



A Whisper of Leaves

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When ESL teacher Riko finds an old journal buried in the forests beneath Mt Fuji, a malevolent, untraceable force begins to threaten her at every turn.

But is it all in her head?

The more she studies the journal for answers, the more questions she uncovers. Worse, no-one takes her fears seriously and her best lead appears to be a belligerent old man, whose only care in the world is raking leaves deep in the forest.

With her grip on reality shaken and friendships strained to breaking point, Riko must discover the truth about the journal in order to put ghosts of the past to rest, as strange events turn deadly.

A Whisper of Leaves Details

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Author : Ashley Capes

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From Reader Review A Whisper of Leaves for online ebook

Rebecca says

Fun and Suspenseful

This was a fun suspenseful little book. It was exciting and fast-paced, especially near the end. It reminds me of some of my favorite anime mixed with a dash of some of my favorite horror movies. A great spooky read for anyone who likes horror and Japanese culture.

Ashleigh says

I really enjoyed reading this book given to me by a Goodreads competition I entered. The story is really catching and I didn't put the book down until I finished it. It's a nice quick read with only 146 pages, that anyone could finish in a day.

The book that I received had a few spelling mistakes in it though like one of the main characters name was spelt wrong (Kiyomi "Kiymoi" page 42) and some sentences needed to be re-read a second time because it wasn't written that well or had a grammar mistake.

Other than that though, this book was an excellent read and I'd recommend it.

David Schembri says

I enjoyed this journey. A nice glide into Riko's experiences in Japan and wonderfully paced and told by the author. What's most rewarding is the lift in pace and tone beyond the half way point of the story, truly drawing you into the unknown corners ahead. Well done to Capes for giving us a very well crafted ghost tale.

Marjorie says

I enjoyed this spooky novella and found it quite suspenseful and fast paced. The main character is Riko, who is undergoing some difficult times when she finds a journal half buried in the woods. Strange things start happening that cause Riko and her friends to doubt her sanity. Her struggle to determine whether the events are all in her head or whether something else is happening makes this book an interesting one.

I enjoyed the fact that this book takes place in Japan, with all of its mysticism and unique beliefs. It made this book feel like a Japanese folk tale and helped create the otherworldly atmosphere. There were scenes that gave me chills and I found the book to be quite different and unpredictable. I did find one part a bit unrealistic and I don't believe Riko would have made the major decision that she did. But then again, it's a paranormal ghost story so pretty much anything goes.

The author has created an unusual ghost story that will keep your interest. I very much enjoyed this author's "The Fairy Wren" and thought he would write a good ghost story and he has!

This book was given to me by the author in exchange for an honest review.

Cheryl Sonnier says

This novella begins gently, introducing Riko as a stressed young woman who goes hiking with her friend in a haunted forest. Capes keeps you wondering right up to the final pages whether or not the strange happenings that begin to follow Riko after she finds something in the forest are all in her mind or real. The suspense is tightened up a notch with every page.

I'm not going to tell you, as that would spoil the story, but it's well worth the read to find out.

Aly says

This was a very good story for me. I love a good mystery and I don't often read Japanese Mysteries. I think this was a good change for pace for me and I loved the characters and the story kept me reading on. * I received this book from the author in exchange for an honest review*

Gina Smith says

A book written in very beautiful language. Rico finds a journal buried in a forest and brings it home. Weird things begin to happen as she tries to read it. The journal seems to be written by Makiko and it is the story of her two loves. As the story develops the characters and the story comes to life. An interesting tale.

* I received a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Aderyn Wood says

A Whisper of Leaves by Ashley Capes is a beautiful, mysterious ghost story that will take you on an intriguing escape. I enjoyed it so much I'm giving away three (ebook) copies of this book to my mailing list subscribers - winners will be drawn end of July (more information below).

Riko is an ESL teacher on a working visa in Japan, and in a spot of bother. There's been some allegations that she's been 'inappropriate' with one of her students, and deportation out of the country threatens. When her good friend invites her to go hiking in the beautiful forests of Mt Fuji, Riko is glad to get her mind off work and her troubles. But in the forest, one should never leave the path. And when Riko inevitably does she finds a half buried treasure - an old mysterious journal.

