

# **The Wind-up Bird Chronicle Study Guide**

## **The Wind-up Bird Chronicle by Haruki Murakami**

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## Plot Summary

Toru Okada quits his job as a gofer in a Tokyo law firm and stays home to take care of the house while his wife works. Toru and Kumiko have been married for six years. The Okadas have an insular, childless marriage. They live in Tokyo with their cat, Noboru Wataya. Toru's quiet life changes a few days after their cat disappears and he meets an unusual cast of characters who help him explore connections between waking and dreaming, past and present, good and evil. Once the search for the wayward feline begins, Toru befriends teenager May Kasahara. Not long after meeting May, Toru meets Malta Kano, an unusual psychic whose trademark is a red vinyl hat. Malta is named after the island, as is her younger sister Creta Kano. Next, Toru makes the acquaintance of Lieutenant Mamiya, a former soldier in the Japanese army during World War II. Mamiya and Toru are brought together by Mamiya's association with Mr. Honda, who is haunted by memories of the Japanese defeat at Nomonhan. Mamiya and Toru both have an affinity for being at the bottom of deep wells. Most importantly, Toru's friendship with the lieutenant is pivotal in awakening Toru's interest in Japanese World War II history.

After Kumiko leaves him, Toru begins people watching at Shinjuku station where he first encounters Nutmeg Akasaka. She and her son, Cinnamon, are involved in a secret business and eventually Toru becomes part of their organization. Going to the bottom of the well on a jinxed property eventually becomes Toru's main focus. In the well, he is able to connect with his own consciousness. In addition, he has a recurring dream about a hotel room. Toru soon discovers that he is able to pass through the wall between the well and the hotel room. After his first time going through the wall, Toru discovers a blue-black inky mark, about the size of a small child's hand, on his right cheek. There are two especially violent events in the novel that influence the main protagonist's worldview. The first involves Toru following a man carrying a guitar case. The second violent scene takes place when Toru passes through the wall into Room 208. Oddly enough, this particular violent act also brings some resolution to Toru's subconscious. Toru Okada travels through different incarnations of himself during the novel. Once, he is a young boy dreaming. In another instance, Toru is conflated with Nutmeg's father, a veterinarian at the Hsin-ching zoo bearing the same facial mark as Toru. These incarnations work with the grain of the story and reinforce the position that Toru's personality somehow fractures during the course of the narrative, only to be reintegrated at the end.



# **Book 1 Chapter 1: Tuesday's Wind-Up Bird • Six Fingers and Four Breasts (Pgs. 1-23).**

## **Book 1 Chapter 1: Tuesday's Wind-Up Bird • Six Fingers and Four Breasts (Pgs. 1-23). Summary**

The novel opens one Tuesday in June in 1984 with a ringing telephone and the main protagonist (and chapter narrator), Toru Okada, cooking spaghetti at half-past ten in the morning. When Toru Okada answers the phone, a woman on the other end of the line suggestively tells him that ten minutes is all they will need to understand each other's feelings. Toru Okada first meets May Kasahara.

## **Book 1 Chapter 1: Tuesday's Wind-Up Bird • Six Fingers and Four Breasts (Pgs. 1-23). Analysis**

This chapter introduces the reader to the main protagonist and his wife. It also brings the mysterious nature of the cat's disappearance into the characters' field of vision. Noboru Wataya the cat vanishes before the novel begins. This fact conveniently foreshadows numerous other disappearances in the novel. The author provides valuable glimpses into Toru Okada's character. Given his reaction to the anonymous woman on the telephone, the reader learns that Toru can easily become flustered and nervous at times. It is clear from this chapter that the principal character is not entirely uncomfortable with his current state of househusband and man of some leisure. Between trips to the grocery store and keeping the house in order, Toru Okada enjoys reading a satisfying book. He is a man of some culture who listens to and has knowledge of classical composers and their music. This also identifies the character closely with European customs and history. It is also clear that the character in the beginning subtly establishes the notion of instability in Toru's life and how his personal "go with the flow" philosophy helps or hinders his progress. There are also moments of humor that accentuate the strangeness of his day. Murakami's storyline plants the seed of possibility in the reader's mind that intangible forces in motion cause unexpected things to occur in the characters' lives.

The anonymous woman also gives the reader further insight into Toru Okada's character. The caller confuses him at first because her responses seem random to him. The further their conversation advances, the more flustered he becomes. This is a foreshadowing of the nature of Toru's sexual encounters with women throughout the novel. The encounters are always a combination of pleasure and guilt for one or both of the characters. However, Toru is able to compartmentalize his feelings in such a way as to remain emotionally distant and, at times, unaffected. Also, from this point on, Toru has



an ever-increasing number of interactions with women other than Kumiko. These encounters with female characters serve to buffer Toru emotionally in order to counteract Kumiko's eventual departure.

At the outset, Kumiko Okada is positioned as an emotional character when she cries at the news that Toru is unsuccessful at finding the cat. In addition, Murakami connects Kumiko with natural forces during one of Toru's internal monologues concerning the full moon's effect on his wife's menstrual cycle. Kumiko often arrives home late in the evening, claiming it is her work that keeps her at the office. Thus, by making Kumiko the possible adulterer, Murakami manages to subvert and complicate the cheating husband stereotype. A small seed of doubt takes root in Toru's mind without his noticing, and the plot point becomes more intriguing. Kumiko becomes more solid as a character in scenes taking place once she returns home. When she and Toru are in the same space together, the reader learns more about Kumiko from her body language than from her dialogue.

May Kasahara is also introduced in this chapter. Her first appearance in the backyard is slightly unsettling, especially given her age and her attitude toward Toru. She seems only mildly interested in Toru on the first day and yet she continues to engage him in conversation. He is candid with her and May responds to this by talking to Toru about death. The girl is only sixteen years old and some of her behavior is a way of testing Toru's boundaries. Toru handles her outrageous statements with patience and some curiosity. She agrees to join the search for Noboru Wataya the cat and becomes a fixture throughout the novel in person and in letters. May Kasahara also provides the voice of reason in Toru's narrative of self-discovery.

These first pages of the novel are meant to entice the reader to continue following the story. Toru is a likable figure, who in the beginning, seems to be at the mercy of forces beyond his control.





## **Book 1 Chapter 2: Full Moon and Eclipse of the Sun • On Horses Dying in the Stables (Pgs. 25-31)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 2: Full Moon and Eclipse of the Sun • On Horses Dying in the Stables (Pgs. 25-31) Summary**

Kumiko wonders aloud whether Toru has truly been paying attention to her during their six years of marriage. After a quick glance at the calendar, Toru realizes that it is nearly time for the full moon and that Kumiko's menstruation cycle is about to begin. Kumiko quickly realizes what the problem is and apologizes to Toru for taking her frustration out on him.

### **Book 1 Chapter 2: Full Moon and Eclipse of the Sun • On Horses Dying in the Stables (Pgs. 25-31) Analysis**

This chapter leads the reader further into Toru and Kumiko's relationship as husband and wife. Six years into their marriage, Kumiko voices strong, rather random opinions, and Toru Okada realizes with some surprise that he does not know his wife as well as he thinks. She is talking about simple things, food and toilet tissue, but the emotion behind her words belies the impetus of something more substantive than pet peeves. After Kumiko's outburst, Toru believes his wife's PMS is to blame, but later in the evening his doubt gets the better of him. Now he wonders if Kumiko is keeping something from him. This feeling of unease could be the result of unresolved guilt about keeping secrets of his own. In the previous chapter, Toru withholds details about his day from Kumiko without giving it much thought; he does not mention May Kasahara or the obscene phone caller. His wife's behavior shakes his self-trust then and internally the character loses emotional ground. The fact that Kumiko continues to come home late is a signal to the reader that there is more going on than meets the eye, even while Toru's trust in his wife is unshaken. He assumes that he and Kumiko share the same feelings about their relationship. This reinforces Toru as being very short-sighted when it comes to his wife. By not noticing the clues that his wife's behavior provides, the character contributes to his own eventual loneliness and unsettling isolation. Perhaps if Toru Okada were a deeper thinker, he would recognize the signs of Kumiko preparing to leave him. Nonetheless, this chapter provides good groundwork for understanding the main protagonist's willfulness and tenacity—two qualities that prefigure Toru's path into spiritual and intellectual chaos, then significant inner transformation.

Toru's mention of what happens to horses when the moon is full gives the reader another example of the character's disconnection from his wife. His motivation for bringing up the subject is difficult to discern, but the significance of the comment



becomes clearer in the following chapters of the narrative. In this instance, he misses the mark when speaking to Kumiko. After this point, Toru's conflict becomes more clearly delineated. He loves his wife; he has questions he wants to ask. He has secrets. He has deceived his wife. Kumiko's choices and actions now mirror his. What he once knew as solid ground in his marriage is not so solid anymore. It is an important moment of realization for Toru Okada. At this point, he becomes aware of Kumiko as multi-dimensional and autonomous. In this chapter, Kumiko is a more present character in the home. At the same time, one is aware of how small a physical space she actually occupies in the house. Thus she is also somewhat ornamental; inserted into the story by way of details, this decorative quality that Kumiko gives the narrative comes into better focus when Toru deals with her absence for the first time.



## **Book 1 Chapter 3: Malta Kano's Hat • Sherbet Tone and Allen Ginsberg and the Crusaders (Pgs. 32- 45)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 3: Malta Kano's Hat • Sherbet Tone and Allen Ginsberg and the Crusaders (Pgs. 32- 45) Summary**

Kumiko tells Toru to expect a call from a woman by the name of Miss Kano and that he may need to meet with her regarding the missing cat, Noboru Wataya. Miss Kano calls back and apologizes profusely for her rudeness in disconnecting him. She then asks to meet Toru in the tearoom at the Pacific Hotel. Miss Kano informs Toru that she is thirty-one years old and that she will be wearing a red vinyl hat. When Miss Kano arrives, Toru sees that she is a beautiful woman wearing a finely tailored white jacket over a yellow silk blouse and of course the red vinyl hat. The woman hands him a business card on which only her name is printed: "Malta Kano." Just prior to departing, Malta Kano says that he will find the polka-dot tie, but it will not be in his house.

### **Book 1 Chapter 3: Malta Kano's Hat • Sherbet Tone and Allen Ginsberg and the Crusaders (Pgs. 32- 45) Analysis**

The chapter title lets the reader know exactly what lies therein. Malta Kano's red vinyl hat is an important prop in this narrative. The hat's color and material give the reader a clear picture of a woman who is not concerned with what others may think of her appearance. Murakami emphasizes this assertion by allowing the reader to know what else Malta wears the first time she meets Toru Okada. This is a wonderful, early example of the author's meticulous, thorough commentaries on the characters' style and fashion sense early in the narrative. The text describes her outfit in some detail, and the reader has a very clear idea of the character's wardrobe as an extension of her inner paradoxical state. The contradictory red vinyl hat completely defines the rest of the ensemble Malta Kano wears to the tearoom as elegant and well-chosen. The hat calls attention to the head. And since the woman wearing the hat is a psychic-type of character, one necessarily associates the hat with the special powers of divination that Malta Kano is supposed to have. Hence, in later portions of the novel, the hat will become a symbol of knowing.

Similarly, Malta's younger sister, Creta, dresses in the style of the 1960s. The Sherbet Tones included in the chapter title refer to the sister's clothes. The sweet, frozen dessert comes in pink, green, yellow, possibly orange and white, which would be Creta Kano's



predominant color choices. This presents another paradox. Malta's sister is in her early twenties and she chooses to dress like women in the mid-twentieth century. Thus, Murakami sets Creta apart as an interesting and thoughtful, fashion-forward character. Her clothes indicate boldness and individuality as two of the character's personal priorities. Creta's style is directly attributable to a focused, studied fashion performance. Creta Kano does not just wear old clothes, she replicates a specific cultural and historical message. Creta's wardrobe choices are precisely authentic down to the smallest detail, which is evidence that the character is not given to whims or spur of the moment behaviors. Malta Kano's sister is a planner and a creative logician.



## **Book 1 Chapter 4: High Towers and Deep Wells (or Far From Nomonhan) (Pgs. 47-55)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 4: High Towers and Deep Wells (or Far From Nomonhan) (Pgs. 47-55) Summary**

Kumiko reminds him that Noboru Wataya is important to her because she and Toru chose the cat together shortly after they were married. On one occasion, Mr. Honda warns Toru Okada that being a lawyer might not be the best career for him because the law governs only things that happen in the world "where shadow is shadow and light is light" (51). Mr. Honda then tells Toru that it is not time for him to make a change professionally because there is "no flow" (51). Mr. Honda then suggests that he be especially careful around water. Lying in bed that night, Kumiko remembers taking the polka dot necktie to the dry cleaners six months ago in December.

### **Book 1 Chapter 4: High Towers and Deep Wells (or Far From Nomonhan) (Pgs. 47-55) Analysis**

Mr. Honda is an important secondary character in Toru Okada's narrative. The main protagonist represents generations of younger Japanese men and women who know virtually nothing about their country's struggles during World War II. National shame is exposed as a theme and what begins as mild interest in an old man's yarns turns into a concrete desire on Toru's part to know what happened at Nomonhan and other battles in the Asian theater of conflict at the time. The way Honda lives exposes another contradiction. His house is barely large enough for one person and his kimono looks as if it has seen better days. The old man is known for repeating the same stories time and again, but Toru enjoys listening to Mr. Honda's recollections. How could such a person (now more caricature than character) have taken part in any armed conflict? The reader does not know enough about Mr. Honda to say how his wartime exploits inform who the old man has become in this chapter. Nomonhan is not especially kind to Honda's mind or his body. The older man's deafness provides contrast to the spiritual enlightenment he has attained. Be that as it may, something leads him to give cryptic instructions that prove valuable much later in the novel. Mr. Honda's mention of water is important here because it foreshadows one of Toru's last experiences in the Miyawaki well. And so another piece of the puzzle falls into place. In this case, Mr. Honda's entrance places remembrance and narrator reliability squarely at the center of the novel's thematic mix. Toru assumes Mr. Honda is telling the truth about the defeat at Nomonhan but what happens subsequently between Mr. Wataya abruptly stops the flow of information between the two men. Mr. Honda's memories of war then become Toru's memories of war, leading the younger man further into a study of his historical heritage. Additionally,



the concept of war becomes part of the backdrop of Toru's relationship with Noboru Wataya. Also, Mr. Honda is the first older character to represent a more folk-oriented, less material-based belief system. Knowing that Mr. Wataya believes in such matters stands in direct opposition to his belief that Japanese class-based society is both rapacious and relentless. On one hand, Kumiko's father is the consummate social Darwinist. On the other, he is a superstitious man who believes in signs, omens and pronouncements of future events.



## **Book 1 Chapter 5: Hooked on Lemon Drops Drops • Flightless Bird and Waterless Well (Pgs. 56-67).**

### **Book 1 Chapter 5: Hooked on Lemon Drops • Flightless Bird and Waterless Well (Pgs. 56-67). Summary**

The following morning, Toru Okada retrieves the polka-dot necktie from the dry cleaner. May Kasahara is fascinated with thinning hair and balding. She works part-time for a wig company. Since May Kasahara does not attend high school, she has a substantial amount of free time. She works taking surveys and filling out questionnaires. Toru is invited to spend a day working with May to earn a little money but mostly to alleviate the monotony of unemployment. He gives her directions to his house. Then May Kasahara asks Toru if he'd like to see the well in the Miyawaki's garden. Toru remembers Mr. Honda telling him to be careful around water. He also recalls Mr. Honda telling him, "When you're supposed to go down, find the deepest well and go down to the bottom" (66). Toru notices that it is eleven-thirty and returns home to call Kumiko at work.

### **Book 1 Chapter 5: Hooked on Lemon Drops • Flightless Bird and Waterless Well (Pgs. 56-67). Analysis**

The polka-dot necktie's reappearance in the material world shows the insistence of the paranormal in Toru's life. After all, Malta Kano does tell him that the tie will be found. The character eases himself into the missing cat saga and furthers the plot in the direction of friendship with May Kasahara. First, however, the author brings the sense of hearing to the forefront. In the silence of the alley, Toru knows there are people all around him because he hears them going about their daily lives. Toru's cynicism about the stone bird with the outstretched wings is something which manifests as self-doubt later in the novel. Going through the solid wall of the Miyawaki well later in the narrative challenges the character's willingness to believe in things that are impossible to explain in any rational way, such as a stone bird's ability to spread its wings and fly. The fact that the gate opens without any exertion on the character's part signals the reader of Toru's entrance into a space of transition and movement; change takes place when characters enter and leave tangential spaces. Once again, sound enters the story when Toru tells May about the wind-up bird. The bird makes a sound only a select few characters can hear. The twist to this phenomenon is that the characters besides Toru Okada who can hear the wind-up bird are actually expressions of the character in different states of being.



There is more information here that fleshes out the reader's portrait of the girl who stays home every day. By pointing out that Toru has thinning hair, May is reminding him of his mortality by unpretentiously observing that his body will eventually go the way of all others and that the process begins with thinning hair. May Kasahara is still young enough to be excited about a career in wigs and toupees. May's breadth of knowledge is impressive and she has found a way to make her interest in baldness pay off in the long-term as well, which is evidenced by the girl going to work in the wig factory far from Tokyo.

Finally, this chapter is significant because it is Toru's first visit to the well on the Miyawaki property. The scene between Toru and May Kasahara reminds one of two bored children, trying to figure out what to do on a summer vacation afternoon. One child (May) invites another (Toru) to a secret location for a look around and their discovery opens another door in their individual psyches. Toru meets the well and his life changes again. The exploratory adventure comes to an end with Toru returning to reality (Kumiko, the marriage) after looking at his watch.





## **Book 1 Chapter 6: On the Births of Kumiko Okada and Noboru Wataya (Pgs. 68-80)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 6: On the Births of Kumiko Okada and Noboru Wataya (Pgs. 68-80) Summary**

Toru expresses his bewilderment at how Kumiko and Noboru Wataya could possibly relate as brother and sister and adults. The unfortunate argument he has with Kumiko's father effectively ends her other family relationships, and they very rarely see her parents. Kumiko is the youngest of three children. Noboru Wataya is the eldest and nine years older than Kumiko. An older sister, the second-born, dies at the age of eleven. Kumiko is sent to live with her father's mother when she is just three years old. For weeks before Kumiko's return to her father's home, her grandmother behaves bizarrely. She begins to feel inferior to her dead sister until she develops hatred toward her family, especially her brother Noboru Wataya.

### **Book 1 Chapter 6: On the Births of Kumiko Okada and Noboru Wataya (Pgs. 68-80) Analysis**

Toru narrates an entire chapter devoted to providing background information on Kumiko Okada and her older brother. Murakami's representation of Kumiko's parents as spiteful and capricious tells the reader that her childhood is anything but happy. She is powerless over her parents' whims and powerless when faced with the self-perpetuating darkness with which Noboru Wataya is born. Kumiko becomes responsible for her own sanity as an adult and she marries Toru who is the polar opposite of her father, brother, and mother. Toru validates Kumiko's negative feelings toward her family when he meets her brother. His body's response to Noboru Wataya is an indication of the presence of darkness. Toru's hatred of the other man reflects the battle between good and evil. The visceral reaction to his brother-in-law is something that the character does not forget. To his benefit, Toru Okada pays attention to this signal and subconsciously begins to prepare himself for the time when the conflict reaches a critical point. Noboru Wataya's revulsion for his brother-in-law is just as strong. He is open and unapologetic about his lack of interest in Toru and Kumiko's involvement. He regards matters such as their marriage to be a waste of his valuable time and he makes no secret of his sense of self-importance.

The concept of wearing a mask is a strong point of discussion in this chapter. Noboru Wataya's outer appearance is what seems to account for his popularity on television. He has the "right" look for someone in his position: slim, on-the-go, young, sardonic and fiercely ambitious. He is a well-received package that satisfies the visual interests of the



audience. People believe what he has to say and he enjoys saying it. He looks good while he says it and this strategy is evident in the measure of the character's notoriety. It proves that looking good is still very profitable in entertainment and politics. It also proves that sometimes popular opinion is wrong. Toru and to a lesser extent, Kumiko, are aware of what Noboru Wataya really looks like behind his slick mask. The characters respond differently to the darkness within him. Toru's first reaction is to stay away from Noboru. Kumiko has an attraction and a revulsion for her brother. The brother-sister bond is revisited later in the narrative. Until that time, however, the author reveals enough about Toru's wife and her background to comprehend Kumiko's wounded condition.



## **Book 1 Chapter 7: The Happy Cleaners • And Creta Kano Makes Her Entrance (Pgs. 81-86)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 7: The Happy Cleaners • And Creta Kano Makes Her Entrance (Pgs. 81-86) Summary**

Toru rides his bike to the train station in the rain to take Kumiko's skirt and blouse to the dry cleaners. The clerk recognizes Toru and gives him a ticket indicating that the clothes can be picked up the following Tuesday. Before leaving the station, Toru notices all the men dressed in their corporate uniforms: suit and tie with black shoes, briefcase, umbrella. He returns to his house and Malta Kano telephones at eleven o'clock exactly. Malta Kano calls to let Toru know that her younger sister, Creta Kano, will pay him a visit at one o'clock that afternoon. Creta wears her hair in an authentic bouffant with the ends curled, penciled eyebrows and fake eyelashes. Creta Kano is the perfect diminutive 1960s replica. Ceta Kano is there to collect water samples from the kitchen tap, bathroom sink, and bathtub.

### **Book 1 Chapter 7: The Happy Cleaners • And Creta Kano Makes Her Entrance (Pgs. 81-86) Analysis**

There are two primary returns in this chapter which bear pointing out. The first is the author's insertion of music as background texture. In this case, there is the Van Halen t-shirt Toru wears. This is a distinguishing mark when the character is compared to his former social peers. He no longer dresses as they do, which means he does not belong to that group any longer. Once out of uniform, Toru notices how narrow his perspective became and that his direction has drastically shifted onto a less linear track. The second musical instance comes as he enters the dry cleaners. Here, he notices "easy listening" music coming from the radio. This observation is generational and generic in musical terms. Easy listening is just that, innocuous, largely instrumental covers of popular ballads and other inoffensive fare meant to provide ambiance and not much more. The music changes in other places in the narrative, which denotes that for the dry cleaner, the particulars are inconsequential; it is music; therefore, it is strictly background. Murakami's narrative also comes around to another principal thread: clothing. In this chapter, the reader meets the red vinyl hat again. The red vinyl hat continues to symbolize knowledge and knowing in both the corporeal and ethereal senses.

What Creta Kano wears to her meeting with Toru Okada still qualifies as performance. She is to be her sister's stand-in for this part of the journey. The author's substitution of one style for another leaves the reader with a little more interpretive work to do. The details of Creta's look come under the microscope. Whereas Malta is somewhat larger



than life, her younger sister's presence is less solid, more mutable. She is much like the small white butterfly Toru sees in an earlier chapter. There is something delicate about the woman and Toru responds to this the same way he responds to a similar quality in Kumiko. Creta is less of a threat to Toru. He behaves as though she is a curiosity, albeit a delightful one. Her 1960s outfit produces a precise charm which has a positive effect on Toru. He is relaxed but interested, and he and Creta are comfortable with one another to a certain degree.

Toru knows that his life is changing rapidly. The motivation for collecting water samples from inside and around the Okadas' home is never revealed. The author drops the thread after this chapter.



## **Book 1 Chapter 8: Creta Kano's Long Story • An Inquiry into the Nature of Pain (Pgs. 87-100)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 8: Creta Kano's Long Story • An Inquiry into the Nature of Pain (Pgs. 87-100) Summary**

Creta Kano is the youngest of three children; Malta is five years older. Malta works hard, saves her money, and runs away to Hawaii. Malta Kano travels to Canada, the United States and Europe, sampling the water along the way. In England, she helps the police investigate the disappearance and murder of a little girl. The search for perfect water continues until she finds herself on the island of Malta and decides to change her first name to "Malta" like the island. Having no one to consult for advice for many years, and in constant physical pain, Creta decides to kill herself. She borrows her brother's car, deciding to crash headlong into a wall at one-hundred miles per hour. The front-end of the car is demolished and she breaks one rib. As a solution to her financial difficulties, Creta Kano becomes a prostitute while still a college student.

