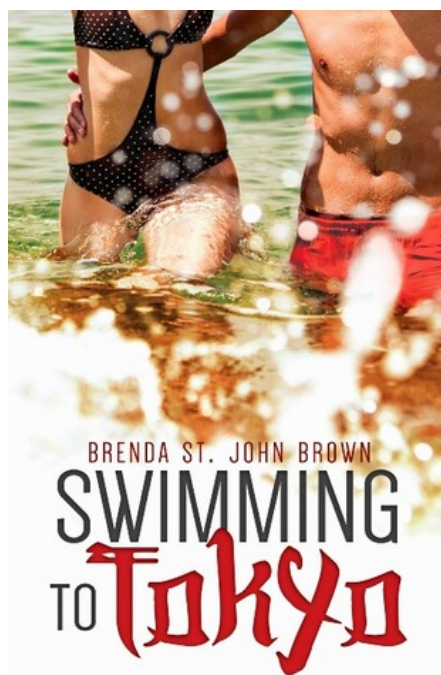




Swimming to Tokyo

Brenda St. John Brown

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Swimming to Tokyo

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Swimming to Tokyo Brenda St. John Brown

The rules for swimming are simple:

Rule #1: There is no lifeguard on duty. Since her mom died three years ago, nineteen-year-old Zosia Easton's been treading water. Living at home. Community college. Same old Saturday nights. So when her father breaks the news he's taken a job transfer-and by the way, it means renting out the house that's been her refuge-a summer in Tokyo feels like it just might be a chance to start swimming again.

Rule #2: Beware of unexpected currents. Finn O'Leary has spent God knows how many years trying to drown out his past. Juvenile detention. Bad decisions. Worse choices. He's managed to turn it around - MIT, Dean's List, a sexier-than-thou body with a smile to match - at least on the surface. When his mom asks him to spend the summer with her, Tokyo seems as good a place as any to float through the summer.

Rule #3: Swim at your own risk.

Swimming to Tokyo Details

Date : Published July 28th 2014 by Spencer Hill Contemporary

ISBN :

Author : Brenda St. John Brown

Format : Kindle Edition 235 pages

Genre : New Adult, Romance, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance, Fiction

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From Reader Review Swimming to Tokyo for online ebook

Allison says

I LOVED THIS! I didn't expect to. I expected it to be an overblown, melodramatic, tropey, sterotypical new adult novel. It wasn't.

I loved the way the conflict was written. I can't even describe it, but I'll try. Zosia and Finn have both had hard lives, Finn more so than Zosia, but they're both trying. They fail and freak out and do the wrong thing, but they're giving it a go and I loved that about this book. They didn't get in fights that lasted a week because of a mis-communication, they may walk away from each other and act like idiots, but they eventually made it right.

I loved the tension between the two leads and the slow burn of the romance.

The only thing I felt that was lacking was the development of the supporting characters. Zosia's dad was a weak "villain." He's definitely not an actual villain, per se, but he doesn't agree with her choices and seems to only exist to create conflict in that respect. I would have like to have seen his relationship develop more with Zosia, Eloise, and Finn.

There's a lot of Japanese and Polish words in this book and I love how the author didn't explain every little thing to the reader as if they've never read a book before and don't know how context clues work.

Finn is totally a believable damaged character. These characters are so well written. This book is actually good contrast to Lost and Found. Where Lost and Found's damaged characters seemed 2-dimensional and not well thought out, Swimming to Tokyo's Zosia and Finn were the opposite.

You know how many times I rolled my eyes while reading this? Zero. And I'm an eye roller.

Spoilerish: (view spoiler)

I adored this novel and am really sad that it won't be available in paperback until December. I placed my pre-order though and am excited to receive it!

As always, this review is also posted to my blog: Crazy Something Maybe

A.J. Pine says

Brenda St. John Brown, it's your fault I'm at work today on only four hours of sleep! But I wouldn't have it any other way.

You know how the TBR gets, and this book has been sitting on my kindle since its release. It's only been out a little over a month, and I still want to kick myself that it took me this long to read.