Riko cannot keep her nose out of the journal. She translates parts of it into English; beautiful, and often dark, poetical passages add another level of mystery.

"black clouds
brooding
was I ever a bird?"

Just as she is drawn to the journal, Riko is drawn back to the forest, and suddenly her life becomes haunted by an unseen presence. Unknowingly, Riko's quest to find out more about the journal's origin puts her life in danger.

There are so many things I enjoyed about this book. The mystery builds and makes it quite a page turner by the end. I loved the supernatural element, told so convincingly, it almost seems like an actual Japanese folklore at times. Riko is immediately likable. And what I loved most is the imagery of Mt Fuji and those beautiful yet eerie forests. Ashley Capes is a poet and his power to evoke strong visual imagery is a wonderful element in this story.

"The grass was cut close; the water's edge a brilliant deep blue. Across the lake, clear of snow, loomed Mt Fuji — a dark purple giant. Almost glorious, the way it hugged the sky lines, seemingly unconcerned with everything below it. Even its reflection in the silken surface of the lake was proud."

Whether you're a lover of poetic language or not, the visual descriptions in this story will have you fully immersed in the landscape and the mystery.

Fans of paranormal mysteries and ghost stories will love this book. Readers will also enjoy the beautiful Japanese setting and 'mythology'. I fully recommend A Whisper of Leaves to anyone who likes a good story.

If you'd like to enter a draw to win a free copy of A Whisper of Leaves all you have to do is sign up to my mailing list. I'm giving away three copies, and all my list subscribers can enter. The winners will be drawn at the end of July. Good luck!

Erin Zarro says

I really enjoyed this novella. It's about this ESL teacher named Riko who is from Australia but is in Japan on a visa. She is unfairly accused of inappropriate behavior toward one of her students and is threatened with deportation. When her friend invites her to go hiking, she goes, and finds a mysterious journal written in Japanese written by an even more mysterious woman. And then things start happening, inexplicable things, and Riko thinks she is losing her mind.

This is an amazing ghost story. Very unique, with the reason of the haunting something I've never ran across before. It pulled me in, and kept pulling me in, until I couldn't turn the pages fast enough. I enjoyed it immensely, and was intrigued by the mystery of the woman and why Riko was being haunted.

If you like ghost stories that are different, read this novella. It'll make you think twice about journals written in a foreign language by mysterious women. ;)

Kimberly says

This book is written by an amazing Australian author. Writing for him is so fluid, it seems to come so easily. I could very well be reading any of the big and famous top dog writers. This is a novelette. Short but sweet. The cover drew me in firstly, but also reading that the book contained

two of my favorite things, the paranormal and Japan, grabbed me immediately. Very well written, beautiful descriptions of what to me was the infamous Suicide Forest in JAPAN. Spooky and elegantly told.

Maddalena says

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

Ashley Capes is a very eclectic writer: I became aware of his writing through the first book of his fantasy saga, *City of Masks* and its sequel *The Lost Mask* that should reach the shelves soon. Then I was asked to read and review his novella *The Fairy Wren*, a curious and inspired combination of mainstream and fantastic elements. I also know he writes poetry, even though my abysmal ignorance of the medium prevents me from appreciating what I'm certain are equally enjoyable works.

So, when Mr. Capes proposed I read his newest novella, *A Whisper of Leaves*, I accepted immediately, since I was curious to see what new avenues he would lead me along. This is again a different kind of story, both in concept and background, since it's based in Japan: even though modern civilization tends to create a similar context, no matter where you are in the world, there are subtle differences in outlook and mind-view and they tend to influence both the characterization and the story itself. I found these almost subliminal differences quite intriguing, and they added to the appeal of the novella.