### **Book 1 Chapter 8: Creta Kano's Long Story • An Inquiry into the Nature of Pain (Pgs. 87-100) Analysis**

This chapter is Creta's personal narrative as told to the main protagonist. This is also Malta Kano's narrative told third-hand. After all, Creta tells Toru what Malta told her. The reader gets Toru's version of what Creta says about her sister. Creta spends time sharing the mythology of Malta. This is an explanation of gifts and exchange. In the beginning, it is Malta's ability that takes center-stage; she is the first to discover an authentic self. Malta Kano's passion is what drives her. Passion for finding the perfect water is her motivation. Creta steps into Malta's narrative while it is in progress. Malta Kano signifies movement and fluidity. She moves from Japan to Hawaii then Canada and two more continents after that. Conversely, Creta's life is very much about the body and how to navigate the temporal plane as a flesh-and-blood being. She feels that she is held captive by her body. It must be monitored, experienced, paid attention to night and day. Creta is a prisoner; whereas, Malta is completely at liberty. The older sister comes and goes as she pleases. Creta, on the other hand, is earthbound and flesh-bound. Her physical reality overshadows everything else. Creta subsequently lives her individual story on a different path than her sister's.

Creta's obsession with her body continues until the pain stops, at which point she becomes a prostitute. Creta moves from one physical extreme to the other when numbness besets her. The pendulum swings and she feels nothing at all. Creta also transitions into psychic pain as well. This is evidenced by her choice to sell herself to



men for money and then being extorted and "managed" by criminals. Once her commodification takes effect, Creta is able to make a good deal of money and the body becomes something of a non-issue until she encounters Toru's brother-in-law. Before the story progresses, though, Creta disappears. She sneaks out after sending Toru for coffee but the reader is not told why. The young woman's absent body now has more impact on the narrative because of what the reader knows about her past physical experiences. Creta has come through pain into nothing in the same body. It is not surprising, then, that she vanishes one afternoon after coffee and cookies. Just like the white butterfly, she leaves the same way she entered, floating out on her white spike heels. Creta's body is now something that moves easily and with lightness. But since it is Creta who chooses to bring their conversation to a close, she nonetheless maintains power. Toru has no control in the situation and he must wait until she approaches him again. Creta might return on her sister's behalf as before and finish her story. Or, she might not return at all. The fact that she vanishes while Toru is out of the room implies that Creta has something to hide. Something prevents the young woman from continuing her story in a very immediate sense. This kind of leaving becomes commonplace in Toru's life. Along with Kumiko and May Kasahara, Toru is now also bound to the Kano sisters as well. Listening to another character's testimony, or reading it for that matter, or witnessing it firsthand produces a thin strand that the characters share. Toru's life resembles a web. He is married to Kumiko, lives within walking distance of May, and meets Malta and Creta through his wife. Creta then has a run-in with Toru's brother-in-law. The web then spins in on itself.



## **Book 1 Chapter 9: Culverts and an Absolute Insufficiency of Electricity • May Kasahara's Inquiry Into the Nature of Hairpieces (Pgs. 101-114)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 9: Culverts and an Absolute Insufficiency of Electricity • May Kasahara's Inquiry Into the Nature of Hairpieces (Pgs. 101-114) Summary**

Toru remembers almost having an affair with an engaged woman at the law firm one week before her wedding. He tells Kumiko exactly what happens. Kumiko refuses to speak to Toru for three days. Then Kumiko informs him that some time in the future, she will do the same thing to him simply because his actions have given her the right to do so. May Kasahara invites Toru Okada to join her at work that day counting balding heads for three hours. Toru Okada finds out that May Kasahara's knowledge of wigs, balding and hairpieces is quite extensive.

### **Book 1 Chapter 9: Culverts and an Absolute Insufficiency of Electricity • May Kasahara's Inquiry Into the Nature of Hairpieces (Pgs. 101-114) Analysis**

The chapter begins with a mention of water. Toru goes for a swim in a public pool. Fear of drowning is metaphorical for fearing the loss of control; limbs flailing, taking water into the lungs, the resignation just before the heart stops. Water often becomes a source of anxiety, but not for Toru or Malta. It is possible he swims for exercise only, but on another level, the character experiences water as a medium of resistance and support. Thus, the water strengthens him and nurtures him simultaneously. Knowing how to swim, knowing how to move through water gives Toru confidence to move through life. The water first impacts him externally. He exerts his physical self into the water; this is how he creates a synthesis with the medium. Where Malta Kano is concerned, water is something to be ingested and healed by. Malta Kano views water as salvation which takes place first on the inside of the human body. The more perfect the water, the higher the level of Malta's inner vibration, the healthier she becomes. For her, water is a metaphor for hope and resolution. Water is woven throughout the narrative as a medium of change and inner shifting. It is no accident that both of the Kano sisters are named for islands. The majority of the novel takes place in Japan, which is a nation of islands.

Toru dreams about the hotel room and an intimate physical encounter with Creta Kano. The details of the hotel room never change and Toru lists them each time he narrates



the dream: the faceless man, the long corridors, the whiskey in the room. The dream does not take very long to come to its completion. More precise details about the inside of the hotel room are included in later chapters. Toru's flesh betrays his dream self by climaxing in real life. Fact and non-fact converge at a point where the body and the mind occupy complementary space in the waking and the subconscious world. More of Toru's complicated married life comes to light in this chapter. The reader learns the reason for his fear that Kumiko is not being forthcoming about her late nights out of the house.

His secret almost-affair with an engaged woman at work angers Kumiko when he tells her about it. Toru's recollection of the one night mistake is nothing exciting, he knows. The woman's fear of culverts is a reflection of her pre-marital apprehension. Culverts, like uncomfortable marriages, can be close and dark. Some culverts offer little or no room to move. Sometimes marriage can feel like suffocating in a pipe while water rushes into it. Consequently, the anxiety she feels about marrying depletes the woman's energy and her system is running down. It makes sense that the woman's electricity is low. Her energy is dissipating into the atmosphere without recreating itself because it is directed at points outside herself. Toru does not behave as though he is surprised when the woman asks him to hold her. Electricity is the life force. The woman from the office is nearly inanimate from a lack of conductivity. Toru is merely an energetic sub-station. His purpose in this instance is to replace what another human being has lost. This is what he accepts responsibility for.

Unlike the woman he holds, however, Toru does not feel depleted by his marriage to Kumiko. He really has no ulterior motives for holding the engaged woman. True, the character holds a woman who is not his wife even though he is having no problems in his marriage. He holds the woman in his arms for three hours and does not call his wife. He arrives home after two o'clock in the morning. Kumiko's purposeful three-day silence is Toru's punishment for stepping outside the boundaries of their husband/wife arrangement. His actions, however, reinforce the assertion that he is out of sync with his wife. He accepts his wife's behavior because he knows he is in the wrong and not because he feels particularly bad about it in the moment. This also provides foreshadowing as Kumiko does indeed have an affair.

Toru goes to work with May to count balding heads. This is a departure into tangential experience. The young girl's interest in the condition that makes hair fall out of one's head is extraordinary. As a teenager, one might have an expectation that May would whine about her job or perhaps just not show up. It so happens the reverse is true: May Kasahara enjoys her work and considers herself something of an expert, which Toru thinks she is as well. Categorizing the thinning pates as examples of "A," "B," or "C" lends the work a modicum of scientific legitimacy.





## **Book 1 Chapter 10: Magic Touch • Death in the Bathtub • Messenger with Keepsakes (Pgs. 114-125)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 10: Magic Touch • Death in the Bathtub • Messenger with Keepsakes (Pgs. 114-125) Summary**

Toru's uncle is thought of as the black sheep of the family but manages to succeed at whatever he attempts. The uncle tells Toru that Mr. Miyawaki lost everything in a stock deal. At one time, an elite military officer and his wife had lived in the Miyawaki house, then a moderately successful actress moves into the house. She, too, meets an untimely end. Toru Okada's uncle ends the phone conversation by saying that some pieces of land are just bad and bad things happen to the people who live there. Later that day, Toru receives a letter by registered mail from Mr. Mamiya writes to inform Toru Okada that old Mr. Honda died suddenly.

### **Book 1 Chapter 10: Magic Touch • Death in the Bathtub • Messenger with Keepsakes (Pgs. 114-125) Analysis**

There is a great deal of activity in this chapter. Communication is a major theme in this section. People talk on the telephone; Toru receives a letter. Each character is telling Toru his or her story. It begins passively, however, with another of Toru's memories having to do with his and Kumiko's house. Toru calls his mother's brother to get information. The uncle serves as a substitute for Toru's own father, with whom Toru has no relationship. The character never gives the details of his lackluster relationship with his father. Toru's mother dies when he is fairly young. His father finds a new wife. End of story. The uncle's personality suits Toru. He is neither too distant nor clingy. Toru enjoys the uncle's company and does not suffer any ill effects from not having his father in his life anymore. The actual account of the events in Toru's childhood is never revealed. Toru's father is an unanswered riddle. Toru's uncle is candid and open. The stories he shares with his nephew are dark and melodramatic. They are the stuff of which neighborhood legends are made.

The uncle tells Toru what happens and the stories are now second-hand gossip. What the stories do illuminate, however, is that some darkness has descended on the Miyawaki property and not just by way of a simple jinx or hex-like nursery rhyme. People who live in the Miyawaki house die in violent and unusual ways for a variety of lurid reasons: bankruptcy, intrigue, war, shame and defeat. Each reason is represented



by someone who had once lived in that house. Toru feels the house drawing him in. The well is attractive to him; it is magnetic and dangerous. His uncle even admits to having an uneasy feeling about the house with the well. Suicide is a common form of death on the weird property. It is a choice which, in this house anyway is twice committed by husband and wife couples. This is true in the case of the army officer and for Kojiro Miyawaki and his wife. Miyawaki also commits infanticide at least once that anyone knows. The doubling of the double suicide speaks to the degree of insanity present in the people who inhabit the house over a number of years. It is still quite possible that whatever madness overtook the former tenants still resides on the lot.

A letter arrives from Lieutenant Mamiya and Toru walks into another story. Mamiya and Mr. Honda had known one another during the war. Now, the reader is exposed to another point of view as the lieutenant introduces himself by way of noting their common connection. Mamiya's decision to contact Toru is because a last wish of Mr. Honda's involves a gift for Toru. Toru replies in writing; this shows deference for Mr. Mamiya's choice of medium. When one receives a letter, one writes a letter in response. Even though an electronic mail or a phone call are both faster, it takes time and concentration to craft and move a letter from writer to sender. The pacing of mailed messages has become the slow form of getting in touch with other people. There are those, like Mamiya, who would rather take the time to write a letter to someone than sit in front of a screen and punch buttons. He creates a real-world record of his thoughts and this side of their first conversation. A letter guarantees a memory of some sort; it is dated and postmarked. A canceled stamp is equivalent to absolute existence in the postal world.



## **Book 1 Chapter 11: Enter Lieutenant Mamiya • What Came from the Warm Mud • Eau de Cologne (Pgs. 126-134)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 11: Enter Lieutenant Mamiya • What Came from the Warm Mud • Eau de Cologne (Pgs. 126-134) Summary**

Straightening the house in preparation for Mr. Mamiya's visit, Toru finds the packaging for a new bottle of Christian Dior eau de cologne. He surmises that since he did not buy Kumiko the cologne someone at her job had given it to her as a gift. The phone rings again. It is the anonymous caller the reader encountered in Chapter 1. Lieutenant Mamiya talks to him about old Mr. Honda. Mr. Honda's wife had committed suicide with her lover, leaving Mr. Honda to raise a son and a daughter on his own. When his children had grown up, Mr. Honda moved to Tokyo to live by himself. He and Mr. Honda had been out of touch for six or seven years and Lt. Mamiya had been surprised to receive a letter from his old war acquaintance.

### **Book 1 Chapter 11: Enter Lieutenant Mamiya • What Came from the Warm Mud • Eau de Cologne (Pgs. 126-134) Analysis**

Toru meets Lieutenant Mamiya for the first time in this chapter. Mamiya calls in the very early morning. This is common among people who are wired for getting up and getting on with it. The fragrance that Toru smells on Kumiko gives water to the seeds of jealousy and doubt in his mind. He tries to reason with himself but only manages to sink further into disbelief. He has proof in his hand. The packaging he finds in the wastebasket proves that Kumiko knows who gave it to her and why. Someone hands it to her, she accepts it, brings it home, puts it on and does not mention it to her husband at all. This is a dead-end. Kumiko manages to get out of the house without addressing Toru's comment at all. The woman obscene caller provides a small detour in the trajectory before the narrative is re-directed by Lieutenant Mamiya's arrival. The anonymous caller cheapens the spoken word by sexualizing their conversation. Toru is unprepared to mentally lie in soft mud because the suggestion comes at a transitional time. He is about to listen to another story. Toru once again becomes a deposition witness. Mamiya comes to tell Toru what happened, when and perhaps why. The lieutenant is much less electric than Creta or Malta Kano. Mamiya's pacing is slower than that of the women Toru encounters in this book of the novel. The older gentleman is sincere in his approach. There is a bittersweet tone to the first portion of his narrative. Again, the reader learns about Mr. Honda from Toru's account of the lieutenant's story.



Listening to a story again situates Toru Okada as the witness. Different characters ask Toru's permission and he allows them to tell their stories to him one at a time. Various people are filling Toru Okada with the pieces of their very intricate stories; his story. In this chapter, Mr. Honda's narrative is the one being told.

Lieutenant Mamiya raises the stakes on what he later tells Toru by informing the younger man that no one else had ever heard the story he is about to tell. This gives the story some cache; it gains an air of believability. First, however, Mamiya sets up the character of Mr. Honda as someone who had been through personal trauma and wartime trauma. Honda's wife's suicide and the death of her lover leave him exposed as a broken man. His wife cheats on him and would rather die with another man than ever face him or anyone, including her children, ever again. Corporal Honda is simply a man who lives through much and sees some very heartbreaking things. The tragedy in Mr. Honda's life is balanced by the way Toru remembers the old man: deaf and in front of the television set. The old man never told Toru about his wife and children. Perhaps because it happened long before they met. Perhaps it was something the old man only allowed himself to remember when he warmed his feet. The reader also learns that Mamiya's life during the war had been equally as traumatic as his former comrade's. Losing his hand under a tank then losing the young woman with whom he had an arrangement, the lieutenant had eventually been buried by his family. His life, it seems had gone missing.



## **Book 1 Chapter 12: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part I (Pgs. 135-150)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 12: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part I (Pgs. 135-150) Summary**

Lieutenant Mamiya was assigned to the Kwantung Army General Staff in Hsin-ching. Then in 1938, he was unexpectedly made part of an armed guard which was to escort a civilian named Yamamoto to the Hulunbuir Steppe, not far from the border of Outer Mongolia. The mysterious civilian Yamamoto is the man in charge. He tells the lieutenant that they are in possession of a document which must be delivered to headquarters; this is their first priority. Furthermore, Yamamoto says, if anything untoward should happen, if they should be attacked or captured, Mamiya must kill Yamamoto. Honda tells Mamiya that Mamiya will not die in the war but in Japan.

### **Book 1 Chapter 12: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part I (Pgs. 135-150) Analysis**

The lieutenant tells his story to Toru. Something about the old man's story is riveting. This is the first installment of Toru's Japanese history lesson. Mamiya's anecdotes become the spark that leads Toru in the direction of finding out more. For the most part, it is just another war story. A veteran remembering how things used to be. Through the eyes of the past and the present, the lieutenant allows the memory to tell itself. What happens on the mission is not difficult to understand. Four men are sent into dangerous territory. Only one man knows what the mission actually is. The other three can only guess at who their leader is and what he is really up to. None of them have met before; no one talks about meeting again. Mamiya's naivete allows him to go along without asking questions. He is a soldier, after all, and he has a rather easy time of it before Yamamoto comes into his life. From another standpoint, the lieutenant tells Toru something no one else knows; he keeps it to himself for more than fifty years. This means that the story might still be undiluted from lack of telling into the air. No one else has heard it; therefore, no other version exists.

Honda, Hamano and Mamiya are all set up as oppositional to Yamamoto. He is well-established as a character that stands on his own much of the time. The three soldiers, on the other hand, are not world-hardened like Yamamoto, even though Hamano seems rather gruff. The tone of suspicion comes through in the talks the three have with one another. No one trusts Yamamoto. He does not share information with them until after he is shot and tells them about the important document. The intrigue thickens when Yamamoto instructs the lieutenant to shoot him if they fall into enemy hands. Yamamoto is not only dangerous because of what he knows, but his arrogance is palpable.



Yamamoto is unconcerned about what might happen to the soldiers in case of capture. He knows, however, that he is important enough to die on the spot.

The night before the men are to cross the river, Honda makes a prediction. Mamiya is told that he will die old in Japan. The advice came to Mamiya unsolicited as he was having a conversation with Hamano at the time. Honda's gift is first introduced to the lieutenant. Mamiya is curious and wants to know more. The fact that Honda will not discuss the prediction tells the reader that he was at one time very self-conscious of the gift he shares so freely with Toru and Kumiko later in his life.



## **Book 1 Chapter 13: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part II (Pgs. 151-172)**

### **Book 1 Chapter 13: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part II (Pgs. 151-172) Summary**

Mamiya is awakened by the click of a rifle's safety release. Two Mongolian soldiers are standing over him, with rifles pointed at him. Only Yamamoto and the lieutenant are present. The Mongols hold them prisoner until the next day when two planes arrive, carrying two high-ranking officers: one Mongolian and the other Russian. Mamiya watches as the Mongol begins to skin Yamamoto with a knife. After awhile, nothing is left of Yamamoto but his bloody skinless corpse. The soldiers force Mamiya to climb naked into an empty, dry well. On his third morning in the well, the lieutenant is saved by Corporal Honda. It seems that Honda had known the Mongols were coming and slipped out of camp after removing the important letter from Yamamoto's bag. Mr. Honda leaves Toru Okada an empty Cutty Sark box.

### **Book 1 Chapter 13: Lieutenant Mamiya's Long Story: Part II (Pgs. 151-172) Analysis**

The lieutenant's long story concludes in this chapter. The mission proves to be unsuccessful because the party is captured before they are able to cross the river. The Russian officer is Boris the Manskiner, but Mamiya does not reveal this fact until much later in the narrative. Nevertheless, this chapter is rather explicit in its account of Yamamoto being skinned alive by a Mongolian soldier. What resonates so clearly for the reader is the sense of helplessness in the face of extreme horror. Mamiya closes his eyes during Yamamoto's execution but cannot get away from the sound. Here, the author has inserted screams instead of background music. Once the sound of something like war enters the consciousness, it is practically impossible to remove it or block it out. Yamamoto's death wails had this effect on Lieutenant Mamiya. This adds weight to the lieutenant's admission that he has never told the story before. The sound of his story had nowhere to go until Toru hears it.

The most important portion of this narrative comes, however, when the lieutenant is spared a skinning and forced into the bottom of a well. Mamiya is thrown into the well by the Mongols. His life changes when the sunlight enters the well for a short time each day. Later, the lieutenant will tell Toru exactly what happened at those moments of hyper-illumination during his ordeal. The effect of those moments of warmth stay with the lieutenant for the rest of his life. The miraculous once again enters the narrative when Honda finds Mamiya at the bottom of the well after three days in the darkness. The two men do not discuss how Honda finds Mamiya. This rescue falls under the category of things which go unexplained. Of course Mr. Honda has a gift, but it was as



much a mystery to him as to those who saw it at work. He follows his instincts or some other kind of internal compass. Regardless of the source of his abilities, Mamiya is grateful to be saved from the blinding possibility of the light. The brightness of it, the intimacy of its leaning into the well each day did things to Lieutenant Mamiya that he had never told anyone. Later in life, though, Mr. Honda tells Toru Okada about the well in his own indirect way. His advice to Toru to go to the bottom of the deepest well he can find, is a reference to his rescuing Lieutenant Mamiya.





## **Book 2 Chapter 1: As Concrete as Possible • Appetite in Literature (Pgs. 175-184)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 1: As Concrete as Possible • Appetite in Literature (Pgs. 175-184) Summary**

After a through inspection of the house, Okada finds that his wife did not take anything with her other than the clothes on her back when she departed day before. Malta Kano tells him that the cat will never return and to go with the flow of things and to be patient. She then tells him that someone whose name begins with the letter "O" will be calling him on the telephone. A short while later, she says, "Before very long, a half-moon will last for several days" (180). The Omura liquor store calls to confirm an order. Toru goes to the dry cleaners, pretending that he has forgotten the receipt. The man behind the counter says that Kumiko already picked up the clothes. Toru Okada knows Kumiko has left him.

### **Book 2 Chapter 1: As Concrete as Possible • Appetite in Literature (Pgs. 175-184) Analysis**

"Book Two: Bird as Prophet; July to October 1984" Book 2 opens with another striking change taking place in Toru Okada's life. His wife is gone. The cat is still gone. Things are falling away from the main protagonist and he wants information. His wife takes nothing with her which denotes that her decision was either foolhardy or very wise. The break might not be as clean, but for a woman to simply step out of her life takes a certain amount of resolve. She leaves her entire physical self at home with her husband. This is who she wants him to see. The orderly Kumiko, the Kumiko who talks to him and tells him the truth. Her things serve as a reminder to Toru that she has changed right out of his world. She carries nothing of their marriage forward with her. It all stays just as it is because it was just a moment. A moment that lasted six years. It is important, also, that Kumiko leaves the expensive perfume behind. If she were indeed headed into someone else's arms, she would want to take the cologne to please the person who bought it for her. Wearing the cologne when she leaves her husband but not taking it into the future with her creates space for a third possibility: she is not leaving her husband for anyone; she is just leaving. Their home becomes a very intimate museum. The exhibit is all that remains of the life that he lived with Kumiko, the life she inhabited with him once. Where she slept, the sheets unchanged since she was last there. Everything of hers is now completely his. She leaves the good and the bad, the awful and the sentimental. Kumiko's departure is devastating and so unmistakable.



No less importantly, Toru realizes that his whole life with Kumiko was very narrow. For the most part, they were the only two people in their little world. When he learns that Kumiko has already picked up the skirt and blouse from the dry cleaner, he can no longer deny what has happened. The clothes are now sanitized and fit for her to wear again. This is no less crushing than the reality of her leaving everything else for him to deal with. She forces Toru to remove her from the home. Kumiko bends reality in that she leaves Toru physically and then she leaves him again metaphorically at some point when he is left to decide how to dispose of her things. Again, the wife leaving all her things with her husband subverts the cheating husband paradigm. Toru is spared any messy wrangling for time or closeness. The matter is taken out of his hands. Kumiko's abandonment is somewhat emasculating but Toru does not see it his way. There is no action for him to take and there is no end but the end that he imposes on the situation.

The fantastic once again re-inserts itself into the narrative with a call from the Omura liquor store. Malta Kano's short-term, concrete prediction comes true. This reinforces the idea that Malta Kano may be somewhat trustworthy after all. Her mildly clairvoyant abilities redeem her in the eyes of the character.



## **Book 2 Chapter 2: No Good News in This Chapter (Pgs. 185-195)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 2: No Good News in This Chapter (Pgs. 185-195) Summary**

Toru asks May to call Kumiko's job and find out if she has come to work yet. She has not been to work in two days. He dreams of being in the hotel room again with Creta Kano, who tells him that she is only borrowing Kumiko's dress. Toru then realizes that the woman wearing Kumiko's pale blue dress is not Creta Kano but the anonymous woman on the telephone. Malta Kano has some news about Kumiko and they agree to meet at one o'clock the following afternoon in the tearoom of the Shinagawa Pacific Hotel. Malta Kano tells him that his brother-in-law Noboru Wataya will join them.