Swimming to Tokyo is gorgeous, an emotional, heart-wrenching debut. Zosia was the kind of heroine I could relate to--unsure of herself as she navigates big changes in her life. Not only is she still grieving the loss of her mother, but now she has to leave all that's familiar to spend a summer in Tokyo with her father who has to move there for work. Then there's Finn--oh Finn. This story may be told from Zosia's point of view, but this was as much Finn's story as it was hers, and Brenda St. John Brown masterfully lets his story unfold without us even realizing he's not the one telling it.

I love the way Zosia's experience with losing her mom helps her learn how to love a guy like Finn, and I love how Finn makes Zosia see herself in a way she never has before, always thinking a guy like Finn was out of her league.

This story is as much about family as it is about the building relationship between Zosia and Finn. It's emotional, steamy, and so full of heart. And let's not forget that this is an NA that takes place abroad, and the author brings Tokyo to life as much as she does her characters. Fabulous debut!

mich says

The book cover, title and blurb don't really do this book justice. It was much, MUCH better than its packaging makes it out to be.

The thing this book does really well is something that I'm a total sucker for: I absolutely LOVE stories that center around a new friendship. I love watching it develop and grow, seeing how each person slowly learns more of the other and how feelings can deepen. And then throw in some playful banter and heady sexual tension? um, YES. I like. The author worked the slow build-up like a pro and everything about these characters and their relationship felt genuine - I was impressed.

I also really liked the setting in Japan. I've been there twice as a tourist and it was fun remembering all the places I visited through Zosia. (view spoiler) Zo herself was a great character and pretty refreshing to me. I only got annoyed with her once in the whole book - just ONCE! Unheard of. And as to Finn -- I will shut up about Finn cuz you should just see for yourself.

I thought this book was sweet, but not overly sappy. Funny, but never ridiculous. And yep, angsty at times too, but the *good* kind - it never got to the point where I thought the characters were being stupid and dramatic just for the sake of being dramatic (hate that). There were *real* issues here, and it was all handled in the serious manner it warranted and in the end, I appreciated how the drama unfolded and was ultimately dealt with.

Not giving 5 stars though, because:

--I did get a bit bored here and there (it was minor though - I still ended up reading this in only 2 sittings)

--There were a handful of instances of too much telling when the showing was already sufficient. Overkill. (I thought I had bookmarked a couple of them so I could give an example, but I guess I didn't, sorry :P)

--Song lyrics. *barf* (view spoiler)

--I don't see myself ever re-reading this book.

But I really liked this overall and I wouldn't hesitate to try something else from this author.

Kim says

Find this review and more at [kimberlyfaye reads](http://kimberlyfayereads.com) .

I can't even begin to tell you just how much I loved *Swimming to Tokyo* – and I'm pretty sure my review won't do it justice – but I'm gonna try. From the minute I saw it on NetGalley and read the blurb, I knew I had to read it and that I would very likely love it. I was so right.

Zosia's life is turned upside down pretty early on in this book. Her mom passed away a few years ago and she's still dealing with that loss. Now her dad tells her he's moving to Tokyo for work and he's going to rent out their home while he's gone. Oh, and he has a girlfriend who will be in Tokyo, too. Zosia agrees to accompany him to Tokyo for the summer. She's excited to shake things up a bit, but she doesn't know just what she's getting herself into. Imagine her surprise when she discovers the guy she has had a crush on since high school, a guy she's seen around town lately and had some pretty interesting encounters with, is her dad's girlfriend's son. He's spending some time in Tokyo this summer, too.

While there's a lot to love about this book, my favorite part, hands down, is the characters. I loved Zosia. She was a regular girl dealing with a loss that changed her life forever. She's not perfect and she's self-aware enough to know it. She was a regular girl and the type of person I'd be friends with in real life. She was strong, smart and sassy. Finn was sweet and swoony, but he hadn't always been. The boy had a real piece of work for a father and he spent his life thinking he was just like him. He's spent some time in juvie and has quite an illustrious reputation with the ladies.

There's an undeniable attraction between Zosia and Finn from the beginning, but neither of them really think they're good enough for the other. Despite this, they begin to grow closer while they're in Tokyo. I loved watching them get to know each other and grow closer. Of course, the ticking clock of the time when they both leave Tokyo to head home hangs over both of their heads and they, along with the friends and family, have to wonder if this thing between them would have happened back in the US. Was it a convenience? Was it real? Would it last? Or would Zosia wind up with a broken heart, again, at the end of the summer? Is she willing to go against her dad's wishes and take a chance anyhow?

