



## Return to Mandalay

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Eva Gatsby has often wondered about her grandfather Lawrence's past, and exactly what happened to him in Burma during the Second World War. But it is only when Eva's job as an antiques dealer suddenly requires a trip to Mandalay that Lawrence finally breaks his silence and asks her to return a mysterious artifact of his own - a chinthe - to its rightful owner.

As Eva arrives in Burma her mission soon proves dangerously complicated, and the treasure she is guarding becomes the centre of a scandal that will have far-reaching consequences. Caught between loyalty and integrity, Eva is determined to find the truth about her grandfather's past, of her own family origins, and of the red-eyed chinthe itself - enigmatic symbol of the riches of Mandalay.

## **Return to Mandalay Details**

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Author : Rosanna Ley

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## From Reader Review Return to Mandalay for online ebook

### Rebecca says

Originally posted on <http://beccasboooks.blogspot.co.uk/>

Seriously, if you haven't read anything by Rosanna Ley yet, why not? Because I am telling you, she is SUCH an incredible storyteller, and I have completely fallen in love with Return to Mandalay, just like I did when I read The Villa. I've been hopelessly affected by her story, torn inside out, and I couldn't help but burst into tears when I turned the final page. Return to Mandalay crawled underneath my skin and shook me up, leaving me feeling a little breathless and at a loss for words. Rosanna Ley, you are incredible. I don't know how you do it, but you do it, and I love you for it.

Luckily, I was accepted for an eBook copy of Return to Mandalay by the fantastic publishers Quercus, after I spotted the title on Net Galley and couldn't hit the request button quick enough. Ever since I read The Villa by Rosanna, I've always felt a little drawn to her stories somehow. I was completely sucked into The Villa, I remember walking around in a bit of daze afterwards and having this insane, almost obsessive urge, to jump on a plane and head to Sicily in Italy, where her novel The Villa is set. This urge is still alive and kicking today, because I just want to SEE and FEEL the place where Rosanna brought her story to life. So anyway, when I spotted Return to Mandalay looking gloriously perfect on Net Galley, I knew that I had to have it, because I needed more of what the magical author had to offer. And boy, she knocked me for six with this one.

Firstly, what an adventure! I'm being serious, readers. This was incredible. Rosanna begins Eva's gorgeous story in Bristol, England. More specifically, in The Bristol Antiques Emporium, where Eva spends her days repairing and restoring pieces of old furniture. That is until Eva's boss, Jacqui Dryden, gives Eva a task that could change the course of Eva's life entirely.

'Yangon, Bagan and Mandalay,' she said. 'That's where you'll be going. Ten days should be long enough. You'll have to take internal flights. I'll give you all the details in advance, of course.'

From the dreary, grey skies of Bristol, Eva travels to Burma, where her world collides with another one entirely. Before Eva leaves, she is summoned by her grandfather, who needs her to do something very important for him. He hands her the chinthe that has traveled between both worlds and provides her with two addresses.

'Those addresses I gave you,' he said. 'That's where she used to live, before the war, you know.'

'She?'

'The person I want you to look for,' he said. 'I need you to find out the truth of what happened.'

From that moment on, Eva becomes determined to find out everything about the woman that her grandfather is desperate to hear about. Return to Mandalay was beautiful, incredibly emotional and a story that will stay with you for a lifetime.

What I found fascinating, besides the entire novel, was how Rosanna managed to switch not only between her characters, but between the past and the present too. It was brilliant, and such an exciting way to really grasp each character's history and life.

A particular character that this technique worked extremely well with was Eva's grandfather, Lawrence. Just like Eva, as soon as this other woman from Mandalay was mentioned, I was intrigued. Not only was

Lawrence a kind, gentle man, but his memory was still alive from his days spent in the war over in Burma, a time now long gone. But he has never forgotten a certain someone, and Rosanna perfectly took me back in time, to see things from Lawrence's point of view, including the moment that he fell in love. This switching backwards and forwards was just sensational, and it really allowed me to see the whole story from a number of key perspectives.

