

★ **Sachiko****End Sh saku**

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Set during World War II, End Sh saku's novel *Sachiko* shifts from the fated city of Nagasaki to the horrors of Auschwitz, developing versatile individual and intersecting perspectives with compassion.

Christianity is not native to Japan, but following the persecution of earlier converts, it is allowed to continue under governmental surveillance. In 1930, Sachiko and Sh hei are young friends and fellow Christians whose relationship deepens into a romantic one.

As children, Sachiko and Sh hei meet Father Kolbe, a Polish Catholic priest with a mission in Nagasaki. When Father Kolbe returns to Poland, he is arrested by the Nazis and sent to Auschwitz. Though he endures abuse, starvation, and ultimate martyrdom, he urges his fellow concentration camp prisoners to remember God and the true goodness of humanity.

Back in Nagasaki, Sh hei has literary aspirations and goes to college. He soon realizes that Japan's artistic spirit has been replaced by conformity and aggression; his fate is to be sent into battle. Meanwhile, tenacious Sachiko volunteers at a weapons factory and prays that her quirky, exasperating boyfriend will return to her.

With subtle yet unsparing intensity, *Sachiko* details Auschwitz's dehumanizing barracks and crematoriums. In grim preparation for a kamikaze mission, Sh hei toughens his mind and body at one of Japan's special military training schools. And on the day that America's cataclysmic atomic weapon is launched onto Nagasaki, Sachiko emerges from the bomb shelter wondering how "the world could be transformed into a veritable hell in a mere instant."

Beyond this epic sweep, however, are moments of beauty, humor, and affection that make the war's tragic consequences seem even more devastating. An extraordinary novel by one of Japan's literary masters, *Sachiko* is a testament to shared experiences, cruelty, loss, and the persistence of love and faith.

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