There was a fair bit of drama throughout this book. There were misunderstandings and miscommunications, but none of them were TOO MUCH, if you know what I mean. Each of these characters were dealing with a lot, as well as each other's baggage, and it all felt real to me. I could sympathize with each of them, even if I wanted to scream at them and tell them to stop being ridiculous at times. But even with all the ups and downs, I loved how Zosia and Finn found both each other and themselves during their summer in Tokyo. There's a tremendous amount of character development for each of them.

One of my favorite dynamics in this book was the one between Zosia and her grandmother. Babci and Zosia had a very special relationship and I'm sure most of that stems from her being a mother figure to Zosia after her mother passed away. She was often the voice of reason – and encouragement – when Zosia needed it most.

Swimming to Tokyo really is new adult contemporary at its best. It's an incredible debut book and is one of my favorites of the year so far. The portrayal of friendship, love and familial relationships in the book were real and genuine and completely believable. It was chock full of feels, emotions and sexy times. I'll definitely be looking for more from Brenda St. John Brown in the future.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.

Lola says

I received a copy in exchange for an honest review

I wanted to read this book after hearing some good things about it and because I was intrigued by the cover. This was totally different then I expected, but I still enjoyed it. yes it is about Tokyo and swimming, but mostly it's a romance story set in Tokyo. I did love the setting, although I wished there was some more swimming.

At first i had some trouble getting into this book, the first few chapters where a bit slow and took place in the Us and I just wanted them to get to Tokyo. Later on I did understand why the start in the Us was necessary for this story though. Also the writing style took me some getting used to. When I hesitantly picked up the book the next day after getting only 10% in the first day i actually read most of the rest of the book in one sitting.

I did really enjoy this book, although I can't really pinpoint why. It was a fun story and once the pace picked up I enjoyed it and wanted to keep reading. There are also some more difficult and hard scenes, although I thought they clashed a bit with the rest of the book at times.

I liked Zo and Finn, they are both fleshed out character, although it does take some time before we really get to know Finn. And Finn could be a bit too stubborn at times. There are some frustrating scenes between the two of them, but overall I liked how messy their relationship was, they had their up and downs, but never really let it go too far. I also liked how their relationship developed slowly at first and how they became friends first. Beside the two main character, the side characters weren't that interesting and besides Mindi I often forgot who was who.

I really liked the setting in Tokyo, although I would've liked a bit more focus on the country as sometimes it was easy to forget they actually where in Tokyo. There where some scenes where the differences between the two cultures was really obvious and it was fun to see how different Japan is. Also I had expected for swimming to play a more central point in this book, but while it was mentioned a few times that Zo liked to swim, there wasn't really more focus on that.

To conclude: this was a fun book and once I got past the first 10% I really enjoyed it and read most of it in one sitting. The main characters are nice, although Finn could be a bit stubborn at time and we don't learn much about the side characters. the romance was done well and had a slow build-up to friend first and then more. All in all this was a fun read with a nice setting.

Lady Vigilante (Feifei) says

DNF at 38%

As this book was recommended to those who loved Last Will and Testament I thought to give it a try. The writing was solid and the setting of the story was exotic but there was **ZERO** chemistry between the main characters. Thus, the romance completely felt flat and one-dimensional for me and I got bored easily.

It's possible I will go back sometime and attempt reading this again, but for now, I'm going to move on.

Jaime Arkin says

Let me just start off by saying what a wonderful surprise this book was. I picked this book up and didn't put it down again until I turned the last page! *Swimming To Tokyo* is Brenda St. John Brown's debut title, and I was completely blown away by it. I apologize in advance if my review gets a little flaily!

Zosia Easton, (or Zoe to the people who are NOT near and dear to her heart) is 19 and living at home with her father who works too much and attending classes at the local college. She's still dealing with the death of her mother from 3 years ago and trying to hold on to the memories of the time before she was gone... She keeps everyone except her best friend at a safe distance and never really puts her heart on the line for anyone. Her life has become stagnant. That is until her father breaks the news that he's gotten a promotion that includes a move to Tokyo, and he wants to go... he needs to go. He wants her to come and spend the summer and even though she struggles emotionally with letting go of the home she grew up in and the memories they created there, she agrees with her father and decides to join him.