### **Book 2 Chapter 2: No Good News in This Chapter (Pgs. 185-195) Analysis**

Toru indulges his suspicions by checking up on Kumiko at work. May's suggestion that he shower and shave have an ordering effect on the rest of Tofu's day—the things he does keep him grounded in his body. Cleaning oneself, shaving, dressing, all call for a certain kind of meditative concentration. Such mundane behaviors prevent Toru from spinning out of control. After the trauma of learning that she is missing from work as well, Toru's mind counteracts this knowledge with a re-creation of the hotel room scenario. He and Creta Kano have another sexual exchange. In this case, his mind may be substituting Creta for Kumiko out of some emotional need to re-connect with his wife. Furthermore, Kumiko's dress becomes a costume, something that can be inhabited by another woman of the same size. When other women put on the pale blue dress, however, its shape changes, the way it drapes the body. Changes from one wearing to the next begin to show on the garment. The dress loses some sentimental value also because other people wear it freely now. Kumiko has handed her things over to the women who populate Toru's current inner landscape. The blue dress is nothing more than a prop now. His brief meeting with May Kasahara serves as a transition point between what is and what is about to change.

It is interesting to note that after the dream, Malta Kano contacts him. She has information about his wife. Malta Kano is a variable in that she contacts people sporadically. Her messages are coming to fruition, well, one at least. She is still not someone Toru trusts entirely. The moon makes another appearance. This is significant because of the number of women Toru now interacts with. Kumiko, Malta and Creta, May Kasahara all revolve around him. The moon becomes a symbol for the changes women bring about in his life. The full moon is a potent force in the workings of these

women's bodies and minds. This is an alert to the reader that something meaningful is about to happen.

Perhaps the meaningful event is a meeting at the tearoom with Malta Kano and Noboru Wataya. News of his brother-in-law's inclusion blots out Toru's joy. It also reminds him that the Wataya family probably wants him to grant Kumiko a divorce or something along those lines. And although a relationship between Kumiko and Noboru is difficult for Toru to conceptualize, the other man's presence does pose a threat to his marriage to Kumiko on a deeper level than he knows. The tearoom is a place where things are revealed and Malta does finally have something to tell him about Kumiko. The public setting keeps the patrons from behaving unreasonably or impulsively. Also, the tearoom will provide another opportunity for Murakami to comment on the characters' wardrobe choices.



## **Book 2 Chapter 3: Noboru Wataya Speaks • The Story of the Monkeys of the Shitty Island (Pgs. 196-205)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 3: Noboru Wataya Speaks • The Story of the Monkeys of the Shitty Island (Pgs. 196-205) Summary**

Malta Kano wears the same red vinyl hat to the Pacific Hotel that afternoon. Toru notices that Noboru Wataya is more attractive than he was three years ago at their last meeting and his brother-in-law confirms that Kumiko has left Toru for another man. Noboru Wataya then launches into a verbal attack on Toru Okada. Toru Okada becomes angry and tells his brother-in-law the story of the shitty island. Malta Kano advises Toru Okada that he has not seen the last of Noboru Wataya; the two men will meet again at some point in time.

### **Book 2 Chapter 3: Noboru Wataya Speaks • The Story of the Monkeys of the Shitty Island (Pgs. 196-205) Analysis**

Toru Okada does not relish coming to the tearoom because his brother-in-law will be there. His feelings about the family trying to bully him are validated when Noboru Wataya says what he wants to say. Noboru Wataya's verbal attack on Toru shows that his ruthlessness has deepened in the last few years. He does his best to completely demolish Toru. He is undone, however, not so much by the story Toru tells but by the threats that Toru does not make. Noboru Wataya is left with nothing to say. Kumiko and Toru both know what he hides behind the mask. They both know about his ugliness firsthand. The reader does not know how familiar Malta Kano is with Noboru Wataya's first face. Malta's admission that she also knew of the other man before today's meeting deflates Toru somewhat but this does not deter him from having his say. Toru calls Noboru Wataya out as a malignancy that eats and reproduces itself every time it is excreted. His brother-in-law's unexpressed hatred is what causes the splotches to form on his face. Not even his television-perfect looks are able to camouflage the truth of what he is. This period of silence builds suspense. Noboru Wataya is a man who likes having the last word and yet passes up the opportunity to really finish off Toru. For some time, there is no movement at the table. One can imagine red smoke trailing around Noboru Wataya as he angrily slithers out of the Pacific Hotel.

Malta Kano does not allow Noboru Wataya's exit to disrupt conveying a message to Toru. Her warning places the responsibility for finding a solution right back at Toru's feet.



What happens next is very typical of Malta Kano. The placing of the red vinyl hat on her head signals the end of their disturbing session. Toru has been given what she came to deliver and Malta's duty ends there. It is now Toru's task to decide how to proceed. He is still intact but knows Kumiko's family will continue to contact him, trying to convince him to give up on the marriage. This latest conflagration with Noboru Wataya strengthens Toru's resolve. On some level, Toru knows he has nothing to lose. The cat is already gone; he has no job, and his wife leaves him without much more than a gesture in his direction. Things change again for the protagonist. The last one at the table, having to pay the bill only serves to reinforce the solitariness of his current existence. The relationships he forms are tenuous at best and Kumiko is further away than Toru can reach.



## **Book 2 Chapter 4: Divine Grace Lost • Prostitute of the Mind (Pgs. 206-213)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 4: Divine Grace Lost • Prostitute of the Mind (Pgs. 206-213) Summary**

In a letter, Mamiya says that what took his life was the astonishing light at the bottom of the well. The lieutenant is convinced that something lives in the light, but he never quite manages to see it. Nothing ever materializes and the light is soon gone from the well. Lieutenant Mamiya tells Toru that his entire life outside the well has been empty; nothing but an empty shell. The old man is no longer afraid of dying. At this time in his life, though, Mamiya admits that he experiences a certain kind of salvation. Toru Okada finds Creta Kano sitting on the sofa. Creta Kano admits to being a "prostitute of the mind" and that, as such, things pass through her.

### **Book 2 Chapter 4: Divine Grace Lost • Prostitute of the Mind (Pgs. 206-213) Analysis**

This chapter blends the sacred with the profane. The title is very appropriate in its portrayal of two different states of being that nonetheless flow into one another. Here, divinity stands next to its own flesh in the form of Lieutenant Mamiya's letter. As it happens, the lieutenant's journey to the bottom of the well sends his consciousness in an unexpected direction. In a situation offering limited physical mobility, he chooses to focus on the unseen. There is still an innocence about how he relates to the light. Of course, it is the sun that shines on him regularly but the experience of receiving warmth and light so far below ground for such a short period of time can alter one's perceptions. He feels anticipation and expectation, and this energy animates the light that appears to warm Mamiya during the day. Divine grace is the most effective way to define what the lieutenant is waiting for. What else could possibly reach him at the bottom of a well in the middle of this desolation? Any contact he has must be of a supernatural caliber. That the lieutenant has no idea where he is, it makes sense that only God would be able to find him. Losing divine grace is like dying before the soul leaves the body. It leaves a shell where the person used to be. At least Mamiya is free of his fear of death.

Toru turns his attention to his brother-in-law. The concept of profanity, of life in the flesh re-enters the narrative with his thoughts of Noboru Wataya and the mask Noboru wears. The nothingness behind it continues to concern Toru. He counters the other man's influence with an examination of Kumiko's things. He touches them and remembers how it felt being married to Kumiko. Pouring out the cologne is another action that supports Toru's acceptance of how drastically his life is changing. In effect, sweeping aside his wife's presence becomes almost mundane like brushing his teeth or going to hang out



with May Kasahara. The young woman is diversionary for Toru. Her friendship is a side benefit of finding the wayward cat.

The profane mentioned in the beginning of the chapter analysis is also manifest by Creta Kano's appearance on Toru's couch later that day. Once again, Toru holds a woman who is not Kumiko out of a sense of obligation. It does not cross any boundaries at this point, however, because Toru has no wife at home. It seems that in this instance, Creta is once again acting as her sister's representative. She asks Toru about the meeting at the tearoom. Since she was not in attendance, she must have gotten the question from her sister. Both characters wish to know more about Noboru Wataya for individual reasons. Creta Kano comes clean about her ability to visit Toru in his dreams and join her body with his. This is her gift. What is important about the younger sister's gift, however, is its emphasis on the body. Creta is still bound to the flesh even by the abilities she is born with as a child. The temporal body is inescapable. It dictates much of what goes on in Creta's waking and dreaming lives. Things pass through her, which means that Creta is the receptive force in both situations. At the same time, however, Creta is also a creative force in that she is able to insinuate herself into Toru's dream life and not vice versa.





## **Book 2 Chapter 5: Views of Distant Towns • Eternal Half-Moon • Ladder in Place (Pgs. 214-221)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 5: Views of Distant Towns • Eternal Half-Moon • Ladder in Place (Pgs. 214-221) Summary**

May Kasahara castigates Toru Okada for having too many women hanging around his house. She becomes jealous, thinking Toru has thrown her over for Creta Kano and she hangs up. Toru climbs down into the well. The inside of the well is concrete. The ground, Toru notices, is neither hard nor soft. The sides are cool and smooth, except for something that feels like moss growing here and there. From far down in the well, he looks up through the opening and sees a half-moon shape. This is the same half-moon Malta Kano told him about. After making sure he can breathe, Toru sits down on the floor of the well and closes his eyes.

### **Book 2 Chapter 5: Views of Distant Towns • Eternal Half-Moon • Ladder in Place (Pgs. 214-221) Analysis**

Toru is beset with a desire to know things. His life is spinning out of control around him and Toru decides that there is no order to his world outside the well. May Kasahara's jealousy has no impact on him as she is still young and his thoughts are somewhere else. May does not realize the depth of Toru's connection with Creta Kano. May can only rely on the visual information she gathers the night before. May's confidence slips and she becomes a regular teenage girl who is experiencing the growing pains of adolescence. Toru revisits his own childhood by way of memories of running away from home as a young boy. Oddly enough, when Toru runs away, his parents do not even notice that Toru is gone. In this way, his adult life mirrors his childhood; Toru does not leave much of a mark on the people around him. He does not yet realize that this ability to come and go unnoticed can work to his advantage. This chapter is about the mind's search for structure and logic and sense. Going down into the well is literally Toru's entrance into his own subconscious. He first enters the darkness of the well feeling apprehensive about the unknown. There is something powerful which prompts him to continue his descent. The prospect of finding important answers at the bottom of the well (at the bottom of himself) motivates the character to fully engage the finite darkness of the well along with parts of himself that are still hidden from plain view.

The mystical nature of Toru's downward expedition is revealed when the character notices the half-moon shape above him. Malta Kano's influence on Toru's life increases with every accurate statement she makes. The only problem, however, is that Malta Kano is unable to supply Toru with anything suitably concrete, solid enough to stand the



test of close scrutiny. In actuality, she has "given" him very little. Actually, what concerns Toru about Malta Kano is her unpredictability. She appears and disappears at odd junctures. Malta's unpredictable manner is also a trait her sister Creta shares.



## **Book 2 Chapter 6: Inheriting Property • Inquiry on Jellyfish • Something Like a Sense of Detachment (Pgs. 222-230)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 6: Inheriting Property • Inquiry on Jellyfish • Something Like a Sense of Detachment (Pgs. 222-230) Summary**

Sitting at the bottom of the Miyawakis' well, Toru Okada thinks back on the first time he met his wife Kumiko. At the aquarium, Toru discovers an admiration for Kumiko's sense of style. Kumiko explains to Toru that what fascinates her about the jellyfish is that they represent what remains unseen in people's daily lives. She remarks that people simply forget that most of the world is inhabited by creatures like jellyfish, creatures that are somehow out of plain sight and vital to the continuity one finds in the world. Toru asks Kumiko if she has a boyfriend. Kumiko avoids the question and asks if they can go to Toru's apartment. This is Kumiko's first sexual experience. At the bottom of the well, he marvels at how close this darkness is to everyday life.

### **Book 2 Chapter 6: Inheriting Property • Inquiry on Jellyfish • Something Like a Sense of Detachment (Pgs. 222-230) Analysis**

Remembrances from the bottom of the well. In his mind, Toru is telling himself the history of his life with Kumiko. Her thoughts on the jellyfish provide foreshadowing for her eventual disappearance. She is telling Toru that what happens below the surface of life is often more important than the thousands of details floating by in plain view. Toru misses this clue entirely, caught up in his own adverse reaction to the slow-moving, silent creatures. Kumiko's thoughts also reveal her understanding and acceptance of her own darkness. Early in their relationship, Kumiko shows an awareness of life that Toru does not yet perceive. Alone in the darkness, Toru is comforted by his ability to remember. Whatever he remembers is true. This time gives the character a chance to evaluate his experience for himself with no external input. What happened with Kumiko in the beginning is a testament to the existence of something real and wanted. By calling to mind things that happen in the past, Toru also wages a battle against his brother-in-law's assertion that Toru somehow ruins Kumiko's life. Starting at the very beginning, Toru puts into play a system of self-examination which features Kumiko in the foreground. By focusing his reminiscences on his wife, he can re-observe her actions throughout the course of the marriage.



The question of distance becomes prominent in this chapter as well. Toru perceives Kumiko's distance but only in terms of his own progression. The character says that although his wife kept him at arm's length, he began to feel more comfortable as time went on. What this tells the reader is that Kumiko may have been distant with her husband the entire time, and that he simply became more adept at sweeping it aside. Toru misses important clues early on in his and Kumiko's process. The fact that he is sitting at the bottom of a well, thinking about the way things were is a strong indication that the character is experiencing a longing for solidity and assurance.



## **Book 2 Chapter 7: Recollections and Dialogue on Pregnancy • Empirical Inquiry on Pain (Pgs. 230-240)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 7: Recollections and Dialogue on Pregnancy • Empirical Inquiry on Pain (Pgs. 230-240) Summary**

When Toru awakens at the bottom of the well, it is nearly dark. As he breathes in the moldy air, he thinks again about his life with Kumiko. Three years after they are married, Kumiko becomes pregnant. As a college student, Toru Okada remembers, he once got a girlfriend pregnant. They both agree that Kumiko should make the decision whether or not to have an abortion on her own. Toru Okada is in Sapporo on a business trip when Kumiko has the abortion. In a bar, a young man sings and plays the guitar. The show ends; the young man tells the bar patrons that he wants to give them a lesson in empathy.

### **Book 2 Chapter 7: Recollections and Dialogue on Pregnancy • Empirical Inquiry on Pain (Pgs. 230-240) Analysis**

Waking up at the bottom of a dry well now seems like something almost mundane for Toru Okada. He drifts in and out of sleep and remembering and once again his mind turns to Kumiko. It also happens, though, that being in the well brings Toru some understanding of Creta Kano's vocation. His and Kumiko's first days together are insular. They have only each other for support. And while this strengthens the marriage, it also results in a kind of tunnel vision where the couple becomes the entire world. Kumiko's untimely pregnancy brings up Toru's college experience with abortion. Unlike his college days, however, he is not with Kumiko to offer any support. Kumiko's question to Toru about the possibility of her having an affair signals more than her curiosity about her husband's trust. It is an indication that Toru Okada constantly misses vital clues to his wife's inner workings. Kumiko is telling him something that he fails to interpret properly and an opportunity to become closer to his wife slips away.

The chapter takes a turn toward the surreal with Toru's visit to the bar in Sapporo. This is the first time the reader is introduced to the young musician. The man's whole act culminates in another opportunity for self-examination. There is no indication that Toru feels anything but astonishment at the young man's act with the candle flame. Much like the conversation with Kumiko, Toru is unaware of the message. He is ignorant of Kumiko's pain and ignorant of what the young man tries to impress on the audience in



the bar. The ability to perceive and respond to someone else's pain is what affirms connection with other human beings. Not acknowledging other people's pain leaves one empty, with no evidence of a burn or an emotional mark. Toru returns to the hotel room, to his lack of feeling and his recollection of a very strange performance. Remaining in the well shows the character's tenacity and deep need to continue walking through time, toward some kind of inner light.



## **Book 2 Chapter 8: The Root of Desire • In Room 208 • Passing Through the Wall (Pgs. 241-247)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 8: The Root of Desire • In Room 208 • Passing Through the Wall (Pgs. 241-247) Summary**

Toru remembers a dream which begins with his brother-in-law's face on a television screen in a hotel lobby. The faceless man appears once again and informs him that the time is still not right and that he should not be in the hotel. Seeing a room service tray Toru decides to follow the waiter who is delivering the tray. Following the waiter through a long corridor, the man whistles the overture from Rossini's "The Thieving Magpie" before reaching Room 208. Toru tells the unknown woman that he is trying to find Kumiko. The woman says that each time he fails to discover her identity, Kumiko moves farther and farther away from him. Someone knocks on the door and the woman ushers Toro Okada through the darkness. The two of them walk through a solid wall.

### **Book 2 Chapter 8: The Root of Desire • In Room 208 • Passing Through the Wall (Pgs. 241-247) Analysis**

Toru's vivid dream about his brother-in-law gives the reader an idea of the subconscious work that is taking place in the character. The fitful quality of the dream is indicative of the pressure the character feels to find answers. The people staring at Noboru Wataya on the hotel television are the consumers; i.e., those who take what they see and hear to be the absolute truth. Wataya is a commodity to be consumed with the eyes and ears. Toru's anger can be interpreted to mean that his waking and dreaming lives intersect at the point of conflict with Noboru. The hotel is a familiar landscape by this point. There are elements about it that Toru remembers without effort. The cast of characters found inside the hotel is unchanging, although the female players in Room 208 seem to shift places at will. In this case, Toru talks to a woman he does not know. More importantly, Toru's proximity to Kumiko is contingent upon his recognition of this woman. He is unable to oblige her and fails to discover the woman's identity. Again, the character reaches a dead end. This time, however, his presence in the hotel is fortuitous. In this dream and every other, knocking on the door is indicative of impending danger. Before finding out what that danger is, however, Toru and the woman escape.

Walking through the wall is the proof Toru needs. He has discovered part of his own gift. The ability to go from the well into his dreams and back again adds a whole new dimension to the character's sense of himself. The darkness of the well in this instance gives Toru a chance to settle into a new piece of knowledge. Exposing his awareness to the surface too soon could prove unwise. The heat on his right cheek is the forerunner



of the blue-black stain he notices later. Also, Toru's dream encounter with an unknown woman adds to a series of experiences with women that contribute to his self-definition. To the woman in the hotel room, he is one man. With May Kasahara and the Kano sisters, he fills a different niche. With his wife Kumiko, he is faced with the reality of having to change the way he interacts. She is no longer his companion or his friend.





## **Book 2 Chapter 9: The Well and Stars • How the Ladder Disappeared (Pgs. 248-255)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 9: The Well and Stars • How the Ladder Disappeared (Pgs. 248-255) Summary**

It is shortly after five o'clock in the morning and Toru Okada is staring up at the stars through the half-moon opening at the top of the well. He searches for the rope ladder in the darkness only to discover that someone has removed it. Then he remembers coming back from Sapporo after Kumiko has the abortion. Suddenly, he hears May Kasahara yelling at him from the top of the well.

He tells the young girl that he is just thinking. May tells him that she is the one who pulled the rope ladder up out of the well, telling him that she is the only one who knows his whereabouts. If she chooses to, she could leave Toru Okada in the well to die and no one would know where to look for him. At this point, May Kasahara puts the other half-moon cover over the mouth of the well and leaves Toru Okada sitting in the darkness all by himself.

### **Book 2 Chapter 9: The Well and Stars • How the Ladder Disappeared (Pgs. 248-255) Analysis**

Reaching for the rope ladder touches off a memory in Toru's mind. The time after Kumiko's operation is reminiscent of the time he got a girlfriend pregnant in college. He and his wife fall out of communication with one another. Something stands in the way of their talking about what happened and the way it is changing them. Even in a neutral setting, Kumiko is still unwilling to bring Toru into her confidence and holds out emotionally. This unresolved episode creates an absence in their narrative, the same way the ladder's absence disrupts his experience at the bottom of the well. May Kasahara comes to the well out of curiosity. She is the mischievous sprite who vexes Toru by removing the rope ladder. This is a game for her. The girl is testing limits once again by exercising her power over Toru in another way. By leaving him at the bottom of the well, she can satisfy her desire to know how people die. May also has the means to save him, however. Toru's fate rests with May as long as she chooses to accept the responsibility for his life or death. This show of caprice relates directly to how May's behavior precipitates the motorcycle accident where her leg and face are seriously injured. Toru admits his fear which serves to diffuse May's arrogance. There is not much fun in scaring someone who is already afraid.



What is most jarring about this section of the chapter, however, is the nonchalant way May replaces the well cover and strolls away. It is startling to think that she would allow Toru to die, but the reader is well aware that anything is possible in Toru's new life. May Kasahara has already shown that she is a jealous and sometimes petulant young woman. The anxiety created by the text has to do with potentiality. Would she really just leave him there to die? May's morality comes into question here. The girl knows right from wrong, but does she care in this situation? Killing Toru would be like research, not so different from counting bald and thinning heads at the train station.



## **Book 2 Chapter 10: May Kasahara on Death and Evolution • The Thing Made Elsewhere (Pgs. 256-262)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 10: May Kasahara on Death and Evolution • The Thing Made Elsewhere (Pgs. 256-262) Summary**

Toru Okada tries to mimic the cry of the wind-up bird he has heard so often. Toru Okada admits to May that Kumiko has left him for another man. May tells Toru that he was made "somewhere else" and that his and Kumiko's joint idea to re-create themselves was also made somewhere else. May Kasahara then replaces the cover of the well, leaving Toru in the familiar darkness.

### **Book 2 Chapter 10: May Kasahara on Death and Evolution • The Thing Made Elsewhere (Pgs. 256-262) Analysis**

Toru's faculties split off from one another as his mind and his body diverge. Being the wind-up bird means being completely free. It is not surprising that he would think of flying. He is alone in a deep, dark well. The body's containment gives way to the imagination's expansion. Flying over the rooftops signifies visual omnipotence. His view as the wind-up bird is from high above the small rooms people occupy. This view suggests mastery over the mundane and knowledge beyond the safety of home. Breaking free in his mind takes Toru's focus off his physicality. May Kasahara returns to poke at Toru like a bug, wanting to see if he actually could die one day in the near future. Of course, her actions do nothing to speed up Toru's demise. The girl's interest is purely scientific, and her research yields information which proves that her subject will live awhile longer in the well.

Toru is able to tell May that Kumiko has left him because he is not threatened by the girl. He finds it easy to open up to May Kasahara because she is not yet jaded the way an adult might be. The news is surprising to May for some reason, but not because she knows anything about the workings of a marriage. She recognizes Kumiko's choice to leave as abandonment. Kumiko was there and now she is not. May knows this disappoints Toru, absence upsets her as well. When May Kasahara talks about "somewhere else" it is difficult to understand precisely what she means. There are several options for interpretation, though. The phrase could refer to a place in time and space other than now, other than here. Somewhere else as in another part of your life or your personal consciousness. Also, somewhere else could imply a separate part of the

brain. Toru is able to mentally detach from events, compartmentalizing things to hold some structure in his psyche. It is conceivable that somewhere else is just another compartment in his mind.



## **Book 2 Chapter 11: Hunger as Pain • Kumiko's Long Letter • Bird as Prophet (Pgs. 263-279)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 11: Hunger as Pain • Kumiko's Long Letter • Bird as Prophet (Pgs. 263-279) Summary**

Toru remembers going to baseball games with his father as a child. Eight minutes pass and he finally takes off his watch not wanting to be distracted by keeping track of the time. Startled at the prospect of going insane at the bottom of the well, he convinces himself that May is just playing a joke on him by leaving him all alone here. Later, he receives a letter for him addressed in Kumiko's hand. She writes to tell Toru her reasons for leaving him and that she will not be coming back to him - ever. Then she informs her husband that she never found their sexual relations pleasurable. Kumiko says that having the affair with the married man released some sort of blockage in her. He begins to wonder if he ever really knew Kumiko at all.

