



Toward Night's End

M.H. Sargent

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This WWII novel of Japanese-American honor and patriotism begins on March 30, 1942 when more than 250 Japanese-Americans living on Bainbridge Island, in Puget Sound, Washington, are being evacuated. The process goes quite smoothly until the Army discovers that a 21-year old Japanese-American fisherman, Matthew Kobata, is missing. During their search for Matthew, two Caucasian men are found murdered on the island.

Seattle detective Elroy Johnstone has come to the island to investigate the murders, and evidence is leading him to suspect Matthew may be involved. But he is one step behind as Matthew escapes on his fishing boat. With Matthew now emerging as the prime suspect in the murders, the detective's investigation then takes him to Seattle where another murder has occurred. This time a Japanese-American.

Complicating matters, the coroner finds that both the Japanese-American and one of the Caucasian men have identical tattoos, both on the left ankle. But what do these tattoos mean? And who has killed these three men? Matthew? And if so, why? And most important, where is Matthew?

Johnstone's investigation will take him from Seattle's Naval Air Station to the Manzanar Relocation Center in Owens Valley, California, and back to Bainbridge Island. And, although he doesn't know it, the clock is ticking and a countdown is in place for an event that could result in the unthinkable taking place *Toward Night's End*.

Toward Night's End Details

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Tracy says

I will not summarize the plot because it looks like many others here have done that already. I enjoyed the descriptions of the Japanese-Americans and the struggle that they had during World War Two. They were portrayed with a certain dignity and desire to treat others respect even while in the relocation center. I have seen some pictures in a museum of the areas that they had to live in. This book brought more of that to life for me.

Also, I found the mystery of the book to be interesting. The detective from the local police department interviews everyone that he can find that might shed light on the case. Over time, it becomes a much bigger issue than the effort to solve some murders. The book was fast paced. I sometimes got confused on which character was the point of view character at the time.

Karen says

Two threads, wonderfully interwoven into one story. On the one hand this is a mystery that keeps you guessing until the end. On the other hand it's a glimpse into a Japanese internment camp just after Pearl Harbor. Prejudice, faith in family, and honor abound. Definitely a 5 star rating!

Red Rocky says

This is the story of a young Japanese man living with his family in the US at the outset of WW2. It is a story of intrigue, mystery & bravery. What it lacks is depth and the fascinating history of the Japanese Americans living through this time. An enjoyable read, but I would've liked background knowledge.

Kim says

I liked the plot, but the writing drove me crazy. There were so many sentence fragments, and everyone was surprised, constantly. I get it, what happened was surprising.

Paula says

This is a good book mystery/historical fiction about the Japanese American's. It is mostly a mystery but talks about the camps that the Japanese were sent to. It was a good clean read.

Tim says

This was a very good book - a solid mystery/thriller. I really enjoyed how Sargent wrote about the Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. I've read a lot about the European side of the war, but this was a great story dealing with the Pacific front.

The plot and characters were well developed. I really liked the character of Matthew, as well as the Seattle police detective.

I would highly recommend this book to others!

Karen says

Once I started reading this book, I could not put it down.

I loved the historical information woven into the story and really felt like I could understand what it must have felt like to be interned as a Japanese American after Pearl Harbor was attacked. Or how your devotion to country was questioned and the prejudice that other Americans had towards them.

Well written story.

Karen Noland says

While I enjoyed the story and the mystery, I felt this book lacked depth, character and feeling. I also did not find a sense of time and place in this book. So much more could have been developed to really entice the reader into the worlds of the characters.

Suzanne L Hay says

An American Story

This book is America at it's best and worse. It gives some insight to the plight of Japanese Americans during a time of embarrassment to the country.

Chaplain Stanleigh Chapin says

Bainbridge Island beautiful!

A Great friend was from there and it is one of the places that really brought the story to life

Carl says

If one likes a mystery and historical fiction, this is the book for you. M. H Sargent's "Toward Night's End" is a well written mystery, with likable characters, an historically engaging story line, and well developed setting and local color. "Toward Night's End" is a complex story of murder, sedition and the internment of the more than 250 Japanese-Americans living on Bainbridge Island, near Seattle, Washington, in 1942. The greed, fear, prejudice of the government ordered internment of the Japanese-Americans is revealed through the characterization, and especially as we follow the Kobata family's trials. However, the book is not really about that; "Toward Night's End" is a murder mystery. It is a complex mystery that keeps you guessing as Sargent gives the reader piece after piece of puzzle without revealing too much until we get to the end. Thus, if you enjoy historical fiction and a good mystery, I strongly recommend this book to you.

The story takes place in 1942 during the relocation and internment of the more than 250 Japanese-Americans living on Bainbridge Island. The American Army lead relocation goes quite smoothly, until the Army discovers that one "Jap" is missing (therefore, he must be a spy). 21-year old Matthew Kobata, a fisherman, did not show up for the ferry. During their search for him, two murdered, Caucasian men are discovered on the island. Seattle detective Elroy Johnstone investigates the murders, and evidence begins to mount against Matthew. Pressure builds as this murderer – this spy – must be caught; meanwhile, time is passing – moment by moment – approaching the novels' climactic event "Toward Night's End."

The title "Toward Night's End" holds multiple meanings, but I will leave that for each person to interpret. The plot was developed around the historical Japanese-American internment, which does become a sub-plot of the story. From this situation, fear and prejudice surfaces from both groups, which Sargent develops a moralistic theme for us to consider. The characters are well developed, and we care about them. Matthew, the protagonist, Johnstone, the Seattle police detective, and the Kobata family were especially well developed, and one could not help but become concerned about them as the story progressed. A well written book, and I will look for more books by this author.
