

= Hotarubi no Mori e =

Hotarubi no Mori e (Japanese : ????? , lit . " Into the Forest of Fireflies ' Light ") is a one @-@ shot sh?jo manga written by Yuki Midorikawa . It was published in the July 2002 issue of LaLa DX in Japan , and in July 2003 it was reprinted in a tank?bon short story collection of the same name , which included four romantic one @-@ shot stories written by Midorikawa . Hotarubi no Mori e tells the story of a young girl named Hotaru and her friendship with Gin , a strange young man wearing a mask , who she meets at the age of six in a mountain forest near her grandfather 's country home . Hotaru learns that her friend is supernatural and that touching Gin will cause him to disappear forever . Hotaru returns every summer to spend time with Gin , and their relationship matures as both struggle with its limitations . The inspiration to write the story came suddenly to Midorikawa , who immediately drew the manga ? a process that went smoothly despite some initial conflicting elements . Hotarubi no Mori e is considered a starting point for Midorikawa 's best known work , Natsume 's Book of Friends .

A 44 @-@ minute anime film with the same title was produced in 2011 at the anime studio Brain 's Base and directed by Takahiro Omori . The film starred Japanese voice actors Ayane Sakura and K?ki Uchiyama , and its soundtrack included music by Makoto Yoshimori . The film maintained a strong following for months in Japan after its opening on September 17 , 2011 . The European premiere of Hotarubi no Mori e was on October 8 , 2011 at the Scotland Loves Animation festival , where it won the Jury Prize . It was screened at the Leeds International Film Festival , Anime Contents Expo and Anime Expo convention , and also won the Animation Film Award at the 66th Annual Mainichi Film Awards .

The anime was released on Blu @-@ ray Disc (BD) and DVD in Japan on February 22 , 2012 . An additional story related to the original manga and anime film , titled Hotarubi no Mori e Tokubetsuhen (????? ???) , was released in a keepsake edition of the manga 12 days prior to the release of the anime . Both the keepsake edition manga and the limited edition BD ranked No. 13 on Japan 's Oricon sales chart shortly after their release . Sakura reported experiencing a strong emotional reaction to the story while recording the voice of Hotaru , and Midorikawa acknowledged that the story had a positive impact on her career . Reviewers universally praised the anime film for its beauty , simplicity , and tenderness , likening it to the works of Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli and Makoto Shinkai . There were few criticisms , most commonly focusing on its short length .

= = Plot = =

The original Hotarubi no Mori e sh?jo manga and subsequent film tell the story of a six @-@ year @-@ old girl named Hotaru Takegawa , who gets lost in a forest inhabited by a yamagami , or mountain spirit , as well as y?kai (strange apparitions from Japanese folklore) . She is found by a mask @-@ wearing , human @-@ like entity named Gin , who informs Hotaru that he will disappear forever if he is touched by a human . Gin then leads Hotaru out of the forest . Hotaru returns to visit Gin in the forest over the next few days and they become friends despite the limitations on their interactions . Although at summer 's end she must leave Gin to return to the city and her studies , Hotaru promises to return to visit him every summer holiday . As the years go by , Gin hardly ages while Hotaru physically matures and grows closer to his apparent age . Upon reaching adolescence Hotaru begins to struggle with their budding romance and their uncertain future together , while Gin wishes he could touch and hold the young woman that Hotaru has become . When Hotaru reaches high school , Gin takes her on a date to a festival in the forest hosted by the spirits . The night ends in tragedy when Gin mistakenly touches a young boy who sneaked into the spirit festival , though before he disappears , he and Hotaru embrace and confess their love for one another . The story ends with Hotaru accepting her pain and moving on with her life . The 2011 anime film adaptation of the story follows all of the events from the manga , adding only a few additional scenes .

Hotarubi no Mori e Tokubetsuhen (????? ???) , published in 2011 , expands on the original story with a short episode told from Gin 's perspective . When Hotaru is a teenager , she shares some pudding with Gin before she leaves at the end of the summer . After Hotaru leaves , the y?kai

attempt to cheer Gin up by bringing him a couple persimmons , one of the most prized treats on the mountain . Impressed with the taste , Gin thinks of sharing one of these persimmons with Hotaru next year . After discussing ways to preserve the persimmon with the y?kai and a spirit named Matsumino , Gin sets off to find ice on the highest mountain peak , but is disappointed to find none during the summer . When Gin returns scratched up from his fruitless search for ice , Matsumino feels sorry for him and offers to deliver the persimmon to Hotaru for him . However , not knowing where she lives , Matsumino gets lost and grows hungry . After he returns from his unsuccessful attempt to find Hotaru , Matsumino apologizes to Gin for eating the persimmon and Gin forgives him . The story concludes with Gin seeing Hotaru the following summer and wondering if he will be able to tell her about his feelings for her .