### **Book 2 Chapter 11: Hunger as Pain • Kumiko's Long Letter • Bird as Prophet (Pgs. 263-279) Analysis**

The chapter begins with the character's mind and body coming back together. Examining his ears in the dark is Toru's way of self-assurance that he has not turned into well-vapor. The body unseen is different than staring at one's reflection in a mirror. There is a diligence that must set in when one is surrounded by total darkness. The mind is in its own backyard without any other stimuli. Focus takes concentration and concentration takes presence of mind. His brain directs his hands to investigate the ears and to ground the self in the moment of experience. Also, the character is struggling with the slow passing of time by taking himself back to the past. The Cardinals' baseball game memory is like a small blip on a radar screen. When the character wakes up later, his body takes precedence over his roaming thoughts. Toru plays a game with himself, trying to remember lists of things from other times in his life. It is a litany of teachers' names and old addresses. But none of this remembering can stand in the way of the well's effect on his internal mechanisms. His mind turns in on itself and the mumbling begins; the slip is noticeable.

By shifting into remembrance, focusing his attention on May Kasahara, Toru is able to manage his claustrophobia for a moment. Creta's unpredictability is again exposed at the well by her sudden appearance and just as sudden disappearance. She is the fairy godmother who delivers Toru from his panic, then splits from the scene so as not to draw anyone's eye. Lying in the grass is the character's way of establishing himself as



part of things that go on outside the well. Feeling the solid ground beneath his body, Toru is able to re-acclimate sufficiently. Kumiko's letter is explosive and brutally honest.

Toru's wife expresses herself from a position of shame and self-loathing. Even though the letter is lengthy and goes into a great deal of detail, Toru nonetheless is left with more questions than sure answers. His emotional reaction underplays the impact of the letter's shocking content. He rearranges pieces of his past in his mind. His wife, the woman he thought he knew, has been someone else all along. Kumiko's dissatisfaction with their physical exchanges throws the emotional relationship even more into doubt. The reality is that Kumiko did not feel free being married to Toru. He had been living with a representation of his wife the whole time. The secret she had been keeping from him was the equivalent of an entire self.

The phone call at the end of the chapter is rather anti-climactic. However, a re-entry by Malta Kano always produces some kind of ripple in Toru's life.



## **Book 2 Chapter 12: Discovered When Shaving • Discovered When Waking (Pgs. 280-291)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 12: Discovered When Shaving • Discovered When Waking (Pgs. 280-291) Summary**

Malta Kano asks Toru if he's been away for the last couple of days. She continues, telling Toru that she recently lost touch with her younger sister, Creta Kano, and asks if he has seen her. He says no but that if he happens to run into Creta, he will relay the message that Malta Kano wishes to speak to her. Toru Okada leaves the house and climbs the cinder-block wall and starts down the alley. His watch says it is three o'clock in the morning. Once he reaches the well, he yells Creta Kano's name and she responds. Toru explains that her sister Malta Kano needs to speak with her. Creta thanks him for taking the trouble to come to the well to relay the message. While shaving his right cheek, he notices something which looks like a dark stain. He tries to rub it off with his palm but the mark seems to be indelible. The only way the mark could have gotten there, he thinks to himself, is that it happened during the dream in which he had gone through a wall. He sees the mark as a reminder that he went into Room 208 when the faceless man had instructed him against it. Toru's uncle suggests that he pay a visit to Mr. Ichikawa, a real estate agent who has more than a passing knowledge of the neighborhood's history. Later, Toru finds Creta Kano, naked, sound asleep in bed beside him.

### **Book 2 Chapter 12: Discovered When Shaving • Discovered When Waking (Pgs. 280-291) Analysis**

Toru's exploits with the Kano sisters continue in this chapter. Toru is given information about the mark on his cheek even before looking in the mirror. Malta Kano's sense in this case is spot-on. Toru is experiencing a physical change; the warm mark on his right cheek makes its presence known before he has visual proof of its existence. Her accurate impressions also lead her to ask about Creta. The humor in this chapter is evident as Toru returns to the Miyawaki well only to find Creta sitting at the bottom, thinking. They have reversed roles. What makes this passage so funny, however, is that the reader is never made aware of the transition Creta Kano goes through after finding him in the well. When he returns to the well the first time, she simply tells him that she is thinking. She never tells Toru when going down the well became a viable option in her mind. It seems somehow natural that Creta would follow Toru's lead, though. Creta is already a character from whom the reader expects quirkiness and harmless instability.



Talking to Toru's uncle serves the purpose of continuing the tradition of storytelling. Telling his nephew to visit Mr. Ichikawa is the same as Toru's uncle sending him to the village griot, the one who tells the history of a village or a group of people. By talking to the real estate agent, Toru will be consulting the oracle of the Setagaya section of Tokyo. Like Lieutenant Mamiya's accounts of WWII, Ichikawa is the keeper of a different kind of wisdom. The next day, Toru finally meets the mark on his cheek. He is able to see now the proof of his self-projection through the wall, joining the well to the hotel room. He is now marked, however, and Toru has no experience with being so visible. The Kano sisters stand out by virtue of their outlandish wardrobes. May Kasahara has a limp and a cut near her eye. And now Toru is distinguishable from the rest of society as well. Even Kumiko had her beautiful long hair and lovely legs. Toru is about to receive confirmation of his own uniqueness. Uniqueness is a non-issue for Toru prior to this time. It never bothered him one way or another that he did not stand out in a crowd. Now, he does. He stands out in his own neighborhood, in his own home. Toru gets to know the mark better through the course of the day. Once again, one of the Kano women behaves absurdly but not unexpectedly. The way they pop into and out of Toru's life might tend to annoy some, but Toru treats their collective eccentricity as a minor inconvenience. This shift into new confusion is not subtle. Murakami uses an unmistakable clue to signal the reader that change is imminent for Toru.





## **Book 2 Chapter 13: Creta Kano's Story Continued (Pgs. 293-302)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 13: Creta Kano's Story Continued (Pgs. 293-302) Summary**

Apparently, Creta Kano lost her own clothes somewhere between the well and the Okadas' house. They discuss the mark on Toru's face. Toru quizzes Creta Kano about her experience at the well. She does not remember anything after falling asleep. Somehow, she got out of the well and made it to his house. Creta Kano agrees to continue the story right now, over omelets. To begin, she recounts that Noboru Wataya was her last customer when she was a prostitute of the flesh. Their meeting had been six years ago. Around this time, Creta Kano realized that she was no longer in pain, that she had gone completely numb. She had been instructed to meet Noboru Wataya in a hotel room. Noboru Wataya instructs Creta Kano to undress, which she does. He then begins to touch her body, which Creta admits arouses her. Subsequently, the man rapes Creta Kano with a foreign object and her sensation of pain returns to her body. She tells Toru Okada that upon regaining consciousness, she knows she is a different person.

### **Book 2 Chapter 13: Creta Kano's Story Continued (Pgs. 293-302) Analysis**

Creta Kano makes herself at home. She is preparing breakfast wearing Kumiko's clothes. This is a type of visual substitution. Toru's morning with Kumiko often begins the same way. The two of them would eat breakfast and talk; however, the case is different with Creta Kano in the kitchen. The phenomenon of "losing time" the way Creta does gives the reader an idea that perhaps things are not so solid in the young woman's world after all. If she is incapable of remembering how she got to Toru's house, there is no way to tell how much time she has lost overall. This also raises two other issues. First, there is a possibility that Creta is able to pass through walls just like Toru. There is no evidence of typical travel on her person. The soles of her feet are unmarked and clean. Second, what other passages has Creta made? This was her first time in the well, but she has lost time before in other locations. Perhaps her abilities are stronger than she knows. Creta has to be reminded to continue her story.

The Kano sisters are close psychically, and Malta Kano already has the sense that Toru's body has undergone a change so there is really no need for Creta to mention it to her sister at all. Creta's experience with Noboru Wataya happens the same year Toru and Kumiko are married. Creta returns once again to her narrative of the body when she tells of a strange reawakening at the hands of Toru's brother-in-law. Somehow, Noboru's sexual abuse of Creta is instrumental in bringing the young woman's body back into balance between feeling and non-feeling. Creta Kano explains her physical



paradox. For her, the reintroduction of pain is pivotal in the formation of a new self, one that is neither at the mercy of extreme sensation nor living in complete ignorance of pain. Something miraculous and transformational takes place at the hands of an evil man. This is part of the paradox as well.



## **Book 2 Chapter 14: Creta Kano's New Departure (Pgs. 304-313)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 14: Creta Kano's New Departure (Pgs. 304-313) Summary**

In this chapter, Creta Kano continues telling her story. After three or four days of this, Creta Kano comes into her third self. The first self had lived for years in excruciating pain. Her second self (the prostitute of the flesh) lived "in a state of pain-free numbness" (303). The second self was a transitional self. Her new third self, however, feels more like the person she is meant to be. Although she realizes she is happy being her third self, she still knows that what prompted the manifestation of the third self is something ominous and filthy. Once Malta returns and the sisters are reunited, Creta tells Malta her strange story. Malta decides that it is time for her to have a new name: she renames her sister "Creta" after the Greek island. Creta "couples" with Toru in his dreams because her sister requests it. Creta invites Toru to visit the island of Crete with her, telling him that she would like to make love to him once more as a prostitute. The payment is to be some of Kumiko's clothing and shoes. In Creta's estimation, Noboru Wataya and Toru occupy two completely opposite worlds. When Noboru Wataya gains, Toru Okada loses and vice versa. The chapter ends with Creta Kano warning Toru that if he refuses to go to Crete with her, something very bad awaits him.

### **Book 2 Chapter 14: Creta Kano's New Departure (Pgs. 304-313) Analysis**

This is a chapter of revelation. Creta's story continues and Toru learns more about her unusual relationship with her sister Malta. Creta's narrative continues to foreground physical experience; specifically, what happens with Noboru Wataya and again with the hotel room couplings that her sister requests. At this third stage of being, however, Creta's equilibrium is re-calibrated just in time for her sister's permanent return to Japan. While Malta practices her austerities and searches for the perfect water in other parts of the world, Creta takes shape as a person in Japan. Creta's body and homeland are closely intertwined in a way that Malta's are not. The sister's parallel experiences mirror Toru and Lieutenant Mamiya's connection with wells. The lieutenant comes to learn the secrets of being at the bottom of the well thousands of miles from where Toru receives his initiation into the depths of consciousness and thought. One of them learns on foreign soil; another of them learns the same thing a few feet from his own home. Malta's renaming her sister solidifies their bond as "sensitives," and they become collaborators in the business of navigating the unknown. Creta's second experience with Noboru Wataya is nothing like the first. She does recognize him, though, which means the impact of his past behavior toward Creta has not faded a bit. So, although Creta has moved through both her first and second selves, she is still bound to them by what she



remembers. When Noboru Wataya comes into their home, his violation of Creta is complete. As her third self, though, Creta's relationship with her body improves and she enters Toru's dreams. Even in sexual matters, she does not question Malta's rationale for asking her to participate; Creta knows Malta is more advanced in some ways. This also shows the trust Creta now has in her sister. The same trust which was missing when Creta was a teenager.

A doubling takes place and Toru exchanges Kumiko for Creta. Their situation is complicated partially by Toru's agreement to have sex with Creta again and to pay for this act of prostitution with Kumiko's belongings. Toru's mind has the non-waking experience of the women's inter-changeability in the scene with the pale blue dress. On this level, then, the change has already taken place. Creta steps in, Kumiko steps aside. The exchange of sexual goods for material goods situates Kumiko differently in Toru's conscious mind. Kumiko is still outside the realm of the Kano sisters, however, because her place in Toru's life is part of his emotional self, not his creative or mystical self. Creta has agreed to carry out her sister's suggestion. This is, then, the beginning of his clearing away. Kumiko places no stipulations on how she wants her husband to get rid of her things. Toru's choice to trade her clothes and shoes for sex grants Kumiko the distance she asks for in her letter. He is putting Kumiko somewhere else and moving forward.

Attentions turn to the abstract once again with Creta's declaration about Toru and Noboru Wataya being exact opposites. This is not difficult to conceptualize. The characters are very different from one another. What problematizes their repulsion is their connectedness. Whenever one triumphs, the other suffers defeat. When one enjoys accolades and recognition, the other sinks further into anonymity. It is not so much a situation of going up or down in popularity, but increasing and decreasing in power and influence over their individual worlds.



## **Book 2 Chapter 15: The Only Bad Thing That Ever Happened in May Kasahara's House • May Kasahara and the Gooshy Source of Heat (Pgs. 314-326)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 15: The Only Bad Thing That Ever Happened in May Kasahara's House • May Kasahara and the Gooshy Source of Heat (Pgs. 314-326) Summary**

May Kasahara invites Toru to her house. Her parents and younger brother have gone to the Kasaharas' summer house in Izu for the weekend and May is on her own. They pass the time chatting about various things, and Toru tells May that he is thinking of leaving Japan for awhile and going to Crete. May admits she went down the well and stayed there for five or six hours. Toru does not find this news surprising. She tells him that after some time in the well, she became less familiar with who she actually is. In the darkness, May feels as though something big is growing inside of her. She says she felt like a "gooshy white thing like a lump of fat" would grow inside her until it split her in two (321). The conversation turns to death once more and May Kasahara tells Toru that everyone has something different at their core. She says that that "something" is what makes her want to trap someone in a well or hold her hands over someone's eyes while they drive a motorcycle. Okada knows that this is what caused May Kasahara and her boyfriend to have the accident. The same accident that caused her leg injury and the cut near her eye. The boyfriend died in the accident, although May Kasahara would rather not talk about it right now.

### **Book 2 Chapter 15: The Only Bad Thing That Ever Happened in May Kasahara's House • May Kasahara and the Gooshy Source of Heat (Pgs. 314-326) Analysis**

The telephone continues to be a source of connection and surprise for Toru Okada. May is alone and would like company in the backyard. Her family is largely absent from this narrative. She does talk at some length about her parents later in Book 3 Chapter 18 ("A Stupid Tree Frog Daughter"). Her brother is not mentioned more than twice in the entire novel. May's family has almost no place in her life. She is alone, unattended most of the time, and happily so, it seems. She went into the well to find out what happens at the bottom of a well. She is astute, though, in her observations on the gooshy thing that



might occupy her body cavity and eventually explode. This sounds similar to Toru's claustrophobia in the previous chapter, except that in May's version, something dense causes the choking. Fat is indigestible, unmanageable. May visualizes it as part of who she is on the inside. The white mass spreads itself around and expands until her body is no longer able to accommodate it. Her short time in the Miyawakis' well convinces her not to go back. May and Toru settle back into their friendship and she returns to momentary jealousy of Creta Kano. However, May is intrigued by Creta's special powers and knowledge.

The real reason for the motorcycle accident is revealed in this chapter. There is something inside May Kasahara that causes her to make stupid choices in precarious situations. Her vaguely-motivated actions cause a human being to die and another person is endangered as well. And later, she is still unsure of exactly what makes her do such unconscionable things. At this point, the reader believes May could have left Toru to die in the well. Even after May goes into the well to investigate things for herself, the possibility still exists that leaving Toru in the well would have taken no work on May's part at all. Refusing to pursue the boyfriend's death any more in conversation saves May Kasahara from having to look too closely at the "something" uncontrollable within her. However, it is the "something" that prompts May Kasahara to kiss the mark on Toru's right cheek. It seems Toru indulges May Kasahara a great deal because of her age. She is sixteen years old and he is thirty. Neither of them is especially concerned with the difference in ages. Toru is not quite old enough to be the girl's father, but he functions the same way an uncle might. What is refreshing about their friendship is its quality of innocence. Toru Okada does not harm or take advantage of May Kasahara in any way. She asks him once if he is a pervert; he answers honestly, saying no. Toru's rather easygoing temperament makes him accessible to May the way her father is inaccessible. Toru does not make any effort to impose his will on May; there is no glaring imbalance of power. Physically he is stronger; this is a given. But this, also, is left as a non-issue. In addition, Murakami does not offer any violent back story for Toru to justify his hurting a woman.



## **Book 2 Chapter 16: The Simplest Thing • Revenge in a Sophisticated Form • The Thing in the Guitar Case (Pgs. 327-338)**

### **Book 2 Chapter 16: The Simplest Thing • Revenge in a Sophisticated Form • The Thing in the Guitar Case (Pgs. 327-338) Summary**

On the eleventh day watching people, Toru recognizes the young man from the bar in Sapporo. The man attacks him with a baseball bat. Toru Okada grabs the bat and begins beating the man with it. Toru takes the bat home. In a dream the man skins himself right before Toru's eyes. The skin attaches itself to Toru Okada, covering him from head to toe.

### **Book 2 Chapter 16: The Simplest Thing • Revenge in a Sophisticated Form • The Thing in the Guitar Case (Pgs. 327-338) Analysis**

Two very important characters surface in this chapter: The man with the guitar case and the woman who will be known as Nutmeg Akasaka. First of all, Toru's uncle's advice might seem rather simplistic. That may be so, but telling Toru to focus on small things and then build up keeps the character from feeling overwhelmed. His entire life has been turned upside down by his wife leaving him and the discovery of the well. Toru spends time above and below ground at this point, which is affecting his experience from two different perspectives. His goal becomes to watch and not judge, observe without editorializing. He finds this freeing because it releases him from the drudgery of concentrating too closely on what his life has evolved into. And instead of telling his nephew to go down as deep as he can, the uncle encourages him to look out and away from himself. This form of revenge gives Toru greater powers of detachment. Watching people at the station gives him a more effective way to be empty-minded in preparation to receive what is important and merely to let the unimportant details fall by the wayside.

Toru remembers the young man with the guitar case from a bar in Sapporo where he sang a few songs and then did a trick for the audience. Following him, Toru has no plan in mind for what will happen if he catches up to the man. Perhaps some awkward small talk and then a hasty goodbye. Toru does not talk about what motivates him to follow the young man because he does not really know. Following is a whim in this case which leads him into a dangerous situation. The physical violence of this entire scene is shocking because it is so out of place in the novel. Before this point, violence had been linked to sex and war. This explosive, out-of-hand violence stands in direct contrast to



the rest of the novel. Neither man tries to speak to the other during the confrontation. The young man must have sensed he was being followed. This still does not explain his unprovoked attack on Toru once inside the apartment house. Toru responds out of a sense of self-preservation but goes beyond the boundaries of self-defense when he continues to beat the man with his hands. Fear and adrenaline kick in which is when Toru goes home.

Interestingly, this is another instance in which Toru becomes even more visible to those around him. Climbing on a bus, covered in someone else's blood and carrying a baseball bat is one way to be noticed by everyone. The mark on Toru's cheek makes him stand out as much as the blood and the bat. He is easy to describe now.





## **Book 3 Chapter 1: The Wind-Up Bird in Winter (Pgs. 341-350)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 1: The Wind-Up Bird in Winter (Pgs. 341-350) Summary**

He wonders if Kumiko really is in contact with her family or if they are holding her somewhere against her will. Kumiko's uncle dies, and Noboru Wataya is assured to be elected to his uncle's vacant seat in the Lower House. Toru visits Ichikawa the realtor and decides he must own the Miyawaki's well.

### **Book 3 Chapter 1: The Wind-Up Bird in Winter (Pgs. 341-350) Analysis**

With the change of seasons approaching, Toru's appraisal of his life still focuses squarely on Kumiko and the marriage. He remains stuck. This is partially due to his in-laws' constant efforts to convince Toru to simply agree to a divorce. Also, though, Toru contributes to his own stagnation by leaving his wife's things just as they were when she left. He decides to do nothing with her clothes, even after giving some away to Creta Kano. Part of the character concentrates solely on seeing Kumiko again. It is this hope which allows room for Toru's inaction. His experience of losing track of himself could be directly related to Noboru Wataya's impending successful political career. After all, if one believes Creta Kano's assertion that Toru and his brother-in-law represent opposite points on a continuum, Noboru's gain also means Toru's loss. However, since Noboru Wataya has not been officially elected to anything at this point, there is still a chance that the balance will once again shift to Toru's advantage.

Writing to the lieutenant represents Toru's willingness to ask for help instead of permitting himself to flounder in confusion. The relative comfort of the bottom of the well is something which connects the men across generations and experiences. The sensation is so specific that one would not expect to encounter many people who had been through it. Still, Mamiya responds kindly and supportively. The old man also admits his susceptibility to the call of the darkness and the clarity found underground. Toru is now even more connected to the well. The same can be said for his widening circle of new acquaintances. May and Creta have also been in the well and there is even evidence that Creta may have gone through a wall. The direction of his life changes significantly, however, with his visit to Mr. Ichikawa.

It is not until Toru is actually in conversation with the realtor that his desire to own the Miyawaki well comes to the surface. What begins as curiosity about the family's disappearance leads him to one of the most important decisions since marrying Kumiko and quitting his job. Toru ignores what Ichikawa says about the property, allowing his



preoccupation with the depths to affect his judgment. His desire to have the darkness at his disposal is what determines his actions. He also invests this process with hope. This hope of buying the well has nothing to do with Kumiko directly. This hope is perfectly self-serving. The well must belong to him.

May Kasahara leaves without talking to Toru first. He has become accustomed to people moving in and out of his life randomly. May Kasahara will re-connect with Toru when she feels it is necessary.



## **Book 3 Chapter 2: Waking from Hibernation • One More Name Card • The Namelessness of Money (Pgs. 351-356)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 2: Waking from Hibernation • One More Name Card • The Namelessness of Money (Pgs. 351-356) Summary**

Toru begins to walk the streets close to Shinjuku station. The same woman who spoke to him several months ago in exactly the same spot speaks to Toru Okada again, and he admits that he needs about eighty-million yen. The woman hands Toru a card with an address printed on the front telling him to come to the address the next day at four o'clock.

### **Book 3 Chapter 2: Waking from Hibernation • One More Name Card • The Namelessness of Money (Pgs. 351-356) Analysis**

Buying the lottery tickets is a move of desperation. But Toru Okada returns to doing the simple things first. People watching proves to be effective in helping the character sort through things on his own. However, this outing is more uncomfortable even than his first time at Shinjuku station. This time, he is reminded of what he lacks; he can see evidence of his non-wealthy condition wherever he turns. His discomfort becomes especially apparent when he looks at all the expensive cars. As they whip by, entering and leaving his field of vision, Toru is painfully aware of his deflated social position. At one time, he wore the same suit and tie uniform as the other men he sees here. Now, however, he sits on the sidelines wearing his worn-out clothes and tennis shoes, wishing he had enough money to buy a haunted property and a dry well.

When the well-dressed woman approaches him for a second time, Toru's luck is on the verge of changing. The card she hands him has no name printed on it, just an address. This is reminiscent of Malta Kano's card which bore only her name. In this case, what Toru Okada needs most is the cash to buy the Miyawaki house. The woman's name is not particularly important in this transaction. If Toru needed to know her name, she would have included it on her card. The woman does not seem to be interested in Toru's name either. Place rather than identity takes precedence in this instance. Her manner of dress and the way she carries herself tell the reader that this woman is not someone who wastes time giving out extraneous information. She does not talk much. The card



with the posh address is to be her identity, in this case anyway. Nor does she seem daunted by the sum of money Toru admits to needing. He has made another unusual acquaintance in the well-dressed woman. The similarity between the lipstick color on the cigarette and the color of Malta Kano's hat denotes the gist of what is happening. Because Malta Kano's business with Toru is primarily of the paranormal variety, meeting the woman at Shinjuku station is somehow paranormal in nature as well. They both give him cards with at least one piece of information missing. Both women contact Toru; he does not contact them. The woman at Shinjuku station has her trademark cigarette just as Malta has her red vinyl hat. Also, unlike the other characters who smoke in the novel, this woman is the only one who smokes an American brand: Virginia Slims. Virginia Slims was the first "women's" cigarette on the market during the 1970s. And while the woman's wardrobe is certainly up to date, the same cannot be said about her choice of tobacco product.

Furthermore, the station now becomes even more about movement for Toru. Ordinarily, he sits on the bench and passively watches people come and go. Beginning with the incident featuring the young man carrying the guitar case and now the woman's invitation to visit her in Akasaka, Toru is moving, traveling in one direction or another from the station. With the young man, the situation turned out unfortunately for both of them. Meeting someone in an office building, though, is vastly different from following a person somewhere then beating the person severely. Toru realizes he has nothing to lose.