Something that was obvious to me, as was the case in *The Villa*, were Rosanna's absolutely gorgeous descriptions of Burma. Oh my goodness gracious me. Rosanna has such a gift when it comes to bringing a place to life with words. Her imagery is spot on. Every tiny little detail is picked up on. The sunsets, the pagodas, the Irrawaddy River, the Burmese homes, the streets and markets. Every smell, sight and sound felt almost as if I was experiencing it first hand. I feel like I've been to Burma and seen, smelt and heard everything for myself. It's magical, each setting made incredibly real by the way the author describes them. God, she really is just amazing. You need to read one of Rosanna's novels to really understand where I'm coming from, because there is just nothing like her words to take you away from everyday life and reality. Pure escapism, maybe not completely chick-lit, but definitely something that you need to try anyway.

Another character that played a major role in *Return to Mandalay* was Eva's mother, Rosemary. When Rosemary was first introduced to me, I felt an intense sadness on her part. Something had gone terribly wrong in Rosemary's life, that much was obvious, but she just seemed as if something was missing... Not only had she lost her husband Nick, but in the same moment she had closed herself up and I guess, in a way, removed herself from Eva and Lawrence's life. I can understand this because grief is insane, and works in so many different ways with different people. Rosanna did an exceptional job when describing the character to me, and whenever I thought of Rosemary, I just felt like she had given up on herself. The relationship between Rosemary, her daughter and father was one of many complexities, and it was incredibly interesting to watch out Rosanna allowed it to play out.

There are just so many themes and ideas rolling around in *Return to Mandalay*, far too many for a mediocre writer like me to talk about without making a complete mess of things. Also, for you to really enjoy this story, you should experience the entire novel for yourself. I've mentioned a few things about the characters and how bloody beautiful Rosanna's settings are, but this is a fierce story of love, fate and separation. An journey so intensely moving that I'm finding it impossible to describe it with just my words.

From Bristol to Burma, Eva follows the trail to the woman her grandfather never wanted to say goodbye to. I was choked up, to tell you the truth. Rosanna, I'm so sorry this review isn't put together very well, and I probably haven't made an ounce of sense either, but I just want to say thank you! Thank you for writing such an incredible novel that whisked me away to Mandalay. Perfection.

Becca's Books is rating Rosanne Ley's *Return to Mandalay* with nothing less than five cupcakes. I'm getting teary eyed just thinking about it. DAMN! Just magnificent, I'm telling you.

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## **Tripfiction says**

Novel set in Burma

A book of well over 500 pages that passes like a dream. Myanmar, formerly Burma, is gorgeously evoked, and in such colourful terms that it had me wanting to drop everything and book myself on the next plane. I too wanted to walk across the U Bein Bridge, the longest teak bridge in the world, savour the smells of hot Sandalwood, visit the places described and enjoy the refractive light on the Mogok and pigeon-blood rubies that are all part of the story....

But this is a country that has had a very difficult history and is only just emerging; and Eva, the main character, has to weave her way through the intricacies that are modern day Myanmar. Eva is asked by her employers in Bristol to head out to Myanmar and supervise the export of chosen antique artefacts. At her Grandfather's request, she packs into her bags a beautiful, single chinthe, given to him during his time in the Far East leading up to WW2, when the country was Burma. He asks her to match it up with its other half (they invariably come in pairs and serve as guardians outside pagodas). It is her quest to do so that forms the main storyline, and she thereby discovers so much more of her Grandfather's history and life. Add romance and intrigue, international skulduggery and food, flavours and feel of the country, all combined with a gripping read – a book that makes for a wonderful combination that will truly allow you to wallow in a beautiful part of the world.