Finn O'Leary has a past he's not proud of, and demons he battles every day. But he's turned things around and has spent the last year at MIT, making the Dean's List and applying himself... When his mom suggests he spend the summer with her, he realizes it might be an opportunity skim through the summer and also experience something he wouldn't have otherwise had the chance to do.

Neither one expects the other... in more ways than one.

So... what did I love besides everything? First and foremost it was the characters for me. Both Zosia and Finn were so wonderfully developed that I completely fell in love with them. I can't think of a single thing about them that bothered me or I would have changed. They are both at that time in life where you're still sort of a kid but now also sort of an adult and where Zosia has always had an amazing relationship with her family, Finn is the complete opposite. They have a connection to each other prior to arriving in Tokyo and it definitely added to the situation between them.

I really loved Zosia's relationship with her grandmother. Without her mother to lean on, especially for those milestones we all have growing up, it was nice to know she had Babci. And even though it isn't the ideal, she had some amazing advice for her and a lifetime of experiences to help her through some of her issues. Plus – bonus points for the added Polish in the story. But I also have to say that I really loved her relationship with her father. Even at the beginning when I was worried he worked too much and maybe didn't worry about his daughter enough, I still liked him. But when we got to see their interactions together in Tokyo, I really enjoyed the respect that they showed each other and the trust they had in each other. Was everything perfect? No... I mean, He definitely does work too much and he isn't completely honest with her about a few things up front. But when they were coming clean with each other and sharing their feelings about things, you could get a sense of their love for each other and that was really perfect to see.

And Zosia herself was snarky, and for the most part pretty self-assured and knows who she is. And I really liked her friendship with Mindy. Though we don't see a ton of it, what you do see is them supporting each other and I always love that.

The setting of this story is like it's very own character! While I've never been to Tokyo I feel like I was transported there with this story. I loved being a tourist through this book – hearing about the different cities and the transportation and the temples and the food (not that I would eat any of it!)... as a reader I got to

experience all of those amazing things through these characters experiences and it was really well done.

So... let's talk about Finn. You guys – this boy. Do you love the tattoo having, guitar playing, song writing, lover of books, attempting reform, bad boy? I don't always, but holy crap do I love this one!!

He so brings the swoons I can't even tell you!!

“This summer has been so much more than I ever thought it would be. You... someone like you... was never supposed to be here. That night on the swings, I remember thinking I wished I knew you. You were so beautiful. So genuine. And then you were here. And all I've wanted is more and more and more of you.”

BUT ... but but but he also has a lot of drama and some issues and he's not perfect. Everything is definitely not smooth sailing for these two. They struggle with being honest about their feelings, they struggle about being honest about their pasts and they struggle with what is in store for their futures. And it is a BIG struggle I can't lie to you. There are things that they are both dealing with that causes some friction between them and while their chemistry together is combustible... they have to continue to work at building the trust and opening up and putting down the walls they've both built up over time.

If you're looking for a fun, sexy, entertaining read and a great new voice in the New Adult world, then I definitely recommend *Swimming to Tokyo* when it is released! Thank you to Spencer Hill Contemporary for the advanced copy in exchange for my honest thoughts!

Kayleigh {K-Books} says

Swimming to Tokyo Review on K-Books

"Honesty's easy. It's trust that's hard."

Holy crap!

Swimming to Tokyo may just be the best NA Contemporary I have ever read in my life. I am already a huge fan of NA Contemporary but I so find some of them so similar that you can completely guess what has happened in the characters past and what is going to happen in the end. *Swimming to Tokyo* completely and utterly dashed all of my perceptions and blew me away. It is utterly phenomenal!

