



Book Club Discussion Notes

The Secret Meaning of Blossom

T.M. Parris

A thriller set in Tokyo featuring hacking, cosplay and Japanese art.

Fourth in the Clarke and Fairchild spy thriller series. Published August 2021.

Around 300 pages (Paperback version), 76,000 words

Average rating 4.1/5 on amazon.co.uk (289 ratings as of Jan 2023)

Available on Amazon as an e-book, paperback and case laminate hardback

Universal link: <https://books2read.com/secretmeaningblossom?store=amazon>

Blurb

When her brother disappears in Japan, she realises she's not the only one with secrets.

Ambitious British spy Rose Clarke wants to focus on the job she does best and save lives. But a bizarre postcard from her brother in Japan makes her fear for his safety. When she tries to find him she discovers that the anonymous group pursuing him is much more dangerous than she could have imagined.

Plunged into a world of manga cosplayers and the yakuza, she is forced to accept help from cynical information mercenary and entrepreneur John Fairchild, who is intent on uncovering the secrets of his own past. Their stories are already becoming more closely linked, and their presence in Japan precipitates a far greater danger. The FBI gets involved and Fairchild's loyalties are called into question. In her desperation to protect her family, has Rose placed her trust in the wrong person?

Featuring hackers, encryption and crypto currency, *The Secret Meaning of Blossom* is vividly set in quirky modern day Tokyo where naive innocents are caught up with some of the most dangerous and ruthless criminals in the world.

Real-life reference: the character of Takao is named after a real person, a sometime friend and boss of the author when she lived in Japan in 1993-4. They have since lost touch but the book is dedicated to him.

Discussion questions:

1. James Clarke: is he nothing but a blundering idiot, or smarter than he seems?
2. Rose's relationship with her brother has become distant since childhood. What does that say about her, and how do their experiences together in this book change things?
3. Are Rose and James as different as they might first seem? Or do they have quite a lot in common after all?
4. Are the actions of Mirai and her gang justified in the end?
5. Fairchild's discoveries about events in his own past become ever more unsettling. What did he want from coming to Japan, and what did he get instead?
6. Fairchild's promise to Darcy Tang is never stated in this book. What kind of promise might he have made to her?
7. Do you understand or have any sympathies with Rapp's serious departure from protocol in her treatment of Milo?
8. Yoyogi Park, Trade Winds, the amine-themed restaurant, a cargo ship, Disneyland: which setting in this book was the most quirky and unusual?
9. Unlike in other countries, Fairchild relies on a fixer, Takao, to operate in Japan. Why is this, and does it make sense?