= = Production = =

= = = Manga = = =

The author , Yuki Midorikawa , explained in the postscript of the Aizoban Hotarubi no Mori e reprint that the idea for the story came to her more easily than for any other work up until that point . Although she had been planning to write a story as challenging as Hotarubi no Mori e once she had gained more experience writing manga , she decided to undertake the project sooner when the idea for the story suddenly came to her . Afraid that she might lose the idea , she promptly began to draw it , and Midorikawa 's writing progressed smoothly despite having numerous conflicting ideas for the development of the story .

The story came from Midorikawa 's desire to draw several scenes . She was interested in drawing a scene where a boy dodges a girl who is falling towards him . She also wanted to draw a shadowy summertime forest , which would allow her to expand the range of tones and blacks used in the manga . A third inspiration was the desire to depict a more tranquil summer festival than those she had drawn before . She was also eager to create the mask worn by Gin at the festival , which resembled the face of a fox whose typical slitted eyes were replaced by oval ones to give the mask a " creepy " hybrid fox @-@ primate appearance .

The supernatural love story between Hotaru and Gin is considered a starting point for Midorikawa 's best known work , Natsume 's Book of Friends , which also depicts ill @-@ fated interactions between humans and y?kai (sometimes referred to as ayakashi) . In both stories , differences in lifespan and other insurmountable barriers mar their relationships and attempts to understand each other .

Prior to the anime film 's theatrical release in 2011 , Midorikawa published an additional chapter to the story , Hotarubi no Mori e Tokubetsuhen . Since the original story was already complete and she initially felt uncomfortable about adding to it , she opted instead to expand on the story from Gin 's perspective .

= = = Anime = = =

According to the animation director , Yumi Satou , the anime project originated with his personal wish to animate original manga , which he enjoyed . The project was given approval in early 2011 , and according to the film 's producer , Shuko Yokoyama , the anime was originally planned as an OVA (Original video animation) , which would not have been released in theaters . However , the popularity of Natsume 's Book of Friends , which was also written by Midorikawa and developed by the same production staff , gave them the support they needed to create an anime film . The film was produced by the studio Brain 's Base and directed by Takahiro Omori , starring Japanese voice actors Ayane Sakura as Hotaru and K?ki Uchiyama as Gin . Satou had frequently worked together with Yokoyama on previous projects . Other staff included Akira Takata (character design) , Yukihiro Shibuya (art) , Hiromi Miyawaki (color design) , Hitoshi Tamura (photography) , and Kazuhiko Seki (editor) . The anime film had a very small staff because it was a very short film and

was produced domestically , unlike the TV series , Natsume 's Book of Friends , which was primarily outsourced to other countries ? a common trend in anime production .

In March 2011 , midway through production , the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami struck Japan . Despite the national tragedy , the production crew continued its work , and according to Omori , the team hoped that their work would help soothe the nation after it had time to recover . Omori speculated that this was part of the reason for the strong positive reception and the awards the anime later received .

The setting in the manga was based on a shrine in the Kumamoto Prefecture of Japan , known as Kamishikimi Kumanoimasu Shrine , which is dedicated to Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto from Japanese mythology . The animation crew spent two hours searching the location for settings on which they could base their art . Because the story was set in the forest of a mountain god , Omori intended the art to represent a " different world " where the background scenery was obscure and the blue sky was slightly brighter than normal . Omori and his crew devoted extra attention to lighting and coloring , making the forest dim with light coming through the canopy and landing on the characters with the appropriate intensity . The contrast between light and dark was also used during the festival scene to emphasize its bizarre nature , reminding the audience that Hotaru should not be there . Because of the significance of the summer season to the story , Omori deliberately loaded the film with summer scenes , such as rustling leaves and chirring of cicadas .

