

UFO
IN
KUSHIRO BY HARUKI MURAKAMI
TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY JAY RUBIN
AND J. PHILIP GABRIEL

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This story was inspired by the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan.

UFO in Kushiro Details

Date : Published March 21st 2001 by The New Yorker (first published March 19th 2001)

ISBN :

Author : Haruki Murakami

Format : ebook 18 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction

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farida says

Even though this story is short, I really got all the magical elements of Murakami's writing. The intricate descriptions, the non discreet sexuality, the unsettling feelings, the very calm male protagonist, the repeated dialogues... I just love his writing so much I'm glad I'm reading more of his small works.

Vikram says

Murakami's writing, often strange and elegant, draws me into the simultaneously fantastic and banal worlds he concocts in his novels like "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" and "South of the Border, West of the Sun." While this same strange and elegant style of storytelling is present in "UFO in Kushiro," the piece's brevity presents some difficulty in allowing Murakami to develop the story's themes and characterization. The premise of the tale mirrors "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle" in the disappearance of the protagonist's wife. In this case, her disappearance follows a terrible earthquake in Kobe, Japan. The wife leaves with no explanation apart from a letter telling him that he is simply a "chunk of air" and has nothing inside him to offer her. Her harsh words seem to do little to move the protagonist, and like most of Murakami's protagonists, he remains entirely passive about the difficulty placed in front of him.

While I have ceased being infuriated by Murakami's detached lead characters, what I did find infuriating was the lack of resolution in the story. Instead of searching for his wife, or at the very least, attempting to find out precisely what brought on her sudden change of heart, he decides to go on vacation. Again, the lack of action on the part of the protagonist was less of an issue for me than the lack of vision for the story. For example, what themes did Murakami want to present in "UFO in Kushiro?" The latent theme of impotence pervades the work, which is present in his other writings. In fact, the theme is so common that I've often wondered, in the middle of reading a piece of his, "Maybe if I was Japanese, I would understand these apathetic lead characters better."

However, with his other pieces, he resolves those stories in beautiful fashion. "UFO in Kushiro," however, lacks any clear resolution and leaves more questions (Why did his wife leave him? Why didn't he go after her? Does he even know who his wife was? If he wants to go on vacation, why does he go to a cold place like Hokkaido just because his colleague suggested it? What was actually in the box that his colleague asked him to deliver? What was the point of the whole Bear/Bell story? Does he even care about anything?) than answers. While Murakami's goal may have been to get us to ask these questions, I think he could have done a better job at guiding us towards what he thinks the answers are.

Mil111 says

This story was easy to read and I quickly formed attachments to the characters. This is the first short story of Murakami's that I've read and I found it easier to engage with as the shorter format minimises opportunity for Murakami to stray from the main storyline with numerous loosely related events and extensive minor characters. Whilst he still does this to an extent it is lessened and therefore easier for the reader to follow and discover the significance of these initially seemingly unconnected events. When I first got to the end of this

story I laughed and thought 'Is that it? What happened?' I then reminisced my previous experiences with Murakami's work and reflected that deeper appreciation is found when the piece is pondered upon. My love for the purpose of the story grew as I pondered. My interpretation of this story is that it is fleeting and gives us a taste of this fleeting feeling and urges us to notice that life is fleeting. I think that Murakami leaves the story without resolution to instill in the reader the sense of wonder and bewilderment that the main character would have felt. The side stories add to this! I went from simply enjoying this story to loving and appreciating it! Bring on the other short stories!!

Mandy Dan-My Nguyen says

This short story carries the theme of surrealism. The first story, I remember, that strongly urges me to research in order to understand its meaning.

Sometimes, people grow up; they tend to live in own comfort zones. When a sudden catastrophe takes place, there is only an empty soul left.

Madhulika Liddle says

After a severe earthquake in Kobe, a woman (who's watched, very carefully and with near-obsession, all the TV coverage of the quake and its aftermath) leaves her husband. Komura is surprised by his wife's sudden and almost unexplained leaving, but ends up going off to Kushiro a few days later on what seems like a trivial errand for a colleague.

This is the first Murakami work I've read (barring his brilliant and very insightful introduction to Akutagawa's *Rashomon and Seventeen Other Stories*). What worked for me in this story was the crisp, uncluttered style of writing. He doesn't waste time going into things, and yet he tells you enough for you to be able to form a picture in your mind of what he means. Enough to *see* the handsome Komura. or his wife, thick-armed and plain, sitting in front of the TV...

On the other hand, what really frustrated me was the lack of resolution here. What happened, eventually? (I can guess, but I'm not certain, and the certainty is irritating because I don't know what Murakami envisaged when he ended *UFO in Kushiro* where he did, when he did.

Vaiva Sapetkait? says

Po baisaus žemės drebėjimo Kobėje mieste praėjus penkioms dienoms netikėtai dingsta pagrindinio veikėjo Komuro žmona. Ji palieka raštelį, kad išeina dėl to, kad Komuro neturi ką jai duoti, nes jo viduje nieko nėra. Kad išsklaidytų liūdės, Komuro sutinka ? tolim? miest? nugabenti kolegos siuntinį, kur susipaž?sta su jo seserimi ir šios drauge.

Kas buvo šiame siuntinyje?

"Tai, kas buvo tavo viduje, tu tai atidavei savo rankomis ir niekada nebeatgausi, - atsako viena iš mergin?, ta?iau greitai prideda, - Juokauju."

??? ?????? says

even murakami's short stories are full of his surrealistic world the dialogue the characters the feeling that everything that happens around us is connected somehow, I just can't enough of murakami writings

Pei Hao says

I found this story a bit generic, especially in terms of Murakami's writing. Thematically, it just addresses the issue of lagging behind where your circumstances are directing you, ie your mind being stuck on things that happened. I also don't find much purpose in keeping so many things unexplained because the scope is so narrow anyway. Maybe things will become clearer as I have more time to think about it.

Nour says

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Tsering says

there was an earthquake and the wife leaves after six days with a never-coming-back-again note. the story is plain and simple. may be the lightest story i have read of murakami's so far, setting aside the earthquake of which the story is inspired.

Kenny says

3.5/4

I don't think I've ever read a story where impotence was as pervasive a theme ~~ impotence in all areas of a man's life.

I've come not to expect answers from Murakami, but finished this wanting so much more.

Tassos says

Wow... very very Murakami style. The good one :) Again, too short to say anything, just go ahead and read it :)

leila says

Would've given this 4 stars, but the unnecessary scenes messed up the focus of the plot.

Sho says

This story might as well as be described as its protagonist: "A chunk of air."

Her Messy Head says

Strangely addictive.