Zosia is still getting over the death of her mother from 3 years ago. She thinks about her every day. She misses her every day. When her Dad reveals that his job is moving him to Tokyo and she will be spending the summer there before she heads off to University Zosia is devastated. She isn't so sure that she is ready to say goodbye to her house... the house with all of her memories of her mother. When she arrives in Tokyo she runs into Finn. The boy from her school that she had a major crush on. The one boy who is untouchable. As their friendship develops and sparks fly Zosia and Finn have to face their pasts... and face the fact that after the summer they will both be leaving. Can they face their pasts and come out on top or with saying goodbye to Tokyo mean saying goodbye to the one beautiful thing that has happened to them both.

Brenda St John Brown is fast becoming an auto-buy author for me. I know I know this is her debut but I was

lucky enough to beta another book that she is working on and it was awesome so this is the second Brena St John Brown that I have read... and it is phenomenal! Brenda's writing style is just so incredible. It really sucks you in from the first paragraph and won't let you go until you have devoured the whole book in one sitting. This is what happened to me! I demolished *Swimming to Tokyo* in one sitting and I was slightly devastated when I had no more to read. Yeah... I loved it that much!

Swimming to Tokyo is one of the best NA Contemporary novels I have ever read. I think I adore this book so much because it is so different and unique to other books in the genre. I loved that there is no major drama in the girls past. I mean of course it's horrible that her Mom died but in a lot of NA Contemps the girl has always been abused or something like that which is dramatic and damaging. Zosia hasn't had this happen to her and I loved that. A lot of the horrible stuff going on is in the guy's past and I found this so refreshing and awesome. That instead of the guy having to help the girl through her traumatic past the roles were reversed. Add that to the fact that it is set in Tokyo, Japan. I loved it! So many of these books are set in the college somewhere in the US so to have this awesome summer in an exotic place it made me love it even more.

Swimming to Tokyo is the best NA book I have ever read. I loved every moment of it and I can't recommend this enough. If you are a fan of NA Contemporary books then this book is a must-read... if you don't really like NA Contemporary books then this book is still a must-read as it's so unique and different from others. I loved everything about this book. The culture of the setting, the storyline, the emotion, the characters... everything about it is absolutely phenomenal. If there is ONE book that you read this summer make sure that it is this one.

***"I don't have relationships and I sure as hell don't fall in love.
But I'm falling for you."***

Sara Bow says

Habe das Buch abgebrochen..null Japan feeling total vorhersehbar und einfach langweilig..ich wollte das Buch lesen weil es in Tokio spielt aber die Kulisse hätte man beliebig austauschen können so wenig wurde darauf eingegangen..dabei gibt es kaum eine Stadt auf der Welt worüber sich mehr erzählen lässt als Tokio !!! Keine Leseempfehlung von mir !

Dark Faerie Tales says

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

Quick & Dirty: Emotional, gorgeous new adult romance that I devoured. All romance fans need to pick this one up!

Opening Sentence: I wipe my nose on the sleeve of my T-shirt, right across the pink Nike swoosh. Disgusting, but it can't be helped.

The Review:

Zosia Easton's mother died a couple of years ago and she's never quite been the same. She hasn't taken any risks because she felt like she's had enough heartache in her life and she doesn't think she would be able to deal with more. She has a best friend, a loving family, not much of a love life, but at the moment she's

content. But she knows that she is stuck in a rut and she can't stay there forever. So when her father suggests that she spend the summer in Tokyo with him she decides it's probably a great opportunity to start over. Then she runs into Finn O'Leary, the boy she has had a crush on ever since high school. Her summer goes from being a relaxing experience to something much more. Finn might be her new start, but she soon realizes that love is complicated and she will have to be patient if she wants their relationship to last!

Finn hasn't always made the best choices in life and he has had some pretty serious consequences because of it. But he finally has his life back on track, he is attending MIT, on the Dean's List, and has managed to stay out of trouble. But some scars run deep and no matter how much you try to cover them up they never seem to go away. Spending the summer with his mother in Tokyo seems like the perfect way to relax and have a good time. What he didn't expect was that he would fall for a girl that he would never be good enough for!

Zosia is a very easy character to like and I felt like I could relate to her. She is smart, cute, and fun, but she also has a fair amount of insecurities. She is naturally a little on the reserved side and after her mother passed away she pretty much lost all her motivation to really succeed. She didn't start failing or getting in trouble but in areas of her life where she really excelled she just became more average. As the story progresses she slowly comes out of her shell and you finally get to see her to start living life to the fullest. I thought she was a wonderful character and I really enjoyed reading her story!