According to the Omori , the idea for the opening scene was suggested by Yokoyama ; following traditional cinematography , the images of scenes indirectly related to the main story were played while the opening credits appeared . Originally intended to show Gin 's life before meeting Hotaru , Omori allowed the viewer to decide its relationship in time with the main story . Omori also opted to start Hotaru 's narration from a time after the story 's main events ; showing Hotaru as an 18 year old who had just graduated high school and heading back to visit her relatives near the forest . By having Hotaru tell the story in retrospect , Omori thought it provided a more human feel and gave more meaning to the final scene , where Hotaru expresses her hopes for the future by saying , " Come on , let 's go . "

One of the difficulties in adapting the manga to anime , according to Omori , was that the developing relationship between Hotaru and Gin had to be shown visually , rather than through monologue . One way in which this was done used Hotaru 's yearly change in height ? by subtly showing the convergence of the length of their strides when walking , the audience is led to perceive a change in their relationship . Omori also wanted to portray more depth to Hotaru 's character by expanding on her school life . Although the manga depicted a brief flash of her life in middle school , the anime depicted scenes from both aspects of her life .

Omori shared a draft of the film with composer Makoto Yoshimori so that he could write music to match the tempo . However , there was some disagreement over the ending theme , which Omori and Yoshimori discussed at length over email . Although neither would compromise on key points , the issue was eventually settled and the ending theme was finalized .

Hotaru 's voice actor in the anime film , Ayane Sakura , was a fan of Midorikawa and owned the original manga . In an interview , she mentioned that she was thrilled to get an audition and ultimately the role , and also admitted that she shed tears while recording . Kōki Uchiyama , who played Gin , read the manga for the audition , and confessed that he was concerned at first about how to portray his character , though his work made him feel good . The film was initially pre-recorded , where the voice acting was recorded prior to the creation of the animation , but later re-recorded for the final version . According to Omori , this allowed the animation to emphasize natural pauses in the dialogue and let the cast set the rhythm and tempo .

= = Media = =

= = = Manga = = =

The manga was first published in the July 2002 issue of Hakusensha 's LaLa DX in Japan . It was first reprinted on July 10 , 2003 in the tank?bon entitled Hotarubi no Mori e , which included four previously published romantic one @-@ shot stories by Yuki Midorikawa . In addition to the titular short story , the book included " Hanauta Nagaruru " (April 2003) , " Kurukuru Ochiba " (November 2002) , and " Hibi Fukaku " (January 2003) . As part of the 2003 tank?bon short story collection , each of the four one @-@ shot stories were set in a different season : " Hanauta Nagaruru " in spring , " Hotarubi no Mori e " in summer , " Kurukuru Ochiba " in fall , and " Hibi Fukaku " in winter . Within the tank?bon , the stories were arranged in order from spring to winter , although they were originally published in a different order . As of May 15 , 2012 , the tank?bon was on its 19th printing .

On September 5 , 2011 , 12 days prior to the anime movie 's premiere in Japan , a new story related to Hotarubi no Mori e was published as part of a keepsake edition of the original manga , Aizoban Hotarubi no Mori e (??? ?????) . The 12 @-@ page story , titled " Hotarubi no Mori e Tokubetsuhen " (????? ???) , is one of four short stories included in the keepsake edition , which also includes the original " Hotarubi no Mori e " and two other older works by Midorikawa : " Taion no Kakeru " (??????) (2003) and " Hoshi mo Mienai " (??????) (2005) .

= = = Anime = = =

The anime film , Hotarubi no Mori e , is categorized as a drama / romance , with a running time of 44 minutes . In March 2011 , the anime version was to be put on display at the Anime Contents Expo in Chiba , Japan , along with new work on Natsume 's Book of Friends , but the event was canceled following the 2011 T?hoku earthquake and tsunami . The opening date for the film was announced on June 4 on the film 's official website . On June 18 , special pre @-@ order tickets were sold along with the limited offer of a free poster . Around a week later , four television commercials focused on the anime 's main characters were streamed from the film 's official website . Sixteen days before the official release , a 96 @-@ second trailer was posted on Cinema Today , a Japanese movie website .

The film opened in Japan on September 17 , 2011 , playing at Theater Umeda in Osaka and Ikebukuro 's Cine Libre in Tokyo . The European premiere of Hotarubi no Mori e was on October 8 , 2011 at the Scotland Loves Animation festival in Glasgow , followed by interviews and a Q / A session with the animation director and the producer . It was screened again at the Scotland Loves Animation festival in Edinburgh on October 14 , along with two other short films produced by Brain 's Base studio . It was also a late addition to the 2011 Leeds International Film Festival and shown as a free presentation on November 18 in Leeds Town Hall . Hotarubi no Mori e was one of 60 titles screened at the first Anime Contents Expo held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba in late March 2012 . It was also shown on June 30 , 2012 at the Anime Expo convention at the Los Angeles Convention Center .