We also have an author Q & A with Rosanna Ley: <http://www.tripfiction.com/burma/>

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### **Adelaide Silva says**

Uma escrita que nos transporta até à Birmânia e nos faz desejar visita-lo. As relações entre pais e filhos e os primeiros amores não esquecidos. Maravilhoso.

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### **James Hartley says**

I'll be honest, not really my cup of tea. Very sweet and a bit twee - a straight-ahead romantic story, well-written, I suppose, but superficial. I couldn't work out why I wasn't enjoying it until I read some guff in the back about Ley's other books having "the gentleness and authenticity" of Rosamund Pilcher. That gentleness and "elegance" is what I don't like, I think. It's all a bit Notting Hill - a weird, white-washed version of the world which doesn't look like any place I've ever lived in. Escapism, I guess.

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### **Zarina says**

Review originally posted to my blog:

<http://www.pagetostagereviews.com/201...>

Last year I read Rosanna Ley's stunning novel *Bay of Secrets*, which not only told a beautiful story but also enlightened me on a piece of history which up until that point was unfamiliar to me; The Lost Children of Francoism. It was one of those novels that was already special when reading it and which I started to appreciate even more with time, as I found myself referencing it back on more than one occasion and recommending it extensively to my friends (in hindsight I would probably give it five stars rather than four!).

So of course I was thrilled when I discovered that Rosanna had a new novel coming out this year and one which once again would be set in a to me foreign location; Burma. This time around the history the story was seeped in was that of European settlers, the Japanese occupation during World War II and tracing back to the last dynasty ruling in the late 19th century.

The story is this: Eva works for an antiquarian in Bristol. When her boss wants to send her on assignment to Burma to authenticate a new order, she's filled with excitement not only at the prospect of finally putting her

education and expertise to good use, but also at the chance to breathe in the same air as her grandfather had all those years ago, when he was living in the same place just before and during the Second World War.

When her grandfather, Lawrence, hears of the trip he not only tells Eva a little more about what his life was like so far away from his British home, but he also adds a request of his own. He wants his granddaughter to take a chinthe - a small replica of one of the statues that guard temples and pagodas - he has cherished for decades and return it to the person who gifted it to him in the first place. Eva is more than happy to fulfill her grandfather's request, though she doesn't realise yet quite what it is she is saying 'yes' to.

What follows is an extensive journey through Burmese history as Eva and the reader follow in the footsteps of the chinthe; from her grandfather's home in Dorset, to an elderly lady (Maya) in Pyin Oo Lwin and all the way back to the Royal Palace in Mandalay. The story jumps from Lawrence's flashbacks to Maya's stories and is held together by Eva in the present, who is the one connecting all the pieces together. It's a fascinating trip, touching upon many different lives along the way. Many of these seem insignificant at the time, but they leave a lasting impression on the history of the chinthe and the people it connects along the way.

As soon as I started reading I fell in love with Eva and the sheer passion she radiates for her job and antiques. She was a very likeable and sympathetic main character, even when faced with secrets from both her grandfather's past and those of the people she meets on her travels into foreign territory. Combined with her independence and fierceness in the present storyline, which runs parallel to that of the chinthe's journey, I was instantly taken by her wonderful persona.

The beautifully lush descriptions of Burma and glimpses into its harrowing yet also incredibly fascinating history also were an eye-opener to me. Add to that the bittersweet story of Lawrence and Maya, and the intriguing discoveries Eva made along the way and I found this a diverse and compelling read from start to finish.

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### **Sue Upton says**

Not my cup of tea, read it as it was recommended to me, but found it to be a few notches up from Mills And Boon, very predictable ending. Won't rush to read any more from this author.

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### **Silvana (Por detrás das Palavras) says**

Como é que se parte para outra leitura depois de uma leitura intensa e que nos transportou para outra realidade? É este o sentimento que ficou assim que terminei de ler "Regresso a Mandalay". Queria muito mais deste livro, queria sugar cada pedacinho de vida das personagens, queria simplesmente saltar para Mandalay e sentir os cheiros que sobrevoavam aquelas terras.