Finn is one sexy guy that I complete fell head over heels for. He has to deal with a lot of inner struggles and watching him heal was inspirational. He is already a good guy, he just needs to realize that he is. With his background and genetic makeup he feels like he's doomed to fail, but ultimately it is his choice who he becomes. I have always been a fan of hot broken guys and he definitely fits in that category.

I loved the relationship between Finn and Zosia, it was insanely cute! They have seriously hot chemistry and are very compatible. I've always been a sucker for when a friendship becomes more, but what I love most about this relationship was we got to see their friendship develop first and then the romance come later. Their relationship is definitely not easy but it teaches you that a good thing is worth fighting for no matter how hard it gets.

Swimming to Tokyo is an emotional, beautiful romance that I completely loved. The characters in the story were so engaging and I really could sympathize with their stories. There's tons of great sexual tension that kept me intrigued and the book is extremely fast-paced, so I got through it super quick. I thought the setting was gorgeous and while I've never been to Tokyo this made me really want to go and see some of the historical sites there. There were definitely some funny moments that helps to lighten the mood of the story but there was also some very emotional times that really pulled at your heartstrings. Basically, from the very beginning of the story I was totally hooked and read the entire book in one sitting. I honestly can't say enough good things about it, so if you are a new adult contemporary romance fan this needs to go on your to read list right now. You can thank me later when you enjoy it as much as I did!

Notable Scene:

"It's okay, Mom. It is. I'm just freaking out a little. I'm not ready for this. I mean, it's cool, but I just didn't think things would change until..."

"Until what?" The voice is soft and close in the dark.

My eyes fly open and I lurch off the swing. A hand catches my wrist, but I yank it away as soon as I've got my footing. "Jesus Christ. What are you doing?"

When I look up, my heart drops to my knees.

Finn O’Leary, as I live and breathe. Standing a foot away from me. It’s dark, but I know it’s him by the line of his jaw, the smooth buzz of his hair. His white T-shirt glows in the moonlight, and it’s the thing I can see most clearly about him. “I...nothing. What are you doing?”

“Nothing. Seriously, what are you doing here and why are you sneaking up on me?” My voice is loud and hard, and my pulse throbs in the back of my knees now.

“Whoa. Hey. I’m not sneaking up on you.” He takes a step back and holds his hands up like I’m threatening him.

“Really? What would you call it?” I can’t really see Finn’s expression, but in the back of my mind I wonder if I should be worried. I don’t even have my phone with me and it’s not like I know him very well. We had a bunch of random exchanges in high school, but comments on the lunch menu can hardly be called a conversation.

“I just...I saw you and I came to see if you were okay. You shouldn’t be here at night by yourself.” His tone hasn’t changed; it’s still soft and even. But, wow, his voice is deep. Has it always been? I’m sure he sounded different that day I saw him in Walgreens. Didn’t he?

FTC Advisory: Spencer Hill Press provided me with a copy of *Swimming to Tokyo*. No goody bags, sponsorships, “material connections,” or bribes were exchanged for my review.

G.S.Lima G.S.Lima says

3,5

Michelle [Helen Geek] says

11/22/2014 --

It's very early right now and there are all kinds of lightening and thunder outside right now.

What does this have to do with this story / this review? Not a damned thing, but the cover/blurb/title relate about as well here too. I felt it an oversell of what we actually get.

Let's jump into my thoughts on this one .. shall we?

**** SPOILERS WILL BE THROUGHOUT THIS REVIEW -- ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK ****

First, the things I liked about this story:

1 -- The characters. I liked Finn and Zosia. They are pretty typical for NA reads. Finn is a bit of a broken boy. He was harshly abused by his father through most of his childhood. He has anger issues, trust issues. He's incredibly smart; attends MIT. He's talented; he writes music and plays guitar .. for himself and a select someone - only. He is incredibly good looking and a man-whore. Oh .. yeah. There is a dragon tattoo hiding a scar to prove all the above. Nothing special really. Very typical. But the author does him well.

