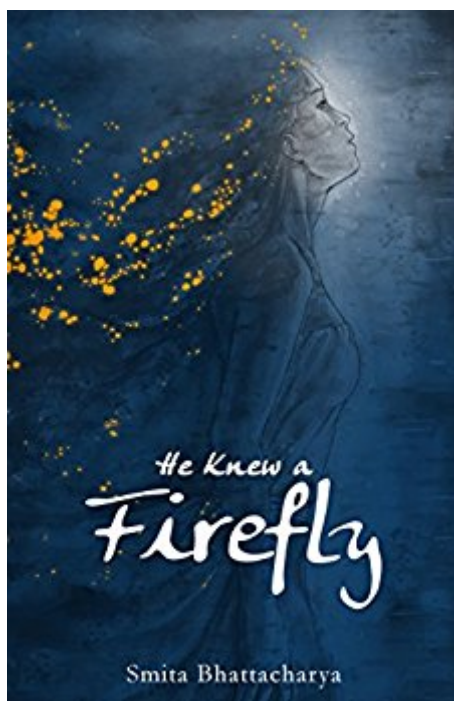


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He Knew A Firefly



Synopsis

An INDIE NEXT GENERATION BOOK AWARD Finalist, *He Knew a Firefly* has been described as lyrical, powerfully emotional and suspenseful. Six-year-old Akshara watches her mother die. At thirteen, she watches her best friend die. She's heartbroken, but their deaths don't surprise her. She has a secret – she can glimpse into the future of those she loves. For her it's not a blessing, but a curse; every life she touches is thrown into turmoil, friends abandon her, and she is overwhelmed by more guilt than she can bear. Then, one day, she sees her own unhappy fate. Does Akshara bring upon her loved ones the misfortunes they blame her for? Will Akshara be able to save herself after she has lost everyone she loved? Or will she lose her sanity like her mother did? A gripping, evocative, and sometimes surreal page-turner, *He Knew a Firefly* follows Akshara as she tries to light the dark, unknown pathways for her loved ones, before being ultimately consumed by the flames herself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I would have rated *He Knew a Firefly* as 3.5 if that option were available. Akshara, a beautiful and charismatic young storyboard artist from India is more cursed than blessed with dreams that foretell the future. The occurrences she sees in these prescient glimpses will come to pass, they cannot be

changed, but sometimes, especially with hindsight, some mitigating kindness or healing wisdom is possible for those whose lives are impacted. Akshara does her best to ease the pain and heartache she sees coming, often at a great personal cost. The premise of this novel is intriguing and there were so many aspects of the story that I enjoyed. Ms. Bhattacharya has a rich vocabulary and a gift for description (her depictions of life in India are lively, colorful, and often very tactile), her characters are well developed and complex, and the central narrative of the novel is compelling. "so why did I sometimes feel I had to push myself to keep reading? He Knew A Firefly is populated by a great many secondary characters that assume center stage for protracted sections of the novel, each with a story of his or her own and a lengthy and painstakingly developed back story, so much so, that I kept wishing the author had structured the book as a series of connected short stories (one for each of the individual characters). I also felt that at times, some of the long descriptive passages could have been more focused.

Smita Bhattacharya's book *He Knew a Firefly* is a delicious blend of ethereal and surreal yet down to earth and true to life all at the same time. She draws you in from the first page and keeps you hooked to the last. She is gifted at capturing the atmosphere and mood of the settings and scenes within her book to such an extent that I felt as if I was living the characters' experiences with them. She skillfully blends the stories of three main characters, with each story written from that character's point of view, in a way that is reminiscent of a thick plait of hair being braided, with all events coming together in one single strand. I have edited hundreds of books in the past decade, and I can honestly say that this is one of the best books I've read, and it was a joy to edit. I encourage you to read it and enjoy immersing yourself in the scope and breadth of the human experience, replete with the full range of emotions from deeply felt passion and love to pain and loss, a palette of life stories grounded in reality yet laced with a touch of the infinite, interwoven and overlapping, touching each other before flitting off into the darkness like a firefly.

I'm a long-time fan of novels that are set in other cultures, so I was thrilled to be offered this title to review. In a similar vein as *The Kite Runner* and *The Rose Hotel*, this book instantly has the power to put you in the setting and the culture without having to provide endless backstory in order to hold your hand through it. For example, the author did a masterful job interjecting "foreign" words and phrases in her dialogue, but did not need to translate those terms for the reader; the tone of the conversation told us all we needed to know in order to understand. While the plot itself is intriguing, what struck me was the universal application of it. This book didn't have to take place throughout

India or Paris, it could have just as easily spoken to a vast audience of readers no matter where and when it was set. The fact that the author brings her readers to these locales is simply another layer of enjoyment to the reading process. But the most important part of this novel is the absolutely exquisite writing. It is equal parts joy and heartbreak, and at times it is even bone-chilling, but all throughout the book the writing wraps you in such a familiar sense of understanding. The most horrific details are written with such finesse that you are in the scene but still somehow safely encased in the author's words. As someone who reads and reviews as many books as I do, it's easy to think you know how it will end, but that's also not the case. Fans of stories that take them outside their own world views and outside their ability to suspend belief will treasure this one.

I didn't love this book. I didn't hate it either, but I didn't love it. *He Knew A Firefly* was okay; I didn't mind reading it one time, but I wouldn't want to read it again. The idea of the story was interesting. I liked how it involved more than one central character, while still maintaining a main character, but I hate how it kept jumping from one person's point of view to the others. The entire book seemed to be written in first person, and kept switching. I found it to be annoying, trying to remember who's point of view I was reading at the time. I found the story to be well-written, descriptive, and the characters were complex, which I really liked. Overall, I would definitely recommend the book to others, as it really wasn't bad. I just personally couldn't get into it for some reason. **I received a free copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.**

The novel follows Akshara who has the magical ability to glimpse into the future of people she knows. Sounds fun, right? Not so when it's not good news. And not when you don't know fully how it will turn out. She does try hard to love, to help people, to make them lead better lives despite knowing what it would bring her. And it's quite a journey, across countries, across people, across years. Quite a journey this. All the characters seemed alive to me, as if I was living their lives. And when it finally ended, it was sadly satisfying, the best kind to be. Highly recommended.

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