## **Book 3 Chapter 3: What Happened in the Night (Pgs. 357-361)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 3: What Happened in the Night (Pgs. 357-361) Summary**

The narrator in this chapter is a neutral figure, not necessarily one of the characters featured in the novel. On a full moon night, he sees two dark figures from his window. All of a sudden, the shorter of the two men, who resembles the boy's father, climbs up into a pine tree. The tall man digs a hole at the base of the tree and buries a canvas bag before walking away.

### **Book 3 Chapter 3: What Happened in the Night (Pgs. 357-361) Analysis**

The narrator in this chapter is completely neutral and is not introduced by name to the reader at all. It is possible that the boy in this dream is Toru Okada and that the small man who climbs the tree represents his father. The reader is left to decide just who the boy is. If one assumes the boy is Toru, however, then the presence of the wind-up bird is completely understandable. Also, if the man who goes up into the tree is supposed to be his father, this would also make sense. Toru's father is only an influential part of his life up to a certain point at which their father-son relationship simply comes to a halt. This would explain why the smaller man never comes down out of the tree. The matter of the identity or the symbolism of the taller man is somewhat less obvious. Since the boy does not immediately recognize the taller of the two men, he is probably not an actual person in the dreamer's life. Perhaps his importance lies in the fact that he digs the hole and places something in it. There is a possibility that the tall man and the short man in the tree don't really know one another very well at all. This is proven by the taller man's departure after covering in the hole again. He does not call up to the man in the tree, nor does he loiter around below waiting.

The wind-up bird's intermittent call is what keeps the boy interested in the action taking place at the tree. When the bird goes silent, perhaps it is a signal to the boy to pay closer attention to the men below than to the bird itself. The bird winds the action taking place. Also, the bird builds a bridge between the boy's waking and dream states. The wind-up bird's cry is what anchors the experience to the boy's daytime existence. The actual significance of the dream is not revealed until later in Book 3.



## **Book 3 Chapter 4: Buying New Shoes • The Thing That Came Back Home (Pgs. 362-372)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 4: Buying New Shoes • The Thing That Came Back Home (Pgs. 362-372) Summary**

Toru Okada arrives at the door of 602 in the Akasaka office building at four o'clock the next afternoon. Following his "appointment," the young man slips an envelope containing two hundred thousand yen into Toru's pocket. Noboru Wataya the cat comes back.

### **Book 3 Chapter 4: Buying New Shoes • The Thing That Came Back Home (Pgs. 362-372) Analysis**

This chapter is the first time Toru Okada meets Cinnamon Akasaka, although Toru does not learn the young man's name until later. His visit to the Akasaka office building turns out to be another unusual experience in sensory deprivation. This time, Toru's sight is taken away momentarily when he meets the middle-aged woman again. The swim goggles are emblematic of purposeful sightlessness. They have been painted over with some substance which makes it impossible to see out of them. This is a more interesting choice than a blindfold of some sort. The goggles insure complete darkness. They make sure that no light will travel into the eye from the outside world. Wearing the goggles is a sign of trust on Toru's part. He is not disturbed in the least by his experience, as he knows that this type of encounter is pretty much par for the course of his present life. Since Kumiko's leaving, Toru Okada is open to the element of surprise in his life. If a man can be married to the same person for six years and really not know her, then anything is possible in the "real" world.

Also of note in this chapter is the Akasaka woman's action toward Toru's mark. The presence of the mark provokes physical curiosity on May's part and the part of the woman at the fashion design company. They both interact with the mark orally, as though there were something to learn from putting one's mouth on such a mark. The women's reaction is decidedly sensual, not sexual. The mark has some attractive quality of which Toru is unaware. Regardless of the object of her interest, Toru is pleased to receive the money from her. He does not experience any qualms thinking about what is done to him at the office building.

The cat has waited almost a year to come back to Toru and Kumiko's house. Noboru Wataya's return delights Toru and puzzles him at the same time. The cat cannot give him an explanation for the absence, and Toru can find nothing wrong physically that

would warrant the animal staying away from home for such a long time. Either way, Toru's fortunes are on the upswing. For the time being, the woman in the office building and her mute assistant remain a mystery but now Toru has new tennis shoes to wear into the next phase of his life.



## **Book 3 Chapter 5: A Place You Can Figure Out If You Think About It Really, Really Hard (May Kasahara's Point of View: 1) (Pgs. 373-376)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 5: A Place You Can Figure Out If You Think About It Really, Really Hard (May Kasahara's Point of View: 1) (Pgs. 373-376) Summary**

At the time she writes the letter, May Kasahara is somewhere in the mountains, living in a dormitory on a huge piece of land with lots of different animals like badgers and pheasants. She has been on one date but finds the whole concept of dating a boy confusing at this juncture of her life. She says she prefers to be alone for a while, in order to give her thoughts an opportunity to wander.

### **Book 3 Chapter 5: A Place You Can Figure Out If You Think About It Really, Really Hard (May Kasahara's Point of View: 1) (Pgs. 373-376) Analysis**

This is the first time Toru hears from May Kasahara since she leaves without saying goodbye to Toru. Her letters appear on the page and the reader can imagine the sound of the young girl's voice as she describes her current life to Toru. May Kasahara's life has taken on a kind of normalcy that wasn't there for her in Tokyo. She admits her failing as a spoiled little girl to Toru, but happily, she is now in charge of herself. It is not unusual that she would see the neighborhood as belonging to Toru. She spent the majority of her time lounging in the backyard not really involved with anyone, including herself. Her growth and increasing maturity have led her to a place of wanting to communicate openly with Toru. There is still an immature quality to her correspondence, but that is to be expected. In this transitional phase, May Kasahara has achieved a certain amount of autonomy from her parents and even from "Mr. Wind-Up Bird." May's motivation to find a better self is evident in the fact that she has moved far away from her family and Tokyo. Things are new for her and she is constructing a new self based on who she wants to be and what May wants out of life. She admits to still having some of her wildness, a modicum of the "something" that made her hold her hands over the boy's eyes on the motorcycle.

The tone of her letter is one of freedom and relative lightheartedness. May Kasahara is becoming a person instead of an outline of some put-on self performance. The reader is assured of hearing more about May. At least one more letter to Toru is forthcoming; he



has to try and figure out where she is and what she is doing to keep herself busy and working.



## **Book 3 Chapter 6: Nutmeg and Cinnamon (Pgs. 377-386)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 6: Nutmeg and Cinnamon (Pgs. 377-386) Summary**

Toru decides to rename the cat Mackerel, since the cat is so fond of that type of fish. Toru Okada returns to Shinjuku station. The woman from the Akasaka office building appears. The woman chooses and pays for a new wardrobe for Toru. She instructs Toru to call her Nutmeg Akasaka and her son Cinnamon Akasaka.

### **Book 3 Chapter 6: Nutmeg and Cinnamon (Pgs. 377-386) Analysis**

The cat's return gives Toru something to focus on besides himself. Renaming the cat is Toru's way of reclaiming some of the emotional ground he loses when Kumiko leaves him. Something of their life together, the cat now becomes part of Toru's new life as well. The cat now belongs only to him and he earns the right to give the cat another name to signify its importance. Realizing the injustice of giving the cat his brother-in-law's name shows that Toru's hatred of Noboru Wataya is waning somewhat. The shopping expedition with Nutmeg takes Toru by surprise. Even more surprising is the fact that the woman's answer to the question "Why?" is so simple. She does not lack self-confidence; this much is clear to Toru. Neither does she lack fashion sense in a trained eye kind of way. More importantly, she has a keen sense of what looks good on people. She is also commanding and she will have her way. Toru's earlier appearance offended her sensibilities. Wearing the wrong thing is more than aesthetic matter to Nutmeg. She takes control of Toru's wardrobe in a surrogate manner. Nutmeg knows Toru will not do this for himself, so she does it for him. Perhaps she is not so much control as assertive. Now along with the blue-black mark on his right cheek, Toru's physical appearance sets him apart from others once more. He is still not wearing the standard corporate outfit. Toru has moved beyond the herds of men he sees at the station. His wardrobe is now suitable to ride in one of the expensive cars he sees driving by.

This is the reader's introduction into the mystery of the speechless Cinnamon Akasaka, the young, handsome man who had greeted Toru at the door of the office suite. When asked, his mother is fairly nonchalant about Cinnamon's refusal to speak. The fact that the boy does not speak much before his total silence seems almost normal. The distance between talking a little and not talking at all is slight. There is more to their relationship than is being revealed here. The question of naming comes up again and this time it is established by the characters that names are no more than labels which are interchangeable. Evidence for this claim exists in other sections of the novel as well



in which a name begins as an arbitrary assignation. The representation and the thing itself reach a subtle harmony when a name is chosen on purpose. Malta, Creta, and even the cat are named and re-named as a matter of course. Cinnamon and Nutmeg are both fragrant spices whose impressions are unmistakable to the taste buds. The woman and her son make a similar impression on Toru. He is drawn to them individually; each represents a distinct taste and personality. Aromatic and complex, they blend well together and stand alone just as well. Although it is her alias, the character of Nutmeg is the only mother in the novel with an actual name. May Kasahara's mother as well as Kumiko's mother and grandmother and Toru's mother are all unnamed by their children. It is feasible to interpret the absence of the named mother as an indicator of imbalance in the characters. Additionally, Cinnamon and Nutmeg's relationship is the only successful parent-child one in the narrative.



## **Book 3 Chapter 7: The Mystery of the Hanging House (Pgs. 387-390)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 7: The Mystery of the Hanging House (Pgs. 387-390) Summary**

The Miyawaki house is called "The Hanging House" because the entire family dies in the residence after Kojiro Miyawaki's financial ruin. The current owner is a company known as Akasaka Research.

### **Book 3 Chapter 7: The Mystery of the Hanging House (Pgs. 387-390) Analysis**

This is an interesting shift in point of view. The absence of a concrete narrator means that the reader can take what is printed at face value. A newspaper article suggests some form of legitimacy. Moreover, the mention of the Miyawaki property lends the whole neighborhood a certain air of mystery. People who read a paper such as this one are interested in mild sensationalism. While the crimes which take place in the Miyawaki house are certainly tragic, what happens there now is more cloak and dagger. Black automobiles with unvarying schedules and anonymous drivers all indicate a deep level of intrigue. A new mystery comes out of the old lore. Adding to the mystery surrounding the new corporate residence is the presence of a deep well. The article leaves itself open for expansion in later editions of the paper.

What the reader learns in this chapter is that the happenings in Toru Okada's neighborhood are of interest to more than just a few people. Yes, May and Toru are interested; even his uncle knows something about the Miyawaki story. But having the story published in a newspaper connects the small section of Tokyo with the rest of the city and other areas of Japan. The people who own the Miyawaki land become celebrities in spite of themselves. Also, the reader will notice that the company which owns the property has the same name as Nutmeg's fashion design office suite Toru visited.



## **Book 3 Chapter 8: Down in the Well (Pgs. 391-395)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 8: Down in the Well (Pgs. 391-395) Summary**

Toru Okada returns to the bottom of the well. The baseball bat is there. He becomes conscious of the wall separating the well and Room 208 and just as he tries to go through it, he is blocked.

### **Book 3 Chapter 8: Down in the Well (Pgs. 391-395) Analysis**

Once again, the reader has the opportunity to venture into Toru's subconscious. Now that the well has been modernized, Toru can truly inhabit the space for as long as he pleases. Cinnamon is his engineer, and Toru has a way to completely seal himself off. His hours in the well are guaranteed to be free of interruption. The ladder stays in place; therefore, Toru is no longer at the mercy of whoever is standing on the surface. The controls for the entire experience below ground are now in Toru's hands. What seems strange, however, is what he wears and the baseball. His old tennis shoes and plastic watch belong to a different time in Toru's life. In the case of these two items, though, there is something nostalgic about their inclusion in the ceremony of the dark well. Wearing something old and already worn in allows one to wear everything that has ever happened while wearing that article of clothing. Toru's beat-up tennis shoes were with him when he quit his job, and when he met May Kasahara, and when he and Kumiko were happy. The plastic watch serves the same purpose as the tennis shoes, but in this instance, it is a reminder of simple time for Toru. The fancy watch Nutmeg buys him belongs to a different discussion. That watch is bought and paid for by someone other than Toru, and therefore belongs more to the other person than to him. This is probably the watch he wore the first time he met Lieutenant Mamiya or the first time he came down the well. This plastic watch was probably the one he wore when he came through the wall with the mark on his cheek.

In this chapter, Toru revisits the baseball bat as well. It is interesting to note that something used so violently against a total stranger would bring the character so much relief. Perhaps, though, the bat is a reminder of something which belongs hidden away. The rage that Toru experienced while attacking the young man is still unresolved. The character never "talks" to himself about it during his waking, above-ground time, but going into the well and the darkness provide the character with a chance to interact with the bat completely alone. Closed up in the well, Toru has a chance to play through the scene in his mind until it makes some kind of sense. Carrying the evidence of his wrongs in the form of a baseball bat has religious connotations. Toru is carrying a cross;



he carries a part of his inner evil that warrants punishment or redemption or both. He can "see" the bat in the well for what it really is, a weapon and reminder of someone's fear.

By this time, the well is no longer just a symbol of solidity for Toru. It is also a symbol of mind over matter, a symbol of possibility. After all, he could go through the wall at any time. In this instance, Toru's desire to get back through the wall and into the hotel room is obvious as he goes through the room in his mind. Desire, however, is not enough to bring him through the wall, as he finds out. The well is no longer entirely a place of peace for Toru. It is the place he must go in order to walk through his own dreams.



## **Book 3 Chapter 9: The Zoo Attack (or A Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 396-414)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 9: The Zoo Attack (or A Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 396-414) Summary**

Toru narrates Nutmeg's story of a massacre at a zoo one August day in 1945. When the massacre happened, Nutmeg was on a transport ship from Manchuria to Japan. Kwantung Army troops were to kill all the animals in the zoo at Hsin-ching. The zoo's chief veterinarian is a handsome man, about thirty years old, with a blue-black birthmark on his right cheek. The veterinarian tells a young lieutenant that there is not enough poison for all the animals. The animals are shot instead. Eventually, her father sends Nutmeg and her mother back to Japan.

### **Book 3 Chapter 9: The Zoo Attack (or A Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 396-414) Analysis**

This chapter is Nutmeg's biography, or a part of it, as told to Toru. The mixing of what happens at the Hsin-ching zoo with Nutmeg's experience aboard the transport ship show how unreliable a narrator can be. If Nutmeg did not witness the happenings at the zoo, where did she learn the details? Her father and Toru have the same mark on their faces and the two men are the same age. This could be indicative of the way Nutmeg views the present and the past. Often, memories of war are traumatic and can be muddled in a person's mind. The coincidence is presented and never resolved in the novel. There is a possibility that the veterinarian did, indeed, have the same mark as Toru. That would change his relationship with Nutmeg significantly, presenting the possibility that they could be related in some way. Nutmeg makes no mention of the coincidence but Toru notices it just the same. The story itself, however, is engaging. It is interesting that Nutmeg blends the details of the two stories. Not having seen what went on at the zoo, the information she provides is second-hand at best. There is, therefore, a reasonable expectation that not everything she says is true. The portions of the story having to do with the veterinarian and the young lieutenant in charge of the operation may not be accurate. And yet, this is the only account Toru receives. The woman is left behind as her own storyteller. She carries episodes from more than one life in her memory. It is her responsibility to tell and re-tell the stories in order for them to remain true. Also, keeping the stories intact means that Nutmeg is able to keep herself and her son intact as well. The narrative that she knows is the narrative which encloses her son as well. When Nutmeg passes on, Cinnamon will be the one to keep the book of days for their family. The story is also incomplete, as are many family histories. Her father vanishes sometime after Nutmeg and her mother are repatriated to Japan. The veterinarian's story ends with his family's freedom.



## **Book 3 Chapter 10: So, Then, the Next Problem (May Kasahara's Point of View: 2) (Pgs. 415-418)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 10: So, Then, the Next Problem (May Kasahara's Point of View: 2) (Pgs. 415-418) Summary**

May Kasahara is working in a wig factory. She tells Toru Okada that she has been interested in wig manufacture for quite sometime and describes what it is like to live and work there.

### **Book 3 Chapter 10: So, Then, the Next Problem (May Kasahara's Point of View: 2) (Pgs. 415-418) Analysis**

May Kasahara has found a niche for herself at a wig manufacturing company. In this next installment in her series of six letters, she tells Toru all about where she is living. Although the living situation is much like that at college, the girl lives and works on the ground of a huge manufacturing operation located in the hills of a small village somewhere in Japan. Life at the factory is relatively simple for May. At this stage, she is observing quite a lot and she is learning to further exercise her own independence. The young girl comes to value her alone time when everyone else leaves for the weekend. She shows maturity in her decision to stay in the deserted dormitories rather than running home to her parents as well. May Kasahara has made up her mind that the factory and the dorm are now what her life entails. She is her own person, making her own money. The character is also dealing with questions of growing up. She talks about her chosen profession with a degree of knowledge and pride. This proves to Toru Okada that the character has made a world of her own which has nothing to do with "Mr. Wind-Up Bird's World." Having interests outside of what happens with Toru is something into which May naturally falls. She is far away from him and her family. In a way, being at the factory complex is the same for May as going down the well is for Toru. Both are away from their daily interruptions. Both have room and time to think about themselves and their own lives. Both are learning the value of relying on oneself to provide answers to life questions. Writing letters to Toru is an activity which substitutes for May's contact with her parents. Her relationship with her mother and father is based on getting what she wants out of them by manipulating and threatening herself harm. Keeping in touch with Toru is also a way for May Kasahara to witness her own development as a human being. Now, there is a record of her post-accident life, just as her leg and the cut near her eye signify her life before and up until the crash. May Kasahara's letters are her way of proving to herself that people can change.





## **Book 3 Chapter 11: Is This Shovel a Real Shovel? (What Happened in the Night: 2) (Pgs. 419-421)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 11: Is This Shovel a Real Shovel? (What Happened in the Night: 2) (Pgs. 419-421) Summary**

The dreaming boy goes to the base of the familiar pine tree in the front yard and starts to dig out the hole. Inside the bag is a beating human heart. He returns the heart to the canvas bag and places it back into the hole, then replaces the dirt. The boy looks closely at the person in the bed and sees himself, sleeping peacefully. Finally, he shoves the other boy far enough over to make a small space for himself. The boy later realizes that his former self has vanished.

### **Book 3 Chapter 11: Is This Shovel a Real Shovel? (What Happened in the Night: 2) (Pgs. 419-421) Analysis**

Also narrated by an omniscient, neutral character, the reader steps back into the boy's dream. This time, the boy is the only person in the dream, and it is he who handles the shovel, the bag, and the hole under the tree. No mention is made of the wind-up bird here, nor are the two men from the first dream featured. The concern is primarily for what is in the canvas bag that was left in the hole. The boy does not give into the shock of holding a beating human heart in his hand. He tells himself the heart is no different than its picture. This shows a marked disconnect from self. The boy does not think about his own mortality or his own heart while he stands beneath the tree. There is something without emotion at work within the boy. The matter-of-fact way he places the live heart back into the hold and covers it over shows that the boy has split off from something important. Once he is back in his bedroom, the split becomes apparent when the boy sees himself sleeping in the bed. The split makes even more of an impact when the boy has to fight himself for space in his own bed, his own world. So the dream is about identities and how to meld them or when to separate oneself from an identity. The boy knows he has changed. He is aware, even in his dream, of the absolute necessity to assert the self even where other parts of the individual are concerned. There can be only one true self for each of us. Sometimes, the true self must squeeze into tiny corners to be preserved. But at all costs, it must be maintained. The boy could not allow himself to be replaced by an old, obsolete self.



## **Book 3 Chapter 12: M's Secret Cure (Pgs. 422-424)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 12: M's Secret Cure (Pgs. 422-424) Summary**

After being married to a successful real estate developer for two years, M's life takes a downturn. Her marriage ends and M slides into depression and mental disturbance. A close friend refers her to a mysterious woman whose practice caters to only the most elite clientele. A year later M stops taking prescription medication and regains her former beauty. When her symptoms return, M is referred to another practitioner.

### **Book 3 Chapter 12: M's Secret Cure (Pgs. 422-424) Analysis**

Here is further proof of the widening circle of interest surrounding the Miyawaki property. Now in its second incarnation, the site is linked to a famous living actress and celebrity whose mental foundation crumbles beneath her. Of course, the mysterious woman with the special powers mentioned in the story is Nutmeg Akasaka, Toru's current benefactress and sometime mentor. Nutmeg is the money behind the business in which Toru now finds himself. It is his powers that have come into play now as the one who administers the "treatments" to wealthy, troubled women. M's story reflects society's interest in famous people and their often hoped-for hard luck. The gruesome stories surrounding the Miyawaki property are balanced by the strange healings taking place there now. Also, what happened above ground at the site of "the hanging house" is entirely different than the work Toru does at the bottom of the well. In order to assist the clientele in their self-reclamation, Toru takes them underground to face their innermost thoughts and feelings. Ultimately, the flow of information is stanchd by the money and power of those who receive the treatments, and no one finds out what happens inside the Residence. People in politics and the entertainment fields often have things at their disposal than more run-of-the-mill citizens. It is due to nameless money that Toru has the freedom he enjoys. M and other women like her provide grist for the mill. Having someone famous associated with the property makes the story more marketable for those whose news taste runs more toward the sensational side of things.



## **Book 3 Chapter 13: The Waiting Man • What Couldn't Be Shaken Off • No Man Is an Island (Pgs. 425-436)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 13: The Waiting Man • What Couldn't Be Shaken Off • No Man Is an Island (Pgs. 425-436) Summary**

Ushikawa tells Toru that he used Kumiko's key to get into the house. Ushikawa assures Toru that Kumiko is not being held against her will and that she is safe. Ushikawa handles all of Noboru Wataya's "shadow jobs." Ushikawa tells Toru to cut his ties with the Miyawaki property, and Noboru Wataya will make sure that Toru is able to meet with Kumiko in person.

### **Book 3 Chapter 13: The Waiting Man • What Couldn't Be Shaken Off • No Man Is an Island (Pgs. 425-436) Analysis**

Ushikawa is a new character in the narrative. His position as henchman is firmly established in his first meeting with Toru. Ushikawa is not a likable person. There is something foul and unclean about him, and Toru's instincts say that Ushikawa is in the business of making bad things happen. Once again, a member of Kumiko's family uses her as a bargaining chip. Similar to the situation in her childhood when Kumiko is sent to Niigata to live with her grandmother, her brother dangles her before Toru's eyes in an effort to get Toru to cease all dealings with the Miyawaki lot. Ushikawa's involvement with Kumiko, however limited, is still of concern to Toru. Kumiko would never appoint Ushikawa to run her errands. Noboru Wataya has a hold over his younger sister. Enough of a hold that he feels at liberty to trade her for Toru's acquiescence. This could also be Noboru Wataya's way of proving to his brother-in-law that he is the more powerful of the two. Now he holds both of their lives in the balance. Sending a man like Ushikawa to handle Toru reveals still more about Noboru Wataya's inner self. It shines a light on how ugly and brutish Noboru Wataya's sensibilities are. It also speaks to his monumental sense of self-importance.

In terms of Ushikawa letting himself into Toru's home with Kumiko's key, the character is established as not having any scruples. In addition, his use of Kumiko's personal key is a violation of Toru and his wife. Although there is no proof that Ushikawa physically abuses Kumiko, he makes no effort to convince Toru otherwise. In short, Ushikawa defiles the shrine Toru Okada's home has become. Touching something like Kumiko's key and key holder mean that Ushikawa has come closer to her than Toru has in



months. Kumiko's things are still there; Toru has still not decided how to deal with them. Ushikawa serves as a reminder that Kumiko is turning things over to others now, voluntarily or involuntarily, just like the pale blue dress Creta Kano wears in one of Toru's dreams. Change has been set in motion by Noboru Wataya.



