FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Mystery

The Sleeping Dragon
Miyuki Miyabe
Deborah Stuhr Iwabuchi, translator
Kodansha International
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Ever since the tsunami, things have been getting stranger and stranger for reporter Shogo Kosaka. From the moment he meets teenage psychic Shinji Inamura in the storm and begins investigating a young boy's death, a mysterious web of dubious extra-sensory perception (ESP) and very real threats to himself and others tightens around him. What begins as mere curiosity into Inamura's alleged abilities becomes a race to stop a crime. Kosaka never doubts the danger, but no one knows what form it will take or who will be hurt. And the supposed psychics are afraid to talk.

In *The Sleeping Dragon*, author Miyuki Miyabe weaves a classic noir suspense novel and a cozy mystery into a tale of supernatural intrigue. She gives subtle depth to her characters who become unlikely, yet relatable and sympathetic heroes. Many come from difficult backgrounds or face challenges that are unique to this genre. Readers wander into satisfying dead ends and down enjoyable false paths to the solution. She writes so artfully that the reader gets lost in the story, almost overlooking subtle clues. Most of the time, however, the reader simply delights in sleuthing along with the protagonist for answers to their questions. Thankfully, the translator, Deborah Stuhr Iwabuchi, skillfully maintains the simplicity and beauty of the prose.

As Japan's leading mystery writer, Miyabe has authored more than forty novels. She has received numerous awards for her work, including the Naoki Prize, Japan's top award for popular literature. The reason is obvious. Her writing avoids unnecessary gore or gimmicks. Instead, she focuses on slow, methodical, and simple ways of drawing the reader in and building suspense. *The Sleeping Dragon* proves refreshing as it quietly and naturally piques the reader's curiosity. No clichéd plot elements exist in Miyabe's world either. She trusts, and rightly so, that the questions she poses are quite enough.

This book offers an enjoyable read for mystery lovers, though those loving heavy-handed drama won't find it here. Instead, readers will find a gentle and comforting feast of a read, with just enough exotic spice. The dragon of the title refers to the psychic powers we all possess, but rarely fully realize. Like Miyabe's main character, readers will wish they could tap these powers as they puzzle out a solution that remains well hidden. But then again, knowing too much might just spoil the fun.

Diane Gardner