Este livro foi-me emprestado por uma amiga. Ao emprestar-mo disse "Quando terminares vais ficar com vontade de viajar até Mandalay". Eu, desconfiada, dei-lhe uma resposta vaga. Eu nunca senti um grande chamamento relativamente ao continente Asiático. Eu sou muito esquisita com a alimentação, não me dou com o calor e não tenho aquele espírito aventureiro que associo à descoberta deste continente. Mas querem saber uma coisa? Que se lixe esta minha personalidade introvertida e introspetiva... Vou ter de dar a "mão à palmatória": Sim, amiga Carina, fiquei com uma vontade inexplicável por me mandar para a Ásia e vaguear por um mundo que desperta os sentidos e onde o pôr do sol parece ser das coisas mais bonitas de se ver... Pela leitura de alguns momentos em que as personagens assistiam ao pôr do sol, aquilo que senti era como se

estivesse a ler uma poesia suave e sentimental, ou a ouvir uma daquelas músicas que tocam ao som das batidas do nosso coração. Foi lindo.

Este livro mexeu comigo. Fez-me pensar, fez-me admirar a cultura budista, fez refletir sobre a minha forma de olhar as coisas e sentir a vida.

No livro encontramos o cruzamento das histórias passadas e presentes. Viajamos pela Segunda Guerra Mundial e de como ela foi sentida na antiga Birmânia. Conhecemos os muitos rostos que amor por assumir. Somos confrontados com o altuísmo e a serenidade de Maya, lutamos com Rosie contra os seus fantasmas, palpítamos com o carinho de Lawrence e viajamos ao interior da Eva e às mudanças que lá operam durante uma viagem especial.

Acho que a Maya merecia um livro só para ela. Esta mulher tem tanto por descobrir. Senti a sua serenidade, a sua sabedoria e a sua beleza exótica. Ela tinha tanto para partilhar... Eu sugava as palavras dos capítulos em que ela assumia o papel central. E o que senti no fim é que não consegui aceder a todos os recantos da personalidade de Maya. Um dia, gostava de conquistar a serenidade e beleza interior desta mulher. É fenomenal.

Falta falar de Ramon. Admirei a sua integridade e o quão fiel ele se mantinha aos seus sonhos sem esquecer o lado ético. Um homem inteligente, perspicaz e que eu gostava de conhecer.

E é assim que um livro me conquista e semeia em mim a vontade de sair da minha zona de conforto e conhecer a Ásia e os seus recantos mais belos e os mais pobres. Quem sabe um dia!

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### **Ana Goulart says**

3,5. É uma leitura agradável que nos faz viajar a um país distante, que nos é apresentado de forma idílica. Gostei do livro e recomendo - o. O único senão é a previsibilidade do seu final.

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### **Maria João (A Biblioteca da João) says**

9,5 de 10\*

Imagino um dia de Inverno chuvoso e frio. Imagino uma manta bem quentinha e um chá delicioso. É esta a sensação de conforto que este livro me ofereceu! Aconchego e tranquilidade. É um livro para ler devagar, para saborear e aproveitar a escrita de Rosanna Ley.

A acção passa-se, essencialmente, na Birmânia (actualmente Myanmar) e histórias passadas no Oriente trazem sempre uma magia e aura de que este livro não é excepção.

Comentário completo em:

<http://abibliotecadajoao.blogspot.pt/...>

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### **Aditi says**

The true exotic experience can one gather in his lifetime is from only one land in our world, that is, Myanmar in Burma. Rudyard Kipling has once captured the beauty and exoticness of Burma in his famous

quote:

"This is Burma and it is unlike any land you know about."

An English author, named, Rosanna Ley, living in West Dorset, have also strikingly captured the beauty and the aura of Burma in her enthralling novel, *Return to Mandalay*. From the name itself, the book sounds so alluring and with its *phantasmagorical* cover image, it makes the book more and more beautiful.