In short, the main character Riko has come to live and work in Japan, though she was born and grew up in Australia where her parents moved long ago. As the story opens, she's facing some work troubles brought on by a huge misunderstanding and to take her mind off these troubles she's hiking at the foot of Mount Fuji with her friend and roommate Kiyomi. When Riko finds an old journal hidden by the forest's underbrush, she doesn't know that the apparently innocuous object will have a deep impact on her life and on the way she views the world.

This is as far as I'm prepared to discuss the story, because I believe readers must discover it on their own: what I feel free to reveal about it is that it's a tale about obsession, and how it can impact our lives, even beyond our will. Obsession can take many forms: like the kind that possesses Riko, ready to put aside her own problems, and to jeopardize her friendship with Kiyomi, to uncover the mystery held by the pages of the journal, and to know as much as possible about Makiko – the journal's owner – and her life. As the story progresses, we see how obsession can live even beyond the grave, how it can fuel a soul's search for fulfillment and how it can motivate any creature to deeds of love or hate, which for some might be divided by a very thin border...

In consideration of the novella's compelling quality, I can easily say that burning curiosity was indeed the driving force that moved me to finish it quickly: the clues pile up in such a crescendo that you will not be able to close the book until you have solved the mystery at the basis of the story. And that's not such a bad way to give in to obsession after all!

Review at [Space and Sorcery blog](#)

☆?☆RaeleighReads☆?☆ says

I received a copy of this novella in exchange for an honest review.

This is a good paranormal mystery novella. The writing flows smoothly, there are delightful poems that add a little something extra to the prose, and the characters are mostly well-developed and relatable.

A Whisper of Leaves follows the story of Riko, a female of Japanese descent who grew up in Australia but is trying to make a living as an ESL teacher in Japan. She discovers an old journal while hiking with her friend Kiyomi. What unfolds is a mysterious ghost story that will end in a battle for both their lives.

Where this novella excelled was in setting up the suspense. The tension builds very nicely through the first section and I literally had goosebumps when some of the supernatural events began to unfold. It made me very glad that I was reading in broad daylight.

Unfortunately, after that great build up, I was a little let down when all of the action came to a head. Perhaps if more time had been spent on the climax and subsequent wind-down I would have been more satisfied. As it is, I was left wanting more. Hence the actual rating of 3.5 stars.

I don't know very much about Japanese culture, but this novella was a nice introduction to some of those elements. It had a nice blend of traditional Japanese culture and religion and a very modern story line and characters. I really did enjoy it and I think many readers of fantasy, mystery, and paranormal suspense will find this enjoyable as well.

Veronica ?? says

Riko, an Australian with Japanese ancestry, is currently working in Japan. On a forest walk with her friend, Kiyomi, she unearths an old journal. Fascinated by the journal she takes it home and starts to translate it to English. Strange things start to happen and Riko wonders if she is hallucinating. Kiyomi thinks her friend is having a breakdown and encourages her to see a doctor. Riko feels this is all connected to the journal and starts in earnest to find out more about its owner.

I'm not generally a reader of paranormal or Japanese mythology but I found the story fast paced and easy to read. The plot was well rounded and although the story was too short to have the characters fully developed Capes manages to pack quite a tale into this 148 page novel.

I'm Booked says

I seldom read ghost stories simply because they often disappoint me. Ashley Capes, however, has never disappointed me so I was very excited to read HIS take on a ghost story!

For those of you who are unfamiliar with his work, Ashley Capes is literally a poet; he has published a book of haiku, which is arguably the most beautiful type of poetry in the world. It is certainly the most demanding. Ashley can succinctly express himself in a few lines....just imagine what he can accomplish in a novella!

I love, I mean LOVE, to read Ashley's novels and novellas. I love his creativity, his originality and his ability to transport me to another time and place. Most importantly, I love how he makes me feel! Perhaps

you're wondering if he made me feel scared? Well fellow reader, that's a good question given that A Whisper Of Leaves is a ghost story, and the answer is..... NO.... In my opinion, this novella is more about the living than the dead..... It's about love in all of its forms.... It's about obsession..... AND....It's about time that you become acquainted with Ashley Capes.