Zosia has lost her mother. She has only one real friend; Mindy. She has father who is wrapped up in himself

and moving on with life. She is more beautiful than she knows, but is rather bohemian too. She has a strong, loving relationship with her prickly Polish grand-mother. Again, pretty typical to this NA theme, but the author does her well.

Nothing special about either of these two, but they are well written.

2 -- The story was engaging enough to pull me through to the end. What you find quite a bit when reading NA is a real lack of story development. I didn't find this to be the case here. We had a story that had a beginning, middle, end. It wasn't terribly original, but it wasn't bad. More on this in a few minutes.

3 -- The cover and title catch you.

A few things that didn't connect with me:

1 -- If I think about it too hard, this one just didn't make a whole lot of sense. Why Tokyo? What are the chances that these two, who originally meet in a state side high school will meet again in Tokyo? Okay, so their parents are engaged in a dating relationship and they are thrown together constantly, but seriously? Why Tokyo? Maybe this relationship wouldn't have happened if they were in their own home turf. Maybe. But, I'm not buying it. Tokyo added a backdrop to the story, but not a great one and it just puzzled me.

The swimming thing too. It was just there. It didn't add anything to the story other than food for the cover and the synopsis. Neither were terribly clever adds when you look at the way the story evolved. Rather non-nonsensical if you ask me.

2 -- This mother of Finn's. I didn't like her role in his abuse. She seemed to be a coward. You can say she didn't know, but she should have. I don't buy it. And the way she acted when Zo's father was going nutz over his daughter dating her son. Very non-mothering for sure. She was pretty much neutral on the whole thing and I felt she portrayed true cowardice in parenting. No wonder Finn was a mess. He had absolutely no one to count on until Zo.

3 -- Zo's character was a problem for me. Her inconsistencies were a pain in the ass to read. She was confident, then she wasn't, then she was. I mean .. settle on a personality for this girl and be done with it. She didn't deserve Finn. I thought she needed to be more assertive. I don't believe in not stating your mind and playing an active role in your own life. Life is not something you do from the sidelines and reading about people who are passive and expect good things to happen to them is asinine.

4 -- I don't have a problem with no sex and lots of intimacy in a story. I think, if done well, this theme or concept can play out VERY well. However, this became monotonous for me here. All the kissing, rubbing, moaning, was a bit over the top. I didn't buy the reason it never happened and it just played as too .. too for me. Rather than provide a relationship that develops through intimacy and care, we instead see this non-sex thing play out as an annoying character in this book. I got to the point, when a non-sex scene was building in the story ... where I said to myself .. "here we go a-friggin-gain!" Ugh!! Skimmed over it all [speed bumps]. Poorly told. Poorly developed. Poorly played.

I enjoyed this story, but it had issues. I may read another book by this author, if it appeals to me and reviews give me an idea of what's going on because the blurbs this author writes are a bit misleading.

Thanks Jilly Boo for the loan of this one!

Happy Reading!

+++++

Overall Rating = 3 Stars

Book Cover / Book Blurb / Book Title = 3 / 3 / 3 = 3 Stars

Writer's Voice = 3 Stars

Character / Secondary Character Development = 4 / 3 = 3.5 Stars

"Did I like" Hero / Heroine = 4 / 2 = 3 Stars

Story / Background Story Development = 3 / 3 = 3 Stars

"Did I like the Damned Thing" = 3.5 Stars

Ending = 3 Stars

Worth the Chili = 5 Stars -- [\$1.99 on Amazon]

****Loaned to me!!**

Smexy [HEAT] Rating = Mild

235 pages

Ashley Blake says

Super sweet & steamy read! Oh, I do love the tortured boys...

Brooke (The Cover Contessa) says

I want to thank Spencer Hill Contemporary for providing me with a copy of this book to read and give an honest review. I will let you know that, yes, I do work for Spencer Hill Press as a publicist and no, this did not influence my opinion or review. The book on it's own is fabulous and no matter the publisher it needs to be read!

Blurb from Goodreads:

The rules for swimming are simple:

Rule #1: There is no lifeguard on duty.

Since her mom died three years ago, nineteen-year-old Zosia Easton's been treading water. Living at home. Community college. Same old Saturday nights. So when her father breaks the news he's taken a job transfer—and by the way, it means renting out the house that's been her refuge—a summer in Tokyo feels like it just might be a chance to start swimming again.