**Thanks to the author, Rosanna Ley, and her publisher at Quercus, for sending me over a copy of her book, in return for an honest review.**

Eva, an English living by the bay of West Dorset, has grown up fantasizing on her grandfather's fascinating tales from his younger days in Mandalay. This Eva is all grown-up now, working as an antique dealer in an emporium. Soon her dream of visiting the exotic lands of Burma comes true and in a fleet second she says "yes" to her business trip to Mandalay. But little did she know that her grandfather beheld a great secret to the mysterious land and an extrinsic treasure belonging to the history of Burma. And thus we step into *The Golden Land* rich with heritage and natural resources, where Eva embarks upon a journey to relive her grandfather's past with her own eyes and by returning the treasure- a chintze of a lion with "red glowing" eyes, to its rightful owner. Eva finds solace and her heart's desire in the Land of Gems where she not only dons the hat of a master sleuth but also vows to restore the balance in nature by safe-guarding the history of Burma. But will she succeed in doing what she wanted? And will her heart learn to trust again? Read this novel for sure to taste the exotic-ness not only in your mind but also with your senses.

The author, Rosanna Ley, is no-doubt a master story-teller and a skillful writer, who divinely crafted this tale along with the beauty of Myanmar. Her carefully chosen exquisite words have turned this novel into a delectable read. The characters are all so flawlessly contrived, and it is quite evident that the author has quite a strong psychological grip on these exquisitely crafted characters of her, which are bound to leave an impression on your mind. Firstly, Eva, the primary character is depicted someone who has a determination to achieve what her heart has aimed for, strong and confident and bit of daring, who adored and respected her grandfather as her own parents after her father's death. And the more I read about her, the more I fell for her. We got a taste of each character's demeanor and inner-self, with the help of their personal back-stories. There were so many characters that were not alive, but still we felt for them and got to know about their character quite remarkably. Moreover, the book has got a secret to be unlocked by Eva and the way the author has narrated and represented the whole things is quite intriguing.

Myanmar's breathtaking landscapes, history, Buddhism, tales of the last serving queen of Burma, teak and the tales of *Mogok* rubies, will keep you on the edge and all throughout this Eva's incredible journey, you'll lose yourself into the *Land of Immortality*.

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### **Vanessa Montês says**

(...)

As personagens principais são interessantes, mas de todas as histórias cruzadas, sem dúvida alguma que a melhor era a do avô de Eva e da amante. É uma história sobre amor, perda e redenção que acaba por colocar o romance de Eva totalmente a um canto.

É uma história com descrições lindíssimas e de toda a narrativa essas foram as principais passagens que me ficaram em mente. Um bom livro para quem gosta de viajar, literalmente, pelas páginas que tem à sua frente.



## L F says

“This is Burma and it is unlike any land you know about. “

\*Rudyard Kipling\*

This divine novel is escapism at its very best.

A young woman, Eva, is an antique furniture restorer. She is pleasantly surprised when her employer requests her to go to the ‘Golden Land’ of Myanmar. When Eva’s grandfather finds out about her trip, he asks her to do a special favor for him. His request is a bit of a shock to her. She was aware he had worked in the teak timber business when the country was called Burma and that he had enlisted in a Indian Division of the Gurkha Rifles. But she was now being requested to return an ancient chinthee to a very special friend.

Eva then starts on a journey of mystery, romance, danger and a cultural awakening. She walks on a thin line of what is apparent, yet unaware of the threats that stalk her.

The author, Rosanna Ley, has an uncanny ability to magically transport you to an exotic land, then surround you with sounds, smells and visuals that completely set you down in a wonderful foreign land she uses as characters in her books.

I am now ready to go on a trip to Cuba, in Miss Ley’s book “Last Dance in Havana “.

And.....you need to pick up this book and escape to Myanmar.

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