Limited edition copies of the Blu @-@ray Disc and DVD were released in Japan on February 22 , 2012 . The limited edition sets included card set illustrations , stickers , a 40 @-@ page booklet , a strap with an attached mask (like Gin 's) , and other limited time specials . The DVD was also released at the same time without these extras .

= = = Music = = =

The original soundtrack (catalog number : SVWC @-@ 7783) was released on August 24 , 2011 , less than a month prior to the release of the anime film . The music was recorded by Makoto Yoshimori , and the ending theme , " Natsu o Miteita " (?????? , lit . " I Was Watching Summer ") , was sung by Shizuru ?taka .

All songs written and composed by Makoto Yoshimori .

= = Reception = =

The keepsake edition manga , Aizoban Hotarubi no Mori e by Midorikawa , ranked No. 13 on Japan 's Oricon comic sales chart during September 5 ? 11 , 2011 , with 40 @ , @ 641 copies sold during its first week .

In Japan , the anime was considered a hit , attracting many fans at each screening in Tokyo for several months . Following its European premiere at the Scotland Loves Animation festival in Glasgow , Hotarubi no Mori e was awarded the Jury Award . In January 2012 , it won the Animation Film Award at the 66th Annual Mainichi Film Awards and received at the awards ceremony held on February 13 , 2012 in Kawasaki , Japan . The limited edition Blu @ - @ ray Disc also ranked No. 13 on Oricon 's weekly BD sales chart between February 20 ? 26 , 2012 , with 7 @ , @ 171 copies sold in the five days following its release .

The anime film of Hotarubi no Mori e was well received by its reviewers , and likened to the works of Hayao Miyazaki of Studio Ghibli and Makoto Shinkai . UK Anime Network 's Andy Hanley , who attended a screening at the Scotland Loves Animation festival , said it is " beautiful in its simplicity " , though noting that the climax seemed a bit rushed and sudden , leaving the audience to struggle with their emotions .

Nick Browne of T.H.E.M. Anime Reviews described it as a " vignette of bittersweet nostalgia " , praising the anime for being a " gorgeously detailed piece with beautiful animation . " Browne also wrote favorably of the story 's progression , noting that its dark undertones grew heavier as the main character matured , and that the consistent characterization of Hotaru from childhood to her early teens was impressive , especially given the film 's length . Browne 's criticisms were limited to noting the film 's short length , a clash between the cartoonish depictions of the forest spirits and the rest of the movie , and an issue with one element of plot development near the end of the film . He did note that sensitive viewers may interpret some aspects of the story as inappropriate , such as the initial age difference between the main characters and the way Gin punishes Hotaru as a child when she tries to touch him . In the case of the former , Browne noted that their romance developed only when Hotaru began to approach Gin 's physical age , and with the latter , he noted that no harm was intended . In both cases , he also mentioned that cultural differences must be considered .

Both Yokoyama and Satou noted the " Japanese @ - @ ness " of the anime during the panel discussion following the main showing at the Scotland Loves Animation festival . Yokoyama had originally been concerned that foreign audiences would not fully understand and appreciate the work , but the reaction of the audience at the Glasgow showing alleviated his concerns . According to Yokoyama and Satou , elements of the story that exhibited strong elements of Japanese culture included the watermelon eating scene , the part where Gin hits young Hotaru over the head with a stick , and the scene where young Hotaru gets scared at night when she sees the face of a y?kai in the patterns of the wood panels on the ceiling .

Midorikawa attributed the success of Hotarubi no Mori e to the quality of the story , noting even those readers of the original manga who were critical of her artwork were drawn to read the story from start to finish . She speculated that hiding Gin 's face behind a mask had helped mitigate some of the artistic issues for which her earlier work had been criticized . The intense pressure experienced by Midorikawa early in her manga writing career was relieved as a result of the positive feedback she received upon her success with Hotarubi no Mori e . In 2011 , she expressed excitement for the new anime film and having the manga reprinted in a new short story collection , remarking that her attempts to write about her feelings and recent experiences in relation to Hotarubi no Mori e brought tears to her eyes . She described the story as a " precious work " that had help her build social connections .