

*Yuki Chan in Brontë Country*, by Mick Jackson

rev. by Ami Roberts

Faber and Faber

*Yuki Chan in Brontë Country*, by Mick Jackson, was published in January 2016 by Faber and Faber. Mick Jackson has written five other books, and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for *The Underground Man*. In the book, Yuki is visiting the UK to retrace her mother's steps from a previous visit using old photographs her mother had taken. A few days after she arrives in Haworth (aka Brontë Country), Yuki meets Denny, a girl who insists on helping Yuki with her quest. Together the girls visit the locations from Yuki's mother's photographs and try to uncover Yuki's mother's mysterious quest on her previous trip.

The story is set in Haworth, West Yorkshire, England. Yukiko (Yuki) is a lovable childlike character though she is actually in her early twenties. She sees herself as a psychic detective and she wants to find out if and why her mother committed suicide after coming ten years before. Her friend, Denny who shows up later in the book is more spontaneous and adventurous. Denny helps Yuki find out about her mother but it's never made clear in the story, why she cares so much.

The tones in the story are very cold, mysterious and grave. It reads like a mystery novel except that the detective is rather unconventional and the details of the story are not readily revealed. I think that the tones might be clearer if the storyline was clearer at the beginning.

Yuki's character is very well done and complex. Yuki's friend, Denny is kind of a mysterious character and not very much information is given about her. I think that the characterization could have been a bit more complex for some of the side characters and they could have been introduced a little quicker in the story.

Context is few and far between. It's written more like the author is slowly revealing little hints of what is yet to come but they don't feel like enough. For example, Jackson writes on page 75 that not long after Yuki's mother came back from her trip ten years earlier she went insane. This is the first mention of why Yuki is so strongly wanting to recreate her mother's trip. I think it might have been more effective to introduce context a bit earlier in the story as this technique slows down the story a lot.

The author includes a lot of Yuki's memories and imaginative/random ideas in between the storyline. For example, on page 9 the reader is told all about Yuki's ideas for improving airports and how she would simply make an elevator or maybe a chair lift that could take you anywhere in the world in seconds. These moments are random and don't really connect with the storyline at all. I

think they take the reader abruptly out of the story as they happen and then abruptly back into the story when they end. This tends to ruin the tension build up in the beginning of the book. By the end the tension is done very well.

Anyone who has a passion for long unsolved mysteries and haunting family secrets would love to read this book. Readers that don't mind waiting a bit for the grand reveal and who appreciate the author's style of revealing very little detail even to the end. This would be a great read for a long bus ride or just sitting with a hot cup of tea.