the international division of Waseda University in Tokyo. While the material is interesting for itself, it has little relevance to the main thrust of the book and slows things down.

On the other hand, a Shinto priest says, "People have a need to believe in something beyond themselves. I would say that it is fundamental to our being. I believe this small omamori [good-luck charm, amulet] is more than an attractive piece of silk and wood. I believe that it helps protect me and guide me along a purer path. Can I prove that? Is there scientific evidence to confirm it? No, of course not. But does that make it any less powerful to me? Again, the answer is no." Here the priest's words do help to move the story along.

By putting every chapter into the point of view of the central character—David, Chieko, Aiko, Meiko, Hana, Detective Nomura—the action for the most part does move along briskly. I found Spirit of the Fox a diverting mystery that held my interest.

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## **Carleen says**

### **Amazing Suspenseful Japanese Folklore**

Wow! I've been a fan of folklore my entire life, but this author makes it real! This was an amazing book with twists and turns and a lot of suspense. This was quite the intriguing tale. The author was able to maintain the interest of the reader the entire time. It was incredibly difficult to put this book down. I am one who can usually guess that things are going to happen but this book caught me off guard quite a bit. I would highly recommend this book to anyone looking for a good book full of suspense or if you have a love of folklore. I would love to see a follow up book on Meiko and how she processes all that has happened. You definitely don't want to miss this read!

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## **Carla says**

Spirit of the Fox is an amazing, thrilling novel from start to finish - I never knew quite what to expect next in this story.

We have Meiko, one of our main characters in this story, who is the daughter of an anthropology professor who specializes in folklore and a psychologist. Her mother (the psychologist) left her at an early age to return to Japan after she divorced her father. Meiko was raised primarily by her father in America (or perhaps she raised him a bit) and she has turned into a responsible, organized, cultured young woman who wants to continue in her graduate studies but needs some time to reflect and figure out what that would look like. She travels to Japan with her father (who will be teaching there) and plans to use this time to reflect on her future, document her journey on her blog and perhaps re-build her relationship with her mother. This is when everything makes a turn in the novel.

This is when we are introduced to some of the folklore of the Japanese culture which sends Meiko down a destructive path that we hope her family can rescue her from. The fox plays an interesting role in Japanese culture with both a good fox and an evil fox that plays on men and can be manipulative and destructive. The fox will possess a woman (who is very attractive and has a manipulative personality) and she will spell the ruin of any man. Throughout the novel, we are shown how many times this woman, at no fault of her own, will be ostracized from the community and sometimes forced to leave her home. Her history will follow her everywhere and she is doomed to a life of hatred from other women and never belonging.

It is the symbol of the fox (controlled by one man) and Meiko's family history that is the center of the story as we soon find out. Meiko is "captured" by a person using the history of the fox and branded with the fox tattoo. She takes on the persona of a controlling, manipulative woman who is out to financially ruin the men on her list. The death toll starts to rise and Meiko's parents must work together despite their history in order to save their daughter and bring her back to them.

This was an amazing book from start to finish, it was refreshingly different and exciting. I loved how he intertwined the culture and beliefs into the story for some additional learning. Meiko and her captor keep you on your toes, right when you think she may be coming back - he pulls her back into his evil plot. You almost feel lost at the end, that she may never come back but you keep praying that her parents and Grandmother can solve the case. This is a definite must read novel.

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### **Jacqueline Ellison says**

This is the first book I have read by Matthew O'Connell and thought this was an interesting book. Meiko is in Tokyo with her father and to rebuild her relationship with her estranged mother. An accident happens and Meiko is on her own. Well written storyline and characters. I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book.

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### **Shelda says**

I received a free copy of this book to review. At first I didn't like this book. In fact I put it away for a couple of days and read other books. As I opened my mind to start reading again I found a very interesting story unfolding before my eyes. The characters were relatable and fascinating. I recommend that you open your mind and absorb this book, which is rich in Japanese culture and folklore.

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### **Donna says**

Spirit of the Fox is a combination of ancient Japanese folklore and modern day. I knew very little about Japanese myths before I read this book. Once I got into the story I was rooting for Meiko to regain her memory before she was lost forever. The author did a great job bring this story to life. Received a copy from Hidden Gems and this is my voluntary and honest review.

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### **Susan Bissell says**

I like reading stories that take place in Japan and this story really piqued my interest. The story is about a young Japanese /American young woman Meiko who goes to Japan with her father for a year as he teaches at a University. Meiko's mother moved back to Japan after she left Meiko when she was a child. Meiko decides she will try to reconnect with her estranged mother, but she has a very deep-seated pain and anger towards her mother for leaving her behind. Can she get past that as she tries to rebuild their relationship? One day Meiko takes a trip to a Shinto temple where she takes a nasty fall. She awakes with no memory, she can remember nothing of her past. A local priest offers to help her. Meiko finds that after a while something is not quite about the place she is staying at. She must escape before she will get into something she can get out of. Meiko's mother, Chieko, is not going to let anything stop her she vows she will find her daughter no matter what she has to do. She lost her once and she NOT going to lose her again. As Chieko starts delving into her daughter's disappearance she finds a pair of suicides connected to a strange seductress. Feeling like her daughter is next she must find Meiko before it is too late. Cheiko must uncover Meiko mental captivity more than anything else before she can safely bring her home or lose her forever.

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### **Jessica Higgins says**

Supernatural folklore twists make this a very compelling mystery.

It's been nine years since Meiko Wright's mother abandoned her and her father in San Diego and fled back to her native country of Japan. Since then she and her father have continued to live in San Diego through her teenage years and she has resented her mother ever since. She blames her for all the missed first times that she should have had with a mother. But now her father, an esteemed professor in folklore, has taken an assignment in Tokyo to allow Meiko to have some time with her mother to try to heal their relationship, even though Meiko wants nothing to do with it. Even so, they begin a process of healing.

Meiko being half Japanese, decides to take in some of the tour scenes while in country. She decides to take a trip to Kyoto to see the temples and while at one of the most popular shrines, she is suddenly overcome and loses consciousness. When she awakes, she has lost her memory and a priest vows to help her. Since disappearing, both of her parents are worried about her. When pictures of her surface with men no one knows who wind up committing suicide, she becomes a person of interest. It becomes a race to see who can find Meiko before something worse becomes of her.

Interestingly, this is the fifth book that I've read this year set in Japan. More interestingly, they have all been set around murders. This particular book was definitely intriguing. The story of the fox spirit was interesting and how it has been in the Japanese folklore really brought it to life. Couple this with finding a way to rebuild a damaged family brought the emotion aspect to the story as well. The story is a bit predictable, but don't let that take anything away. It is very well written and worth reading. There is some language and discussion of sex, but nothing too over the top. I recommend this book to people who are interested in Japanese folklore or just love a good mystery.

I received a compliment copy of this title from the publisher. The views and opinions expressed within are my own.

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