Luvtoread says

This was hard deciding how to rate this book. The book is fast paced and well written but maybe more a YA read. I picked this one due to the Suicide Forest theme which is usually very creepy and frightening and since there was paranormal and mystery to it I thought it would be quite scary. Unfortunately not, I found it more of a timid and cute little paranormal story. My dilemma is this. Did I misjudge the the blurb of the book for myself and the story is a good one? Or was the story supposed to be a scary suspense filled read and it just fell very short?

The bottom line is "Not My Cup Of Tea.". Mr. Capes is a very good writer and this book may appeal to many

readers who enjoy a light ghostly mystery. I was looking for dark and suspenseful and this one fell short on my expectations however the storyline is good and I believe it is more geared to YA readers.

Ashley Capes says

Whisper is due late next week and I'm pretty excited to see this novella out there!

Fans of haiku and senryu should find some surprises inside too - along with folks who like a good dose of mystery with their paranormal events!

Print edition available now!

Rachel Teferet says

I received this book as a gift from the author and I absolutely loved it. I had read *Fairy Wren* by Capes last year and fell in love with that book too, so I was very excited to read this novel. Capes has a way of writing the setting and character development in such a way that you can really get caught up in the beauty of the story. Like *Fairy Wren*, this novel was full of unpredictable and delightful plot twists that had me hanging on the edge of my seat. This book is definitely worth a read, especially if you are a fan of supernatural stories. Thanks for another great read Ashley! Looking forward to plunging into another one of your books soon:)

Brenda says

When Riko and her best friend Kiyomi were out walking through the forests near Mt Fuji, Kiyomi implored Riko not to leave the paths, as the spirits would not be happy. But Riko did – her discovery of a battered old journal buried under leaves in the forest intrigued her, and though Kiyomi told her not to touch it; not to remove it from its home among the trees, Riko took it anyway...

Strange events began to follow Riko; as she worked her way through the words in the journal, she became more convinced she was being subtly threatened by forces no one else could see or hear. The smoke which choked her; the butterflies which surrounded her – no one else was aware – was she losing her mind? Kiyomi was concerned, but she was angry as well. What would happen to Riko? Was the danger real?

A Whisper of Leaves is an eerie novella by Aussie author Ashley Capes which I raced through, and thoroughly enjoyed. Strange, twisted and other-worldly events flitted through the pages – I wondered what would happen next; how Riko could escape. Highly recommended.

Thanks to the author for my gifted copy.

H. Roberts says

I love a good Japanese ghost story so when I found out about "A Whisper of Leaves," I immediately bought myself a copy to read. The story revolves around an Australian expatriate named Riko, who, after losing her job, goes hiking in the forests near Mt Fuji. There, she finds a half-buried journal which she ends up taking home with her. That's when Riko's spooky problems begin.

Capes has crafted a unique story with just enough genre tropes mixed in to keep fans of Japanese horror turning the pages. I enjoyed following Riko on her adventure. She was a sweet character whose utter normality made her battle against the supernatural terrors haunting her all the more tense. Her little quirk of checking for spiders was a nice addition and I would have loved to have learnt the reason behind it.

Unfortunately, people who are more familiar with living and working in Japan will find some details within this story that just don't ring true. It is often the accuracy of mundane details that help to transport a reader into a believable world despite the more fantastic elements but a few times I was thrown out of the story and left scratching my head. This was particularly the case with Riko's work and visa issues, where, for me, the mystery of what visa she could possibly have entered on threatened to overshadow the mystery of the journal itself. Another round of editing would also have been of benefit.

Still, overall I enjoyed the story and Capes has a descriptive yet easy writing style that kept the action moving along at a good pace throughout. "A Whisper of Leaves" is a solid entry to the genre.

Aurelia Casey says

This is an excellent ghost story in the tradition of Miyazaki's *Spirited Away*. It had the perfect combination of suspense, creepiness, and mystery, without being gory or horrifying. What I'm trying to say is: it was scary enough without being too scary.

If you like Japan and ghosts, you'll probably love this story.