Rule #2: Beware of unexpected currents.

Finn O'Leary has spent God knows how many years trying to drown out his past. Juvenile detention. Bad decisions. Worse choices. He's managed to turn it around – MIT, Dean's List, a sexier-than-thou body with a smile to match – at least on the surface. When his mom asks him to spend the summer with her, Tokyo seems as good a place as any to float through the summer.

Rule #3: Swim at your own risk

To say I was pleasantly surprised by this book is an understatement. I loved the concept from the moment I read the blurb. I'm very into contemporary books right now. But I am also extremely picky about them because they have to have fabulous characters, an interesting plot, and some basis in reality. This book has all three and more.

Zosia (Zo, Zoe) really surprised me in this book. At the start, I was sure she was going to be so resistant to Tokyo that the book would focus on how much she hated her life while there. However, I was happy to see

her embrace Tokyo and her situation, as much as she was reluctant to go at first. Zosia is strong minded and independent and can easily take care of herself with no assistance. Not surprising that she adapts fairly well once abroad. She misses her life back in the states, but she's willing to take a chance to figure out what there is for her in Tokyo. She also has quite a bit of snark and there is nothing fake about her at all.

Enter Finn. Yup, this is a boy you are going to LOVE. Does he have demons, oh yes he does. And they keep him closed off from Zosia for many parts of the book. But this just lends to his intrigue (and for me the bad boy status is such a turn on in male characters I am immediately drawn to them). And his connection with Zosia cannot be denied. He's a swoon worthy book boyfriend for sure. I think my favorite thing about Finn is that he comes across as this bad boy, but he's super intelligent and has gone from battling his demons to coming to terms with them and turning his life around. He's not perfect, but believe me, you will overlook it. Just keep in mind that he has good intentions and wants to keep everyone around him, especially those he cares for, safe.

I love how Finn and Zosia explore Japan, while exploring themselves. The way Brown develops the characters makes you fall for them completely. I would imagine anyone would be hard pressed not to connect with them on some level. There was nothing about either character that I did not love.

Having never visited Japan, I can't say that I know where anything is. But that really didn't matter, Brown did a great job with her descriptions and I felt like I was there with the characters exploring the temples and marketplaces, the restaurants and tourist attractions.

I love how Finn and Zosia slowly open up to each other, and let their demons out. Typical of a contemporary is the angst that comes along with their growing relationship: Zosia's uncertainty of letting him in and whether or not he wants to allow it. She keeps almost everyone at a safe distance, fearing heartbreak as she had when her mother died. But she's strong and determined at the same time, and slowly realizes that perhaps Finn is just the person she needs to let in.

Brown's writing is truly great. The flow is easy, her pacing is spot on. There was never a time that I wanted to put this book down. It completely and totally engulfed me. She writes funny scenes, sexy scenes, and heart wrenching scenes with all the emotion you would expect. There's tons of struggling in this book. Prepare to have Brown throw your emotions all about!

Lovers of Colleen Hoover, Cora Carmack, and Katie McGarry will definitely enjoy this fun, funny, sexy and emotional read by Brown!

Alicia says

I *JUST* finished this book maybe 2 minutes ago so please, just give me a moment here:

Wow..okay, *sniff*

I really wasn't expecting this kind of story and I mean that in the nicest way possible. I was pleasantly

surprised, to say the least. What I really only knew about this book was the synopsis and let me tell you, it's SO much more than that.

I thought that this was going to be "just another summer-fling" book, but these characters are way more complex for that type of story. I was sucked into their story just about from the beginning. As I got deeper into the book I couldn't stop. I had no idea where the story would take me and I couldn't put the book down. I'm a very impatient reader. I'll admit that sometimes I'll scan the few last chapters so that I can see where the story will be going so that I can maybe stop me from heartache. I didn't do that at all with this book. I just kept going, kept reading, hoping that they would find their way.

The only part of the story that I had a hard time wrapping my head around was Finn's mother. She was very supportive of Zo and his relationship and I found that especially odd considering her own situation. (view spoiler) The interactions that Zo and Finn's mother had were few but impactful. (view spoiler)

Such an amazing story. It's definitely added to my reread shelf.