## **Book 3 Chapter 14: Cinnamon's Strange Sign Language • The Musical Offering (Pgs. 437-446)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 14: Cinnamon's Strange Sign Language • The Musical Offering (Pgs. 437-446) Summary**

As a child, Cinnamon loves to read, can play the piano and teaches himself to read English and French in a matter of months. He is also intensely interested in machinery and electronics. He takes clocks apart and reassembles them and he builds radios and tube amplifiers. When Nutmeg's mother dies, Cinnamon is twelve years old. Without being asked or prompted, the boy decides to take over all of the grandmother's domestic duties. Nutmeg is convinced that the same thing responsible for snatching Cinnamon's voice also killed her husband.

### **Book 3 Chapter 14: Cinnamon's Strange Sign Language • The Musical Offering (Pgs. 437-446) Analysis**

Cinnamon is the main focus of the chapter, and by extension, his choice of a life of silence. Cinnamon seems to be hyper-vigilant even as a child when he takes up his grandmother's household duties without being asked. The young boy even then has a picture of himself as someone who serves and serves quietly. This altruism could also be a result of inheriting his mother's tendency to like things just so. He was probably well aware of his mother's likes and dislikes even as a younger child. He seems to have been born with adult tastes as his choice in music would attest. The quickness of Cinnamon's mind is what mitigates his being sent to a special school for less than gifted children. Nutmeg's confidence in her son has never been an issue. Her view of Cinnamon is that he is a normal young man who happens to be exceptionally strong willed. It is unusual, however, that as a toddler Cinnamon actually requested that his mother tell him the wartime stories repeatedly. One can only assume that the nature of the stories themselves play a contributing role in Cinnamon's subsequent decision to stop using his voice. Perhaps the boy found language to be too limited or too easily abused. Not wanting to speak means not wanting to insert oneself into any narrative. As a small boy, Cinnamon made his mother tell him the stories of Manchuria and the zoo and the submarine. By listening to the stories and then retelling them, Cinnamon took possession of the stories for a short time. Not repeating them after a certain amount of time signals that the stories have some mysterious, transformative effect on the young Cinnamon.



Cinnamon is still hyper-vigilant as a young adult. Nutmeg never mentions what effect his father's murder has on her son. This could also be a missing piece in the boy's individual narrative. He is raised primarily by Nutmeg and her mother and inherits her fine sense of living as well as some of her physical attributes, most notably, his hands. Toru enjoys having Cinnamon around because of the order he imposes on the Residence and everyone who enters it. Cinnamon's control of the place is not megalomaniacal in any way. The order he creates has a good sense foundation to it. It is as if Cinnamon's sense of things is absolutely logical. Nutmeg and Toru's lives are made easier by having Cinnamon on duty everyday. His is a celebration of finely-functioning details all working cooperatively to make the surface appear smooth and the effort appear negligible.

Nutmeg's assertion that what killed her husband is responsible for taking her son's voice is somewhat disturbing. Nutmeg's cryptic comment allows for the mutability of evil. Her husband's evisceration was an act of precision and purpose. Whoever murdered Cinnamon's father made certain he would not survive. Something of great magnitude and great power took Cinnamon's desire to speak.



## **Book 3 Chapter 15: This Could Be the End of the Line (May Kasahara's Point of View: 3) (Pgs. 447-449)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 15: This Could Be the End of the Line (May Kasahara's Point of View: 3) (Pgs. 447-449) Summary**

May Kasahara continues her discussion of working at the wig factory. To May Kasahara, each wig is "hers" and she often feels as though signing a finished product. She enjoys knowing that someone in the world is wearing one of her creations. Lately, she has been thinking about the boyfriend who was killed in the motorcycle accident. In closing, she tells Toru Okada sometimes the thought of being disconnected from everything and everyone almost overwhelms her.

### **Book 3 Chapter 15: This Could Be the End of the Line (May Kasahara's Point of View: 3) (Pgs. 447-449) Analysis**

May Kasahara's third letter to "Mr. Wind-Up Bird" is part of her own chronicle. Telling Toru about life at the wig factory reads almost like a letter to her family about her adventures at summer camp. Her life's important matters are small, with the exception of the motorcycle accident. Hers is the chatty gossip of a schoolgirl on the verge of discovering herself. The character admits to being vulnerable to the way memories just make themselves at home in the consciousness. Once again, music enjoys an insertion into the narrative. This time, it is in the form of famous bubble-gum type pop music of years gone by. She does not really believe Toru is old, but she feels obligated to tease him about his getting on in years. May Kasahara discovers something of the technician in herself. Her pride shows in her work; each wig is a special work of commitment, and she is convinced of her products' continued importance in the world around her, even if she is not there to witness it personally.

The crash in which her boyfriend dies affects May's perspective of marriage and involvement. In her letters, she expresses her trepidation about dating and dealing with boys. She thinks differently than the other girls working at the factory. Boys are low on her list of priorities. The character is now about the business of clearing her own mental debris away. Even though she is still very young, May Kasahara is learning valuable lessons about living in her skin and living in the world. At the end of the third letter, then, May Kasahara talks about her loneliness. It is a very human loneliness she feels, and Toru knows this. What is impressive about May's realization, however, is that it leads her

to a workable solution: she thinks of people and places that validate her continued existence. She is learning to feel the far away closeness that defines so many adult lives like Toru Okada's.





## **Book 3 Chapter 16: The World's Exhaustion and Burdens • The Magic Lamp (Pgs. 450-455)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 16: The World's Exhaustion and Burdens • The Magic Lamp (Pgs. 450-455) Summary**

Ushi arrives at Toru's house shortly before ten o'clock at night. He knows how much Toru owes and who owns the dummy company that collects the rent. Ushikawa says he can give Toru the eighty-million yen Toru is paying for the property. Toru wonders what interest Noboru Wataya could possibly have in the land and the well. Ushi likens himself to a genie in a lamp; bound to a life of servitude, carrying out Noboru Wataya's most unpleasant wishes.

### **Book 3 Chapter 16: The World's Exhaustion and Burdens • The Magic Lamp (Pgs. 450-455) Analysis**

By way of Ushikawa's persistent visits, Noboru Wataya tightens his grip on Toru. This time, the henchman comes with information about Toru and the Residence. Noboru Wataya seems to be getting closer to solving the riddle of what Toru does with the wealthy clients and the nature of his business with the Akasakas. Ushikawa's assessment of Toru as ordinary is accurate but only to a certain extent. This shows Ushikawa's short-sightedness where Toru is concerned. Ushikawa does prove to be somewhat insightful when he tells Toru that he will reach the end of his rope one day as well. Noboru Wataya's willingness to pay Toru outright for the Miyawaki land is an indicator of the brother-in-law's rising level of desperation. Contact with Kumiko is still the only thing Noboru has to offer Toru Okada, and Ushikawa is having little effect on him. Ushikawa once again paints himself as Noboru Wataya's lowly servant, someone who takes no pleasure from his assigned duties. It is obvious that Ushikawa enjoys tormenting Toru with offers of contacting his wife. The man's lack of concern for Noboru Wataya's motives behind wanting to purchase the Miyawaki land proves that Ushikawa is more interested in causing turmoil than resolving situations with money.



## **Book 3 Chapter 17: The Fitting Room • A Successor (Pgs. 456-459)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 17: The Fitting Room • A Successor (Pgs. 456-459) Summary**

Nutmeg works with the rich women for seven years, then she begins to grow weary of alleviating the women's symptoms only to have their maladies return even more virulently. Nutmeg believes she lost some of the power of her gift. When she notices the mark on his face, Nutmeg knows Toru Okada is the one meant to take over the work.

### **Book 3 Chapter 17: The Fitting Room • A Successor (Pgs. 456-459) Analysis**

The fitting room is more than just part of the cover for Nutmeg's "healing" business. The fitting room is where clients receive their personalized treatments as determined by Nutmeg. It is actually more like a psychic operating room than anything else. Nutmeg diagnoses the women's problems and then embarks on a treatment path customized for each client. The secrecy factor of Nutmeg's business is a salient issue here. Extreme wealth is able to buy even complete silence and absolute privacy. The women visiting Nutmeg (and subsequently Toru) for treatments believe in exclusivity as a social rule. As such, these women are less likely to invite others into their small coterie of anonymity.

Nutmeg's choice of Toru as a successor is closely tied to her family history. According to her, the veterinarian who was her father also had a mark on his cheek. The mark's origin is still not entirely clear to Toru and he accepts it with a sense of resignation. He gives no idea, however, that he believes there is anything out of the ordinary about the mark. Yes, it appears after he is down in the well, but it causes him no pain and only elicits mild curiosity in strangers. Nutmeg does not mention the mark to Toru right away, choosing to include the detail in her personal narrative. The posture in which she encounters Toru at the Shinjuku station is one of receptivity. He merely sits and absorbs sense impressions in an effort to notice beyond the obvious. He practices not taking in visual stimuli as mental stimuli. His aim in watching people is not to watch but to objectively observe. When he sits on the bench, Nutmeg witnesses Toru Okada working on strengthening his inner self. The mark on Toru's face touches off a memory of her father and in a way, Nutmeg comes to associate Toru with a similar mythical quality. Nutmeg held her father in high esteem during her girlhood. Her father is a symbol of empathy and care. Toru represents the potential Nutmeg notices in her father. Whatever Toru believes about his mark, it has an entirely different meaning for Nutmeg.



## **Book 3 Chapter 18: A Stupid Tree Frog Daughter (May Kasahara's Point of View: 4) (Pgs. 460-464)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 18: A Stupid Tree Frog Daughter (May Kasahara's Point of View: 4) (Pgs. 460-464) Summary**

May Kasahara is concerned about transitional phases and causalities. She expresses wonder at having been born to parents she describes as being "boring as tree frogs" (461). One day, May Kasahara says, she woke to discover that no one likes her. Her life is a series of connecting disconnections.

### **Book 3 Chapter 18: A Stupid Tree Frog Daughter (May Kasahara's Point of View: 4) (Pgs. 460-464) Analysis**

Once again, May Kasahara spills herself into a letter to her friend Toru Okada. Once more, she shares her observations on life and emotional existence. This is one of the few times that May mentions her parents. This letter is especially telling, given what she calls her parents. To her, they are garden variety amphibians and not very exciting ones at that. Her parents are boring and not very serious. May Kasahara feels out of place in her family and she believes it is due to the temperamental difference between herself and her parents. What the character may not realize is that her reaction to her family is completely normal. It is a common occurrence for teenagers to feel somehow unrelated (personality-wise) to their progenitors. She recognizes that her parents are rather mundane and not very attractive in terms of what they have to offer a child.

Recognizing that there are people in the world that do not especially care for her is another step on May's progression to seeing the world for what it really is. No one is popular with everyone and May Kasahara comes to terms with it the way she comes to terms with other things: by observing and then synthesizing. She is feeling out of place in a variety of situations, which means that her comfort level within is increasing. May's letters to Toru provide proof in black and white that she exists and that she is persistent in her efforts to learn about the world from the inside out. May takes a rather clinical look at her motivation for kissing the mark on Toru's cheek. She shows awareness of the interconnectedness of events in her statement that the kiss somehow brought her to this situation at the factory in the hills. There is something she recognizes about physical interaction which plays into her decision to move far away. This also ties in with her desire to allow her thoughts to happen freely. Perhaps the kiss was a reminder to the young girl that physical autonomy is a viable choice in life.



## **Book 3 Chapter 19: The Subterranean Labyrinth • Cinnamon's Two Doors (Pgs. 464-469)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 19: The Subterranean Labyrinth • Cinnamon's Two Doors (Pgs. 464-469) Summary**

Ushikawa tells Toru that Kumiko will neither meet him face-to-face nor talk to him on the phone, but that she will talk to Toru via computer. Toru has the passwords and must find a way to connect with Kumiko while Cinnamon is out of the Residence.

### **Book 3 Chapter 19: The Subterranean Labyrinth • Cinnamon's Two Doors (Pgs. 464-469) Analysis**

This chapter involves the main protagonist's espionage attempt. With Kumiko once again twinkling before him like the golden ring on a carousel, Toru's will leads him to break into the Residence computer system. The passwords he uses are the right ones. The words also reinforce the young man's connection to Nutmeg and his pre-silence experiences. The stories have left a mark on Cinnamon's day to day mind and Cinnamon is incorporating the words into the computer system. The computer is the receptacle for the stories that Cinnamon no longer speaks but wishes to deposit somewhere. Stored on his computer in a file unavailable to Toru are the stories as Cinnamon now understands them. What happens at the zoo and aboard the civilian transport ship are key elements in Nutmeg's life. For other reasons still, the events have reached into her son's personal narrative. At this moment, however, Toru's concern rests with Kumiko and the use of technology to get closer to her. Ushikawa is proving to be helpful to Toru and yet the man's support is not entirely to be trusted, as Ushikawa would himself attest. He plants the seeds of intrigue in Toru's mind, triggering his resolve to get to Kumiko however he can. If he is found out, Toru stands to lose the trust of Nutmeg and Cinnamon. By extension, he could also jeopardize access to the well. In this portion of the novel, we encounter Toru straddling a very thin line. Desire takes a place at the center of the decision-making process. The consequences of discovery are no deterrent to Toru. He becomes single-minded and loses sight of Noboru Wataya and Ushikawa. He also loses sight of himself and the bottom of the well. Toru wants to salvage whatever remains of his six years with Kumiko. At the very least, he wants to ask her questions that only she can answer. The risk outweighs what will happen if anyone finds out that he has hacked in to Cinnamon's private world. Now, Toru becomes the observer, as it is necessary for him to monitor Cinnamon's movements to and from the Residence. Waiting is everything. Preparation and precision are matters of course. Toru has to go underground in a different way. He is faced with making his way through to Kumiko without leaving a trace of himself anywhere on Cinnamon's system.



Cinnamon and Toru are brought closer together by virtue of their means of getting to the truth. In this chapter, the computer portals take the place of the opening at the top of the Miyawaki well. The two characters' footprints cover the same ground. They converge at the pinpoint of Cinnamon's thoughts and feelings. It stands to reason, given that the young man is so unobtrusive in other ways, that he would exercise his self-expression in a way to which others could not easily gain access.



## **Book 3 Chapter 20: Nutmeg's Story (Pgs. 470-480)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 20: Nutmeg's Story (Pgs. 470-480) Summary**

At the end of the war, Nutmeg and her mother move in with Nutmeg's mother's family. Nutmeg works her way up in the fashion industry and soon makes a name for herself as a premier designer. In late 1975, Nutmeg's husband is murdered. Shortly thereafter, her mother dies. It is at this time that Nutmeg discovers her "power."

### **Book 3 Chapter 20: Nutmeg's Story (Pgs. 470-480) Analysis**

Nutmeg's life story is a model for working hard and making something of oneself in life. Her beginnings are an indicator of the obstacles Nutmeg had to overcome by herself. Thus, she is established as a character with enough tenacity to stay on her feet no matter what happens. She single-handedly frees herself from poverty and accomplishes exactly what she sets out to do. Her life is something right out of a movie about a girl who makes it good after the tragedy of war. Changing fortunes being what they are, however, the turning point in Nutmeg's life is the night she meets her future husband. The particulars of her married life take a secondary position in this story, however, as it focuses primarily on the business side of things. Nutmeg deals pragmatically with her husband's affairs, not brushing the knowledge aside nor wallowing in it. She is not a particularly sentimental subject. The grisly details of Nutmeg's husband's brutal murder are revealed in this chapter. The manner in which his body is dismembered suggests that he was killed by someone with some form of specialized training. Removing his vital organs suggests that his body parts were harvested. However, leaving the husband's head on top of the toilet seat denotes something more personal in nature. Cutting off someone's head is a sign of making certain they are never brought back to life. It is as if the visage watches itself at the moment of death. The head is emblematic of the center of reason and the vessel of knowledge. Detaching it from the body releases the head to contemplate its own eventual demise. Thus the body is doubly challenged in its death. Other details of the husband's last night alive, including the young woman who checked in with him, do not support such a vicious attack. The murder remains unsolved. This undoubtedly contributes to Cinnamon's silence. What happened in his father's hotel room was unspeakable. Nutmeg does not say whether or not her son ever verbally responds to his father's death. Thus, the men in Cinnamon's background all become the stuff of mysterious ends and eerie stories. The unsolved murder, the whereabouts of his veterinarian grandfather, the inky mark on his cheek, and his father's infidelities all compound his silence. Nutmeg's relationship with her son becomes the closest one in her life. After the death of his grandmother, he fully takes on

the role of his mother's caretaker and super-efficient personal and professional concierge.



## **Book 3 Chapter 21: The Mystery of the Hanging House: 2 (Pgs. 480-484)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 21: The Mystery of the Hanging House: 2 (Pgs. 480-484) Summary**

The newspaper has information concerning the dummy company that owns the Miyawaki property. Although the dummy corporation itself is legitimate, the accounting firm responsible for establishing the dummy company has been unofficially linked to several political scandals. The only vehicle ever seen at the house is a black Mercedes. The Mercedes regularly returns to a swank hotel in the Akasaka district.

### **Book 3 Chapter 21: The Mystery of the Hanging House: 2 (Pgs. 480-484) Analysis**

Another sensational teaser of an article. The press is drawing closer to discovering Nutmeg and Cinnamon's true identities as the layers of the Residence story fall away. There are not many strong details to go on in the news story, but they have seen a car. The Mercedes with tinted windows is the only concrete detail in the story. This further reinforces the depth of secrecy at which Nutmeg and Cinnamon operate. The duo's material wealth and influential list of clients make it possible for them to come and go anonymously in a city the size of Tokyo. The Setagaya neighborhood's cache increases with the amount of newspaper space it occupies. So far, the external trappings of safety and privacy seem to be working in the mother and son's favor. However, being distantly attached to political scandal could, through Toru's involvement with the Akasakas, erode Noboru Wataya's party support in the upcoming elections. The newspaper's story primarily involves telling its readers what it does not know. Those who constructed the Residence are not talking about it; no one knows exactly who goes in or out; no one can say for certain what goes on inside. Mystery and scandal are glamorous and the paper's fluffy treatment of "the hanging house" saga should bring some readers back looking for more in the days and weeks to come. This appearance in print also becomes part of Cinnamon's narrative, since he is the only one described in the story. The unknown driver, the unknown systems orchestrator of the Residence.





## **Book 3 Chapter 22: Jellyfish From All Around the World • Things Metamorphosed (Pgs. 485-492)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 22: Jellyfish From All Around the World • Things Metamorphosed (Pgs. 485-492) Summary**

Toru is sitting in front of Cinnamon's computer again. Toru asks the other person what was the most fascinating thing about their visit to the aquarium. The response: Jellyfish. He tells her that the cat has come back. Kumiko writes that she is no longer the woman Toru knew. Kumiko instructs Toru to think of her as being terminally ill with a disease which causes her face and body to slowly disintegrate. She wants him to wipe her out of his mind as soon as possible.

### **Book 3 Chapter 22: Jellyfish From All Around the World • Things Metamorphosed (Pgs. 485-492) Analysis**

Toru finally has the chance to talk to Kumiko over the computer. The question of jellyfish re-surfaces in this chapter. The jellyfish represent those parts of life that are often under the surface, floating just below human recognition. Jellyfish can also be equated with the silent darkness that waits in each of us. Whether or not one's darkness is ever exposed, it still lives in the possessor. As with Kumiko, the darkness, the bad is within her all along, certainly from the time her sister dies. That she remembers the day of their first date tells the reader that Kumiko's memories of her time with Toru are still fresh in her mind. It also signals that part of the character's interior landscape remains unaffected by the metamorphosis from good to bad. However, she is still unwilling to entertain any notions of returning to her husband. She describes going bad as a process rather than an event and does not seek to justify her position. She is trying to explain to her husband the extent of her emotional damage and uses vague phrasing like "a long time" to describe her agonizing process of moral deterioration. Kumiko simply wants Toru to release her completely from his mind and his physical life. She is asking her husband to exile her as she wants to exile herself. By associating her internal changes with decay and disintegration, Kumiko paints as bleak a picture of her new self as she can. In talking to Toru, she is asking to be devoured by time and imagination. At the abrupt end of their conversation, Toru is no closer to finding Kumiko and bringing her back. If anything, there is a greater feeling of separation because of the immediacy of chatting in real time. Kumiko logs off. In essence, she walks away

from Toru again before he is ready. She appears and disappears, as is the pattern with the characters in Toru Okada's life. Kumiko is gone again in the blink of an eye.



## **Book 3 Chapter 23: Counting Sheep • The Thing in the Center of the Circle (Pgs. 495-498)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 23: Counting Sheep • The Thing in the Center of the Circle (Pgs. 495-498) Summary**

Toru focuses on one of his books about Manchukuo during World War II. Toru recognizes the name of Yoshitaka Wataya as Kumiko's uncle who until recently held a seat in the Lower House of the Diet as a member of the Conservative Party. Toru's mind puts together all the loose ends. Cinnamon's grandfather and Toru are connected by the mark on Toru's cheek. The grandfather and Mr. Mamiya are connected because of the city of Hsin-ching. Mr. Honda and Mr. Mamiya are connected by the special mission with Yamamoto. He is connected to Mr. Honda through his marriage to Kumiko, and Toru is connected to Lieutenant Mamiya because of each man's fascination with deep, dark wells.

### **Book 3 Chapter 23: Counting Sheep • The Thing in the Center of the Circle (Pgs. 495-498) Analysis**

Toru Okada's self-education leads to a discovery about Kumiko's family. Her deceased politician uncle is a history-making logician. Noboru Wataya now makes an appearance in another area of Toru's life. By extension, Noboru Wataya is even in the history books. His uncle's contribution to Japan's WWII efforts were impressive, which proves that Kumiko and her brother come from solidly patriotic stock. In addition, this widens Noboru Wataya's circle of influence. Knowing that he comes from a famous family will be just the ammunition his brother-in-law needs to twist the screws tighter into Toru's consciousness. At this stage, it appears that Noboru Wataya's star continues to shine brighter than ever.

The thing in the center of the circle, as it is known in the title, unites the loose ends of Toru Okada's life. Oddly enough, it is a geographical triangle. Tendrils sent out from these three locations touch everyone the character is involved with, no matter how distant. Each element of his life, each acquaintance is situated somewhere along one of the edges of this triangle. The list of connections covers things seen and unseen, past and present, even reality and fantasy, as in the case of what happens in the wells. At the center of the circle that represents his life, Toru finds three very distinct places, none of which he has ever personally visited. War is the second factor that brings everything together, directly or indirectly. Mr. Honda, Lieutenant Mamiya, and Kumiko's uncle are all involved in war: conflagration, destruction, tyranny. His personal war entails the same characteristics. The story is progressing toward some final confrontation. Toru's

recognition of how the people in his life fit together is a sign that his mind is clear and that he is regaining some of his focus.



## **Book 3 Chapter 24: The Signal Turns Red • The Long Arm Reaches Out (Pgs. 499-504)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 24: The Signal Turns Red • The Long Arm Reaches Out (Pgs. 499-504) Summary**

After a month, Nutmeg returns to the Residence. She asks Toru about Noboru Wataya. Nutmeg asks Toru if Noboru Wataya might be the one leaking information about them to the media. Nutmeg tells Toru that, unfortunately, security at the Residence has been undermined. Nutmeg tells Toru that she feels as though her life has been orchestrated by a long arm. Cinnamon has decided that it is best if they stop seeing clients until the holes in their security can be eradicated.

### **Book 3 Chapter 24: The Signal Turns Red • The Long Arm Reaches Out (Pgs. 499-504) Analysis**

Things are beginning to come apart for Nutmeg, Cinnamon, and Toru. There is a security breach and their dealings at the former Miyawaki lot are now vulnerable to exposure. The newspaper continues to investigate and someone is getting closer to the truth of their "healing" ventures. Noboru Wataya still casts a shadow over the situation. His interest in the Residence is still murky. He seems determined to find out who owns the land. Nutmeg's feeling of safety is threatened. She believes she has been moved down a pre-determined path by an unknown force since her husband's murder in the 1970s. Nutmeg's inclusion of her husband's killing in the litany of formative events is unsurprising. She is unable to view the episode completely in the past tense. Calling it up, calling it to mind keeps it in her field of vision.

