



A Thousand Stitches: A Novel

Constance O'Keefe

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Based on the true story of an American-born Kamikaze Pilot. The central story of this novel is told as a memoir written by the main character, Isamu (Sam) Imagawa, who was born in America but who served as a pilot for the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II. The story recounts the time Sam spent in Japan, from 1932 to 1963, spanning his early school days, his boyhood crush and young love for Michiko Miyazawa, his military career, his unhappy marriage, and his final escape to the U.S.A. with his second wife. The secondary plot, is told from the perspective of Michiko, who recounts her life in Japan during wartime and reconstruction. The two alternating plots are held together symbolically by a senninbari, a belt with a thousand stitches, which Michiko made for Sam while Sam was a pilot for the Japanese Kamikaze Corps. A Thousand Stitches makes a strong anti-war statement, summed up by Michiko's friend Keiko: "How stupid, stupid, stupid everything about this war is!" This novel was inspired by a memoir, Shig: The True Story of an American Kamikaze," written by Shigeo Imamura, whose life closely paralleled that of the hero of A Thousand Stitches.

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