The woman and her son need time to recover. Without clients, cash flow becomes an issue. Now there will be no one to take to the bottom of the well. And before long, there may be no well to return to. The young man's technical expertise puts him at an advantage but finding the leak will not be easy. It is his system after all. Nutmeg's fatalism is offset by Cinnamon's more practical approach to recent events. Find the leak, seal the leak and the problem goes away. Toru is left to continue his own work at the Residence, however.



## **Book 3 Chapter 25: Triangular Ears • Sleigh Bells (Pgs. 505-506)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 25: Triangular Ears • Sleigh Bells (Pgs. 505-506) Summary**

The cat is one thing that has come back into Toru's life and he is heartened by this realization. He remembers how happy he and Mackerel have been since the cat's return. Toru is awakened by the sound of sleigh bells coming from Cinnamon's office at one-thirty in the morning. A message on the computer screen says Toru has gained access to "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle."

### **Book 3 Chapter 25: Triangular Ears • Sleigh Bells (Pgs. 505-506) Analysis**

Once again, Toru celebrates the triumphant return of Mackerel the cat. The animal is still a symbol of good things happening once in awhile. His timely return provides comfort to Toru physically as well as emotionally. Listening to the cat breathe and feeling the furry creature beside him are tender things to recall. The cat has no expectations beyond a spoonful of wonderful fish every now and again. The cat has chosen to stay even though Kumiko is no longer part of the household. Mackerel's loyalty is unquestionable. Toru has won the cat over and now it is the two of them, enjoying their own brand of friendship and inter-dependence. The sweetness of what Toru imagines happening with the cat is carried over into the music in the background. Christmas bells complete the picture of he and the cat snuggling.

Toru responds to the sound of the sleigh bells knowing that someone is trying to get his attention rather than trying to warn him off. When the character goes to investigate, the experience is made less ominous overall. Being given access to the chronicle on Cinnamon's computer and having the option to choose a document means that the bells were meant as more of an invitation than anything else. Another incarnation of the wind-up bird, the fifth overall, exists in the numbered files. First Toru hears the wind-up bird in the neighborhood. Then May Kasahara begins calling him "Mr. Wind-Up Bird." Next, Nutmeg's father the veterinarian hears the wind-up bird. After his grandfather's experience is Cinnamon's rendition of the bird that winds the world's spring.



## **Book 3 Chapter 26: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #8 (or, A Second Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 507-522)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 26: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #8 (or, A Second Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 507-522) Summary**

Grateful that the elephants survive the massacre, the veterinarian wonders about the state of his wife and daughter. A short while later, the lieutenant and his men return to the zoo with several Chinese prisoners wearing baseball uniforms, needing picks and shovels. Finding a clearing among some trees, the lieutenant orders the Chinese prisoners to dig a hole. The lieutenant then orders his troops to bayonet three of the Chinese prisoners. The lieutenant orders one of the soldiers to kill the remaining prisoner with a baseball bat. The veterinarian hears the sound of the wind-up bird off in the distance.

### **Book 3 Chapter 26: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #8 (or, A Second Clumsy Massacre) (Pgs. 507-522) Analysis**

This is the first part of the chronicle Toru never sees. It is the summation of what happens at the Hsin-ching zoo. The main character is Nutmeg's father the chief veterinarian. What the man witnesses is more than enough to scar anyone permanently. He is on hand to view the atrocities performed by Japanese soldiers. Unarmed men are killed in progressively brutal ways: men are shot, run through with bayonets and bludgeoned to death with baseball bats. Given the Japanese soldiers' barbarity, it is fitting that they set up their camp in the zoo where animals live.

There is another example of doubling in this chapter which involves Toru and Cinnamon's veterinarian grandfather. Both men have the same mark on their right cheek. With this situation, they both have experiences during which a baseball bat is the primary weapon in heinous and violent acts. This scenario also provides a juxtaposition for Toru's childhood memory of the St. Louis Cardinals exhibition game. In the wartime memory, however, there are no autographed tennis balls. The back of a prisoner's head takes the place of a fastball and the battle is over for one person at least.

The cry of the wind-up bird in the distance tells the veterinarian that the spring has been wound, the world will continue to spin at least for another day. The bird's call has the same impact on Toru's senses when he hears it coming from somewhere in his Tokyo backyard.



## **Book 3 Chapter 27: Cinnamon's Missing Links (Pgs. 523-527)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 27: Cinnamon's Missing Links (Pgs. 523-527) Summary**

Toru knows that Cinnamon is the narrator of this chronicle. Toru is certain Nutmeg does not know May Kasahara calls him "Mr. Wind-Up Bird." Toru realizes that in Cinnamon's chronicle, only particularly special people are able to hear the wind-up bird. Toru is sure Cinnamon has monitored his conversation with Kumiko and decides that his having gained access to the chronicle is no mistake. Toru is uncertain of what is fiction and what is true in Cinnamon's chronicle.

### **Book 3 Chapter 27: Cinnamon's Missing Links (Pgs. 523-527) Analysis**

As the chapter title attests, this section of the novel has to do with the blank spaces in Cinnamon's representation of The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle. Upon finishing, Toru begins to question how the young man could have gained access to his nickname ("Mr. Wind-Up Bird"), or what he tells May Kasahara the bird sounds like. The bridge in this case is Nutmeg, who mentions the name. It is unclear in what manner or for what reason Nutmeg gives the information to Cinnamon. She could have revealed it to him in casual conversation.

Toru's estimation about Cinnamon ultimately granting him access to the chronicle is probably accurate. After all, Cinnamon is the one who originally developed the computer and security systems. If anyone could provide Toru with information of this nature, it would be Cinnamon. It is also conceivable that, given Cinnamon's talent with all things technological, he eavesdrops on their conversations electronically. This would still not explain his knowledge of the term wind-up bird. Being given Cinnamon's permission to read his private work means that Toru is now a member of Cinnamon's inner circle. Nutmeg has never mentioned her son's writings to Toru. Maybe allowing Toru to read the stories as he understands them, Cinnamon is able to offer a commentary on his family history without fear of judgment or harsh criticism. Toru wonders about the truth of what he has read, but truth really has no place in what Cinnamon creates. His work is original in that while it is based on things he was told, the stories that he circulates are those which offer his renderings of history





## **Book 3 Chapter 28: You Just Can't Trust a House (May Kasahara's Point of View: 5) (Pgs. 528-531)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 28: You Just Can't Trust a House (May Kasahara's Point of View: 5) (Pgs. 528-531) Summary**

May remembers that the older Miyawaki girl took piano lessons. She watched Mr. Miyawaki working around the house on weekends. May says that after they disappeared, the entire appearance of the house changed, expressing her disgust at the "know nothing look" on the house's face. At a certain point, May had come to share the Miyawakis' happiness. May tells Toru that lately she feels as though she is becoming Kumiko. She admits that this is just a delusion.

### **Book 3 Chapter 28: You Just Can't Trust a House (May Kasahara's Point of View: 5) (Pgs. 528-531) Analysis**

May Kasahara's memories of the Miyawaki family paint them as nearly ideal. Two lovely girls playing. Mr. Miyawaki as a hard worker and an active man. The house changes but her remembrances beg the question, what is going on in May Kasahara's house when she is watching the girls who lived across the way? She personalizes her feelings by ascribing a particular look to the house after the family's disappearance. Something about the family's absence takes more than a physical toll on the structure itself. All the care and diligence that goes into the Miyawakis' existence as a family is suddenly sucked out of the house, de-animating the entire lot. May knows the house is resentful that the family leaves it standing there on the lot, naked and unattended to. No longer the happy family home, the identity of the house is tied to the tragedy even though the Miyawakis die away from the Setagaya neighborhood. The house is not ungrateful it merely grieves its own loss.

The young girl's admission that she shared in what she perceived to be the Miyawakis' happiness shows the lack that was present in her life at that moment. Imagining herself as Kumiko is an interesting twist for May given that her past four letters have had very little to do with Kumiko. The girl chose instead to concentrate on details of her life and her life only. This time, May is the false self and Kumiko is the authentic self. The thread does not hold together long before she is on to the next thing. May expresses her beliefs about delusions. She does not write as though her delusions present any problems for her. May Kasahara has manageable delusions. In allowing herself to become Kumiko even on paper, May discounts Toru's feelings. Kumiko has, after all, left the man after six years of marriage. But May admits she knows nothing about that. Her

approach to occupying the Kumiko "place" in her perception is nothing more than May Kasahara dressing up in a part of the narrative that she knows.



## **Book 3 Chapter 29: A Vacant House is Born (Pgs. 532-533)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 29: A Vacant House is Born (Pgs. 532-533) Summary**

Toru admits to himself that Cinnamon is not at the Residence because Cinnamon does not want to be at the Residence. Tired of waiting, he telephones Nutmeg at the Akasaka office. There is no answer. Nor is there an answer at Ushikawa's number; a recording says it has been disconnected. Toru stays away from the Residence for the next five days and loses the desire to go down the well again. He decides to return to Shinjuku and watch people, but Nutmeg never shows up there. He drops by the Akasaka fashion design office and rings the bell, but no one answers.

### **Book 3 Chapter 29: A Vacant House is Born (Pgs. 532-533) Analysis**

The length of this chapter is important to note. The idea of separation is dealt with quickly and quietly in this episode. The tone is decidedly somber. Toru is completely isolated as a result of Nutmeg and Cinnamon distancing themselves from happenings at the Residence. Whereas there was a time before the well that people came and went in Toru's life, this moment is extremely solitary for him. This time, even starting with something simple proves to be less than effective. Shinjuku does not offer the same potential for growth and newness as before. He feels shoved aside, as though his family suddenly moves and purposely leaves him behind without a word. Toru certainly does not imagine that the end would be so sharp and painful. People had become inaccessible almost overnight. There is nothing for him to do but wait.



## **Book 3 Chapter 30: Malta Kano's Tail • Boris the Manskiner (Pgs. 534-547)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 30: Malta Kano's Tail • Boris the Manskiner (Pgs. 534-547) Summary**

Toru dreams about sitting across the table from Malta Kano. A chunky black dog wears Ushikawa's face and has Ushikawa's voice. There are dry human scalps hanging from the ceiling beams and delicate droplets of blood are falling around Toru and Malta. Toru tells Malta Kano that the cat has returned to him. Malta Kano asks if Toru notices anything different about the cat's tail. Toru says no. Malta Kano shows that she has the cat's original tail attached to her body, then tells Toru Okada that Creta Kano's baby's name is Corsica, after the island. Toru receives another letter from Lieutenant Mamiya.

### **Book 3 Chapter 30: Malta Kano's Tail • Boris the Manskiner (Pgs. 534-547) Analysis**

The first part of this chapter concentrates on a dream that Toru has. The people in his dream are animalized this time. Ushikawa's metamorphosis into a mis-proportioned dog suits the character given his personality as a human being in Toru's waking life. A preoccupation with his genitals carries into Ushikawa's life as a dog very well. It is easy to imagine that Ushikawa is the kind of dog with an odor. The significance of the scalps hanging above their heads indicates the number of people who have been destroyed in the service of things beyond their knowledge. Malta Kano's nudity is proof of her emotional vulnerability. She is wrong about the cat; Mackerel did eventually come home. As a sensitive, making this type of mistake leaves one feeling exposed, naked in the face of your misfire. However, ending up with the cat's tail is a sign of Malta Kano's proximity to the answers surrounding the cat's going missing. Malta only has the cat's tail, not its entire body, which means that she is still in command of some information regarding the cat and his hiatus.

The second portion of the chapter is devoted to Lieutenant Mamiya's continuing story of what happens at the end of World War II. He has already spent time at the bottom of the well. Whatever it was that nearly took shape in the light that managed to invade his darkness has changed the way he relates to the world. Mamiya has another series of encounters with Boris the Manskiner. Boris is still the untrustworthy, contemptuous man the lieutenant had known in Mongolia. Although no mention is made of him, Boris can probably still hear Yamamoto's howls of pain.



## **Book 3 Chapter 31: The Bat Vanishes • The Thieving Magpie Returns (Pgs. 548-554)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 31: The Bat Vanishes • The Thieving Magpie Returns (Pgs. 548-554) Summary**

There is still no sign of Cinnamon or Nutmeg. He sits in the well, pondering the revelation that he relates to the well as an extension of his body. Waking up from a short nap, Toru is on the other side of the wall in Room 208. He reaches out, takes hold of the knob, and the door to the room opens smoothly, as if it had been expecting him all the while. Stepping out into a silent, carpeted corridor, Toru decides to follow it, making right turns only. Standing still to collect himself, he hears the waiter whistling "The Thieving Magpie" again, and following him, Toru returns to Room 208.

### **Book 3 Chapter 31: The Bat Vanishes • The Thieving Magpie Returns (Pgs. 548-554) Analysis**

Toru revisits the scene of his most recent self. He enters the Residence as though going back there will somehow summon up Nutmeg and Cinnamon. Everything is in order, left suspended in this reality. People have vanished. Just as he leaves Kumiko's things sitting right where she leaves them, so Nutmeg and Cinnamon leave the Miyawaki property like an artist walks away from a finished still life. Their absence no longer cuts Toru; this much is true. More striking than this, however, is the approach he now has toward the well. It holds little or no interest for him. There is something unusual in his relationship with the Akasakas that impacts this facet of the character. The missing bat denotes a momentary break from overt physical violence. When Toru finally goes down into the well, it leads him to another episode in the hotel room.

The condition of the room lets the reader know that activity there has been sporadic at best. The dust has settled in places and the feeling overall is one of neglect. This could also signify that Toru had been ignoring his dreams in favor of other matters. Things go smoothly for Toru in this dream and the character's faith in his ability to make it through the hotel. Each time he is in the hotel, he creates a subconscious map of the dream for himself to follow. By reminding himself of the signposts; the waiter, the long corridor, the tune the waiter whistles, Toru takes ownership of the properties of the dream in preparation for future experiences here.

"The Thieving Magpie" is the opera by Rossini that Toru hears on the radio in the first chapter of Book 1. Toru recognizes the tune as something familiar and something new. When he hears the piece in the kitchen, it is background music. When he hears the

same theme in the hotel corridor, it becomes an integral piece of navigational equipment.



## **Book 3 Chapter 32: The Job of Making Others Use Their Imaginations (The Story of Boris the Manskiner, Continued) (Pgs. 555-564)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 32: The Job of Making Others Use Their Imaginations (The Story of Boris the Manskiner, Continued) (Pgs. 555-564) Summary**

Mamiya is an interpreter in the Siberian labor camp. He meets Boris the Manskiner and Japanese soldiers are found out as spies and executed. Mamiya becomes Boris' assistant. A year and a half later, Mamiya decides to kill Boris but the gun he uses is not loaded. Boris gives the lieutenant two cartridges and Mamiya loads the gun but cannot shoot Boris. One week later, he is released from the prisoner of war camp and makes his way back to Japan. The letter closes with Mamiya's wish that Toru live a life without regret.

### **Book 3 Chapter 32: The Job of Making Others Use Their Imaginations (The Story of Boris the Manskiner, Continued) (Pgs. 555-564) Analysis**

This portion of Mamiya's narrative highlights the end of his involvement with Boris the Manskiner. In planning to kill Boris, Mamiya does the most dangerous thing of all; he uses his imagination. The character stewes for over a year, plotting and planning how to get rid of Boris, waiting for just the right moment. The lieutenant is never able to carry out his plan. His war ends and he returns to Japan. The storyline just stops there. Thus, Mamiya is forced to live out the rest of his days knowing that he allowed his opportunity to kill Boris slip out of his hands. It is evident Mamiya feels deep regret about not following through on his plan. The proof is in the last line of his letter. He does not want Toru to go through the same kind of self-disappointment. The old man's letter is a teaching tool. Telling the truth about what happens in his life allows Lieutenant Mamiya to recoup some of the grace he loses at the bottom of the well. Perhaps giving to Toru something useful out of his own pain brings the former soldier back into his own mercy.

The story of Boris represents every opportunity that one might have in life to decisively put evil down. Standing before evil changes the way a person sees things. Doing nothing to stop evil has its own set of consequences. People allow evil to function in its own service for years, just like the monkeys on the island of excrement. Soon, the behavior becomes its own misery. Left to its own devices, evil self-perpetuates just like



Boris. The character's decision to leave him alive shows that Lieutenant Mamiya lives on the moral high ground. Even such an evolved choice, though, leads to more distress. The story of Boris the Manskiner and the lieutenant ends here. But, because of the lieutenant's moment of inaction, the evil was able to continue. Similarly, in Toru's life, there is an evil that continues.





## **Book 3 Chapter 33: A Dangerous Place • The People Watching Television • The Hollow Man (Pgs. 565-574)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 33: A Dangerous Place • The People Watching Television • The Hollow Man (Pgs. 565-574) Summary**

Back in the hotel, Toru watches the waiter come out of Room 208 and follows him all the way to the hotel lobby where he saw his brother-in-law on television in the previous dreams. Noboru Wataya is hospitalized following an attack on his life. Eyewitnesses saw a man who fits Toru Okada's description to a tee. People are following Toru when the hotel goes completely dark. The faceless man tells Toru that some very dangerous people are convinced that he is responsible for the attack on Noboru Wataya.

### **Book 3 Chapter 33: A Dangerous Place • The People Watching Television • The Hollow Man (Pgs. 565-574) Analysis**

At this point, the reader follows Toru's progress in the latest of the Room 208 dreams. This time, after coming through the wall, other people at the hotel see Toru and notice something is not quite right with him. As is true in the waking world, Noboru Wataya's presence is in Toru's dream landscape. The man without a face, "the Hollow Man," as he calls himself, is an invisible ally from the dream reality who also has knowledge of the attack on his brother-in-law. This point signals a further melding of Toru's waking and non-waking lives. Since he belongs to Toru's dreams, the Hollow Man contains nothing and everything. In fact, he typifies the dream state in that he exists but just on the edge of awakening. He counts as all the elements of the dream because he is the dream mechanism at work on behalf of itself. The Hollow Man is the hotel room, the lobby, the people watching Noboru Wataya's story on the television. As such, Toru is guided back to Room 208 out of the dream state's sense of self-preservation. By seeing to it that he survives, the Hollow Man sees to it that all Toru's dreams continue to happen. Right now, there is something dangerous hidden in some compartment of Toru's mind.

The hotel room is unlocked. This shows that Toru is being given increasingly more access to the things in his dreams. He is now able to enter his own subconscious territory with minimal guidance. Thus, there is a better chance that the character will be able to manipulate the situation and influence the outcome of this incident. Toru is in the room with another woman. The chapter ends in medias res, "in the middle of the thing."



## **Book 3 Chapter 34: The Light of a Firefly ●Breaking the Spell ● A World Where Alarm Clocks Ring in the Morning (Pgs. 575-582)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 34: The Light of a Firefly ●Breaking the Spell ● A World Where Alarm Clocks Ring in the Morning (Pgs. 575-582) Summary**

The voice is one that Toru recognizes. She says he was in another Room 208 last time. The woman then alters her voice to sound just like Kumiko. Toru tells Kumiko's voice that he knows what happened to make Kumiko leave him. Toru also knows that Kumiko's sister committed suicide because she, too, is defiled and injured by Noboru Wataya. Marrying Toru had proven to be Kumiko's way out of the darkness that was her family. In the dark quiet of the hotel room, the woman gives Toru the baseball bat that is missing from the well at the Residence. Toru knows that this is the bat used to crush Noboru Wataya's skull.

### **Book 3 Chapter 34: The Light of a Firefly ●Breaking the Spell ● A World Where Alarm Clocks Ring in the Morning (Pgs. 575-582) Analysis**

Here, the blending of waking life and non-waking life continues. The woman admits to being part of a dream but not Toru's dream. This implies that dream realities are parallel in their existence. Somewhere, there is another hotel and another Room 208 belonging to someone else's dream. There is no indication how she comes to be in Toru's dream. Part of the necessity of her presence, though, is the use of Kumiko's voice. Toru's longing to hear his wife speak is indulged for a moment in this scene. Unsaid things from their conscious time together are now coming out into the open.

The woman's return of the baseball bat confirms the reality of objects moving through the wall. The bat's appearance in Room 208 means that people on both sides have access to one another. Perhaps Noboru Wataya's attacker was part of the dream world that passed through the wall as well. The source of the familiar signal knocking at the door is still unknown. In this instance, however, Toru chooses to stay and confront the individual standing beyond the door.



## **Book 3 Chapter 35: Just a Real Knife • The Thing That Had Been Prophesied (Pgs. 583-590)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 35: Just a Real Knife • The Thing That Had Been Prophesied (Pgs. 583-590) Summary**

The person on the other side unlocks the door with a key and enters the room. A fight ensues and Toru is cut and bleeding but still on his feet, holding the bat. He takes a swing that makes contact with the other person's collarbone. A second blow connects with the man's upper neck and Toru hears the sound of a watermelon cracking open. Toru remembers old Mr. Honda warning him to be careful of water.

### **Book 3 Chapter 35: Just a Real Knife • The Thing That Had Been Prophesied (Pgs. 583-590) Analysis**

Toru finds out that he is also mortal in the dream state. Including the man carrying the guitar case, this is the second random fight in which Toru incapacitates someone. The identity of the other person in this chapter is still unknown. Once again, the bat becomes the weapon of choice. In this chapter, Toru feels no qualms about using the bat on his unknown counterpart. The other person must have been injured badly or Toru would not have made it back into the well. When the character feels himself metamorphosing into nothingness, what he feels is his passage from one state of existence into another. Successfully moving back into the Miyawaki well means allowing his physical form to become whatever is necessary to make the transition. Once he regains consciousness to find water in the well, Toru is once again reminded of the permeability of his life.



## **Book 3 Chapter 36: The Story of the Duck People • Shadows and Tears • (May Kasahara's Point of View: 6) (Pgs. 591-595)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 36: The Story of the Duck People • Shadows and Tears • (May Kasahara's Point of View: 6) (Pgs. 591-595) Summary**

May Kasahara writes tenderly of the duck people and how they make her laugh when she is at the pond. The brisk chill of the weather and the warmth of remembering the duck people combine within her and May Kasahara feels happy for the first time in a long time. May Kasahara takes off her clothes and kneels naked in the moonlight, looking at her own body. She describes how the light hits parts of her body and how un-self conscious she feels. She bursts out in tears for no apparent reason, seeing her tears as lovely crystals. May Kasahara hears Toru yelling for her from the bottom of the well.

### **Book 3 Chapter 36: The Story of the Duck People • Shadows and Tears • (May Kasahara's Point of View: 6) (Pgs. 591-595) Analysis**

The sixth letter from May Kasahara to Toru Okada tells of her happiness. The duck people are significant in this instance because it proves May is able to look on and enjoy something outside herself. She is releasing some of her teenage self-obsession to notice and be affected by other creatures. Also, May Kasahara is discovering some distinct powers of her own. She does hear Toru hollering her name from the well. She is not well-acquainted with such mysteries, however, and goes on to the next thing—moonlight. She discovers the way a full moon illuminates a body differently than any other light source. Moonlight renders a body translucent. It is not so much a matter of the light shining on something. Moonlight actually shows through things. Moonlight illuminates from the inside by attaching itself to one's inner light. It is her own inner light. Her tears are timely in that she is probably entering a time of genuine grief for the boy who died in the motorcycle accident. May is opening to her own feelings. Kneeling naked in the moonlight denotes the girl's curiosity about herself as a physical being comprised of light and shadow. The wig manufacturing complex that May calls home has the same impact on her as the well has on Toru.



## **Book 3 Chapter 37: Two Different Kinds of News (Pgs. 596-600)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 37: Two Different Kinds of News (Pgs. 596-600) Summary**

Cinnamon carries Toru into the "fitting room" and deposits him on the sofa. When he regains consciousness, he feels something very close to the pain of being shot. Toru had killed something inside of Noboru Wataya, though. Whatever Toru had hit with the baseball bat was directly connected to the politician's stroke. Toru uses an electric shaver on his face and discovers that the blue-black mark is gone. Toru is given access to "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle."

### **Book 3 Chapter 37: Two Different Kinds of News (Pgs. 596-600) Analysis**

Waking and dreaming diverge again with the knowledge that Toru did not harm Noboru Wataya in real life. There is significance in the realization that something he did in the hotel room stops his brother-in-law's ascent to power even if only temporarily. With Noboru Wataya's stroke, the playing field is level for the two men again. This evening out leaves room for Toru to gain something. He has his life and the cat is still alive. He no longer has the clients and the Miyawaki property is about to change hands once more. Nutmeg's assertion that she will take care of the clients herself proves a resurgence in her own individual healing powers, and Toru has come to the end of his usefulness for the pair. Cinnamon's avoidance of Toru is as yet unexplained. Seeing Creta Kano and her baby in a dream signals that the two of them still have a deep connection. Naming the baby after another island shows that the sisters are still involved in their own self-construction. It is not unusual that Creta disappears when Toru asks after her older sister. This is Toru's reminder that the sisters never speak to anyone on the other's behalf. Perhaps Malta does not wish to be part of their interactions at this time.

The mark disappears from Toru's face just as suddenly as it appears. Toru now has proof that his days with the Akasakas are over. He has returned to the man he was before, externally anyway. What has changed most significantly is his consciousness. Toru is again awakened by bells, which signal further permission to investigate Cinnamon's chronicle. This time, Toru chooses the last entry in the series. For him, the end is as good a place as any.



## **Book 3 Chapter 38: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #17 (Kumiko's Letter) (Pgs. 601-603)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 38: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #17 (Kumiko's Letter) (Pgs. 601-603) Summary**

At the beginning of her letter, Kumiko admits that she has to kill her brother, Noboru Wataya. Her sister's suicide and Kumiko's promiscuity are the direct result of being defiled by their brother. Several times, she dreams of Toru close to her, willing Kumiko nearer to him. He always passes her by in the dark. She writes that she received the password by special delivery just this afternoon. Kumiko is happy the cat found its way home.

### **Book 3 Chapter 38: The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle #17 (Kumiko's Letter) (Pgs. 601-603) Analysis**

Kumiko's letter is a definite departure from what Toru encounters previously. She has reached the end of her mental tether and has become obsessed with stopping her brother. Her desire to kill him connects her with her husband in that each of them takes matters into their own hands to keep Noboru Wataya from progressing. Kumiko's thoughts are more dire, however, because she has a plan. Mentally accepting the consequences of killing her brother beforehand prove that Kumiko has devoted quite a bit of thought and consideration to carrying out her self-appointed goal. What is especially odd about the letter is the fact that Kumiko received the password that very day. If this is true, the reader (and Toru) are left to wonder who it was with whom Toru had the first conversation. The person had known about the aquarium and Kumiko's fascination with the jellyfish. How is it possible that someone else could know such a detail?

Toru can take hope that Kumiko is convinced of his desire to have her with him. His efforts to bring her out of the darkness were unsuccessful. Kumiko says as much when she remarks that Toru always passes by her in the dark. Kumiko shows her softness by saying she is happy the cat is with Toru again. She closes the letter abruptly and decisively. She gives her husband no indication that she will ever return.



## **Book 3 Chapter 39: Goodbye (Pgs. 604-607)**

### **Book 3 Chapter 39: Goodbye (Pgs. 604-607) Summary**

Toru Okada and May Kasahara are sitting next to the frozen pond on the ground of the factory where May works. Kumiko's trial begins the following spring. She will plead guilty when she goes before a judge. Toru plans to wait for his wife until she comes out of jail. Toru never received any letters from May. She kisses Toru on the cheek and tells him to call her and the duck people in a loud voice if he ever needs them.

### **Book 3 Chapter 39: Goodbye (Pgs. 604-607) Analysis**

In the novel's final chapter, it is difficult to say which things, if any, have been resolved. Kumiko's brother is dead, as her awaiting trial proves. No mention is made of Nutmeg or Cinnamon. There is no news of Lieutenant Mamiya or the Kano sisters, except by way of what Toru wants to name his first child. Things have returned to normal for Toru. Mackerel the cat waits for him in the same house. The Miyawaki lot with the well is still just down the alley as is May Kasahara's house. The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle on Cinnamon's computer turns out to be Toru's story after all. Since none of May Kasahara's letters ever reach him, Toru must witness her transformation all on one brief visit to the wig manufacturing complex. Of all the arrivals and departures in his life over the past year and a half, her presence has been the most consistent and the most innocent. In a way, things begin changing for May Kasahara the day she meets Toru in the alley. They are both subjects of their own chronicle. Toru's story ends up on the Residence computer. May's chronicle, the six letters to Toru, end up in some indeterminate place, the somewhere else that she once mentions to Toru.





# Characters

## Toru Okada

Thirty years old and an only child, Toru Okada has been married to Kumiko for six years. He has had no relationship with his father since his mother's death and his father's remarriage. He stands five feet nine inches tall, weighs around one hundred-forty pounds, has short hair and is usually clean-shaven. Toru Okada does not wear glasses and is aware that, physically anyway, he is at best unremarkable. The character is well aware of his unexceptional looks and as such, Toru Okada finds that he has little impact on the people and the world around him. He often experiences feelings of powerlessness in his life. This quality of being unremarkable works to his advantage when he decides to take up people watching at Shinjuku station day after day. Toru Okada blends into society very well, a fact which changes significantly when he develops a mysterious, inky blue mark the size of a small child's hand on his right cheek. Consequently, the mark renders him easily identifiable both in the waking world and in dreams. Toru is a jazz aficionado as well as a lover of classical music. Having worn a suit and tie everyday to his job at the law firm, Toru Okada now enjoys the freedom to wear whatever he chooses. Most days, he wears cotton pants (or shorts), a t-shirt, and a pair of worn-out tennis shoes. Though he is college-educated, he is not exactly a deep thinker, and at this point in his life Toru Okada is somewhat directionless. He notices a restless quality in himself, which he eventually learns can only be assuaged by spending time in complete darkness at the bottom of a dry well. Also, he has doubts about just how well he really knows his wife. By extension, it becomes a concern of Toru Okada's that one can never fully know another person. This particular concern extends to his perceptions governing his other interpersonal relationships with the more unusual characters in the novel such as Mr. Honda and the Akasakas.

Toru Okada marries Kumiko against her father's wishes. Following an ugly disagreement with Kumiko's father, the two men no longer speak. Similarly, Toru has hated his brother-in-law, Noboru Wataya, since the day they met. They have absolutely nothing in common aside from Kumiko; throughout most of the story they manage to steer clear of one another. The two are established as polar opposites early in the novel. On the one hand, Toru Okada is easygoing, contemplative and empathetic in his approach to life and other people. He represents lightness and fluidity. Conversely, Noboru Wataya is slick, manipulative and dark-hearted. His appearance is mask-like and he operates primarily in the shadows, literally and figuratively. Toru Okada has a penchant for spaghetti and when he feels unduly stressed, he irons. Toru Okada is an ex-smoker and keeps a supply of lemon drops on hand to ease his nicotine cravings.

## Kumiko Okada

Kumiko Okada (née Wataya) is thirty years old and has been married to Toru Okada for six years. The youngest of three children, Kumiko is a woman who holds her feelings in





check most of the time. Although she experiences things deeply, she is still relatively undemonstrative. Therefore, it comes as a great shock to Toru when, after six years of marriage, Kumiko finally reveals that not only does she hate beef stir-fried with vegetables, she detests blue toilet paper with flowers on it. This habit of holding back emotionally is most likely the result of Kumiko being substantially younger than her brother and deceased sister, who are nine and five years older, respectively. In addition, between the ages of three and six, Kumiko is sent to live with her paternal grandmother in Niigata. Her parents inform her that the decision was made because she was a sickly child. This, she later finds out, is a lie. Actually, Kumiko's mother and grandmother were involved in some sort of feud, and Kumiko is offered up both to allay the grandmother's anger and solidify the grandmother's relationship with Kumiko's father. Her older sister dies of food poisoning a year after Kumiko returns from Niigata. Consequently, Kumiko grows up feeling like an outsider in her own family because her sister was the only one who behaved lovingly toward Kumiko. Her parents and brother are oblivious to Kumiko's emotional state and take every opportunity to talk about her smart, beautiful deceased sister. Both girls, however, share a secret. What Kumiko does not tell Toru right away is that her older brother, Noboru Wataya, maintains a strangely incestuous psychic hold over her.

She marries Toru Okada against the wishes of her father. Her mother, the daughter of a well-to-do government official, is vain and relies on Kumiko's father for her opinions on just about everything. As a result, Kumiko experiences a modicum of discomfort because of her marriage to Toru. After she marries Toru, as a concession to her family, the two consult a medium, Mr. Honda, who has advised the Watayas for years. Physically, Kumiko is a rather small, delicate woman with an impeccable sense of style. Unlike Nutmeg Akasaka and the Kano sisters, Kumiko is understated in her dress and prefers clothes which are elegant as well as functional. She is fastidious and devotes much time and care to maintaining her wardrobe. Since she leaves Toru Okada at a point less than halfway through the novel, Kumiko is more a strong imprint than a substantive character in *THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE*. Kumiko leaves Toru after having an affair with another man. It is not so much that she has had an affair which causes Kumiko to leave, but an awareness of something terribly flawed within her that she must face and come to terms with on her own.

## **Noboru Wataya**

Noboru Wataya is nine years older than his sister Kumiko Okada. Much like Kumiko, Noboru Wataya is emotionally vacant. Kumiko becomes convinced there is something twisted about her brother when, as a sixth grader, she mistakenly catches Noboru Wataya masturbating while smelling an article of their deceased sister's clothing. Never one to concern himself with the wants and needs of others, Noboru Wataya is his parents' favorite child. They infect him with their narrow view of Japanese society as brutally elitist with no room for the weak or unmotivated. The firstborn and their only son, Noboru Wataya's parents indulge him at every turn during his childhood and adolescence. Academically gifted, Noboru Wataya is given access to the best schools and tutors his parents money can pay for and receives whatever he asks for after taking



top honors in school. He never socializes with other children and never has time for friends or girls. Noboru Wataya spends his formative years single-mindedly working to get to the top of the heap. In terms of intellect, Noboru Wataya eventually establishes himself as one of the strong. As an adult, however, he is devoid of refinement, social aptitude and communication skills. After a failed arranged marriage which lasts a mere two years, he ends up living with his parents. What Noboru Wataya has in his favor, however, is a career in television. After deciding on a career as an academic researcher, Noboru Wataya writes a book on economics which the reviewers cannot stop raving about. From here, he becomes a media darling, courted by magazines and appearing as a panelist on various television shows and working as a political commentator and economist. Not an especially handsome man, Noboru Wataya is tall, slim and (thanks to a team of professional stylists), he now exudes an appearance of superior breeding and extreme material success. During the course of the novel, Noboru Wataya becomes a Lower House member in the Japanese Diet, filling his elderly paternal uncle's seat.

## May Kasahara

May Kasahara is a sixteen-year-old girl who lives just off the "alley" in the Okadas' Setagaya neighborhood. She meets Toru Okada one afternoon when he is out looking for his cat, Noboru Wataya. Her parents (nothing more than shadow figures in the novel) are out most days so May spends an inordinate amount of time alone. Toru Okada often finds her in the family's sizeable, well-maintained backyard listening to hard rock music on a boom box. Physically, she is rather plain although not unattractive. May's mouth is small; her upper lip is slightly upturned and she has "beautifully shaped" ears. May Kasahara is not very tall. Upon first meeting her, Toru Okada notices that May drags her right leg when she walks. There is also a noticeable cut around two inches in length next to her left eye. The limp and the cut near her eye are both due to a motorcycle accident which keeps her out of school indefinitely. Her former boyfriend was driving the motorcycle and was killed in the crash. Consequently, the young girl is fascinated by death and dying and is preoccupied thinking about ways a person could die. May Kasahara smokes Hope cigarettes, loves to sunbathe, does not especially care for high school and has a penchant for asking questions simply for their shock value. When she inquires if he's ever had a nickname, Toru Okada blurts out "wind-up bird" because it is the first thing that comes into his mind. From that day on, May Kasahara calls him "Mr. Wind-Up Bird." Another fascination of hers is baldness; so much so that she eventually moves to a small town in the middle of nowhere to work in a toupee factory. Once, she convinces Toru Okada to help while she works standing in Shinjuku station with a clipboard, identifying balding men and categorizing them according to the progression of their hair loss.

## Malta Kano

Malta Kano is a thirty-one year-old character. A mysterious medium/fortune teller distinguished by a red plastic hat she is very fond of, Malta Kano is first contacted by Kumiko Okada to help solve the mystery of the missing cat, Noboru Wataya. Initially,



Malta Kano telephones the Okada residence to speak to Toru about the cat, but their conversation turns surreal when she gives him a cryptic warning about water and hangs up on him shortly thereafter. "Malta" is not the character's real given name. She adopted the name after visiting the island of the same name in search of the world's most perfect water. Malta Kano is obsessed with water to the same extent that May Kasahara is captivated with death and baldness. Originally from Japan, Malta Kano travels the world searching for water that can heal as well as arrest the aging process. By the time she encounters Toru and Kumiko, she has completed a daunting series of what she calls "asceticisms" (exercises in self-denial and self-discipline) and has returned to Japan to rest. She earns a living by helping clients find things; lost loves, car keys, even cats.

## Mr. Honda (Corporal Oishi Honda)

Mr. Honda comes into the Okadas' life by way of his dealings with the Wataya family. Honda is something of a healer and psychic sensitive. He, too, is in the business of knowing the unknowable. A veteran of the Japanese/Chinese conflicts during World War II, Mr. Honda lost most of his hearing because of an explosion at the battle of Nomohan. Since the war, Mr. Honda has lived in the same tiny house in Meguro Prefecture. His house is across the lane from a busy auto repair establishment where someone is constantly yelling at the top of his lungs. Mr. Honda lives an ascetic life, with the exception of a color television, which he keeps on full volume. He wears the same dirty, threadbare kimono everyday and always appears to be slightly unkempt. He is pleased to receive Toru and Kumiko into his home because of the monthly gift of a very large bottle of sake. Although Toru and Kumiko visit Mr. Honda in order to receive his teachings, they most often end up listening to stories of his World War II exploits, peppered with cryptic messages which sometimes they actually understand. Overall, Mr. Honda is a nice older gentleman and the young couple does not begrudge him the time they spend at his home. After all, Kumiko's father is the one who pays for their sessions and they find him amusing and somewhat refreshing. Mr. Honda is unmarried and has no children so, when he dies, Lt. Mamiya is charged with distributing the things Mr. Honda bequeaths to friends and neighbors. Toru Okada receives an empty Cutty Sark scotch bottle, which he finds most puzzling.

## Creta Kano

Although her given name is Setsuko, Malta Kano's sister is named Creta after the Greek island of Crete in the Mediterranean. Setsuko was renamed by her sister Malta. Twenty-three years old, the younger sister of the enigmatic Malta is a self-professed "prostitute of the mind," claiming she and Toru Okada engaged in psychic sexual intercourse in his dreams. Like her sister, Creta has a remarkable sense of style. Outfitted in authentic 1960s retro clothing, she wears her hair in a high bouffant with the ends curled up. She has a weakness for white patent leather and shoes with sharp, pointed heels.

Formerly a real-world high-end hooker for the Mafia, Creta Kano has had many precarious encounters with men. One of the men Creta spends time with is Noboru



Wataya. The Kano sisters both contend that Creta was somehow defiled by Noboru Wataya both physically and psychically. After the effects of the episode with Noboru Wataya subside, Creta finds that she has become someone else; a new version of her old self. She refers to this self as her "third self." Creta Kano appears in one of Toru Okada's recurring dreams that take place in a mysterious, shadowy hotel. She and Toru share a special emotional connection which is not so much sexual as empathetic. Creta Kano is Kumiko's physical twin. The two women are exactly the same size and in more than one instance, Creta Kano wears Kumiko's clothes. That the women are so physically similar may be part of Toru Okada's attraction to the younger sister of Malta Kano.

## Lieutenant Tokutaro Mamiya

(Lieutenant) Tokutaro Mamiya is an old friend of Mr. Honda. He and Mr. Honda serve in China together during WWII. The two men are assigned to a special detail which takes them to a river on the border of Outer Mongolia. One night in camp, Honda tells Lieutenant Mamiya that he will not be killed in China but will live to a very old age and finally die in Japan. During the mission, Lieutenant Mamiya is captured by a combined Soviet-Mongolian team. He witnesses the mission leader, a man named Yamamoto, being skinned alive by a Mongolian soldier with a curved-blade knife. Subsequently, Mamiya is taken to an unknown location and thrown down an empty well. Somehow, Mr. Honda finds the well where the Mongolians abandon Lieutenant Mamiya and rescues him. In a later conflict, Mamiya loses his left hand when it is run over by a Soviet tank. Toward the end of the war, he is again captured by the Soviets and placed in a Siberian prisoner of war camp and forced into hard labor. By the time he arrives in Japan twelve years later, Mamiya is convinced that nothing remains of his life but an empty shell. He teaches social studies at a rural high school for the next thirty years. Mr. Mamiya is a bachelor and has no children and no other family. When he meets Toru Okada, Mamiya knows he has found a kindred spirit. Toru understands what Mamiya says about the sublime loneliness of the well and the older gentleman comes to see Toru as a friend.

## The Uncle

Toru Okada's Uncle had, at one time, lived in the same Setagaya house as Toru and Kumiko; in fact, it is Toru's uncle who suggests they rent the cozy little place. An uncle on his mother's side, Toru's favorite relative is the black sheep of the family. Nonetheless, they all have to admit that the uncle has a magic touch when it comes to making money in business. Actually, the magic touch is more "a talent for finding capable people to work for him" than anything else (115). The uncle attributes much of his success to choosing the right person for the right job and then paying the person well. After working ten years as a radio announcer, Toru's uncle quits and opens a bar on the Ginza in Tokyo. The bar, much like everything else his uncle puts his hand to, becomes extremely popular. The uncle marries a divorcée when he is in his mid-forties. They have a comfortable life, earning a living from rental properties, the bars and restaurants and of course, stock dividends. The uncle and his wife have no children.



Toru's uncle knows a lot about the history of their quiet neighborhood. The uncle is convinced, though, that the Miyawaki house and the lot on which it sits are both tainted in some way. The uncle is glad to tell Toru what he knows about two of the Miyawaki house's previous owners: a retired military man and an actress, both of whom meet with strange and unfortunate circumstances.

## **Noboru Wataya/Mackerel The Cat**

Noboru Wataya (aka Mackerel) The Cat disappears one day from the Okada house and is not seen again until much later in the story. Toru and Kumiko find the cat a short time after they are married. They name the cat Noboru Wataya after Kumiko's brother because both characters wear a distinctly blank look on their faces. The Okadas' cat is a rather large brown tabby with tail that is bent on the end. The cat's disappearance is significant because it heralds the beginning of a shift in Toru Okada's life. When his wife asks him to go out into the alley to look for the cat, he discovers the stone bird, meets May Kasahara and discovers the Miyawaki's well. Also around this time, Toru meets the Kano sisters and talks to the anonymous woman on the telephone. When the cat returns home, however, everything has changed. Toru renames the cat Mackerel because the cat seems to like mackerel and because Toru decides to cut ties completely with his media-darling brother-in-law Noboru Wataya. Also, the cat's former name reminds Toru of the life he had with Kumiko, which has come to an end.

## **Mr. Ushikawa The Henchman**

Ushikawa (aka "Ushi") makes his first appearance relatively late in the novel. In Book 3 Chapter 13, he breaks into Toru Okada's house and feeds the cat. He identifies himself to Toru Okada as Noboru Wataya's private secretary. In reality, Ushikawa ("ushi" = "bull", "kawa" = "river") is nothing more than a paid goon. He is a low-rent enforcer who has been granted power by a very powerful man. Ushikawa may seem self-effacing, but just below the surface is an unscrupulous, mean-spirited, little man with a nicotine habit. Ushi admits to being a wife beater. He candidly declares that he did not simply beat his wife; her kicked and threw things at her as well. Ushi's wife left him after he broke his five year-old daughter's arm for no discernible reason. His clothes are cheap and he calls himself a "bald midget" at one point (430). But regardless of his self-loathing epithets, Ushikawa is a man who is not afraid to hurt people; this is how he earns a living. Ushikawa is a bottom-feeder and an opportunist. He uses people's revulsion to his own advantage. Ushi knows he is ugly; he knows he is violent and will say as much to anyone who will listen. The most frightening thing about Ushikawa is his absolute lack of a soul.

## **The Miyawaki Family**

Kojiro Miyawaki lived with his wife and two daughters in a quiet section of Setagaya in Tokyo. Miyawaki owned a very successful restaurant chain and for a time, they enjoyed





a comfortable lifestyle. The story goes that Kojiro lived with his wife Natsuko and daughters who were fourteen years-old and college-age at the time. Everyone who knew the Miyawaki family described them as a happy people living a very serene life. They were active and busy. They often took ski trips in the winter. In 1983, the Miyawakis lost their home and were under crushing debt and being pursued by non-bank lenders. May Kasahara remembers seeing lots of clothes drying outside. It seems to May Kasahara that Mrs. Miyawaki sincerely enjoyed doing the laundry. While staying at an inn in another town, Miyawaki strangled his younger daughter, Yukie, with a belt. Afterwards, Kojiro and Natsuko Miyawaki hanged themselves. Their older daughter was never found. People in the neighborhood call the former Miyawaki house "The Hanging House." The story of the Miyawakis is just one in a long line of eerie tales of previous owners meeting similarly weird and sinister ends.

## The Man With the Guitar Case

Kumiko has an abortion while Toru Okada is on business in Sapporo. Toru Okada goes to a bar to have a beer and a bite to eat and a young man sings and plays guitar on a small stage. The young man plays a trick on the audience when he makes them believe that he has burned his palm over a candle flame. Years later, Toru recognizes the young man walking in the area of Shinjuku station and decides to follow him. The man walks briskly along, carrying his guitar case; his steps and his stride are constant and he moves with ease. The man never looks back at Toru and never gives any sign that he knows he someone is watching him. Their sojourn comes to an end in an abandoned wood frame apartment house in a sketchy part of Tokyo. The young man surprises Toru when the man attacks Toru with a baseball bat. Toru grabs the bat from him and hits the man with it several times, before beating the man unconscious with his fists. After discovering that the guitar case is empty, Toru takes the bat and leaves the young man lying on the floor, bleeding and smiling. Toru never sees the young man with the guitar case again.

## Nutmeg Akasaka

The daughter of the chief veterinarian at the Hsin-ching zoo during World War II, Nutmeg Akasaka and her mother were safely transported to Japan in 1945. Standing on the deck of the civilian transport ship heading for Nutmeg witnesses the surfacing of an American submarine during the sea voyage home. She works her way up in the world of fashion design and merchandising, marries a successful designer like herself, and together they build a tidy, chic empire. Nutmeg and her husband are dynamic, passionate designers but after ten years of marriage, he is having extra-marital affairs with a variety of women. One of the women was seen checking into an exclusive hotel one evening. The next day, her husband was found brutally murdered and mutilated in the hotel room. No one was ever convicted of the crime. Nutmeg still has no idea who killed her husband or why. Her mother has long since passed away. No one can say for certain what happened to her father after she and her mother left for Japan and a new life. Now she lives with her son, Cinnamon, who is also her personal assistant among



other things. Nutmeg discovers that she has a special power to heal wealthy, well-connected women of physical and psycho-spiritual maladies, some of which are chronic. Her uncanny ability to help them is rooted in an extraordinary will to illuminate what others often keep hidden away

## Cinnamon Akasaka

A young man in his early twenties, Cinnamon is Nutmeg's only son. He has beautiful features and fine hands like his mother. His wardrobe is daring and fashionable without being garish or showy. Cinnamon is a person who loves order and simplicity. Everything, as far as he is concerned, should be accomplished with a minimum wasted movement and as much style and artistry possible. He has tamed his world and now life looks and feels and sounds and smells the way he wants. Cinnamon plans everything out thoroughly from the first step to the last. He has a disciplined, complex mind that he uses to protect himself and his mother from suspicion and persecution. The young man also loves fine automobiles. He currently drives a black Mercedes 500SEL with tinted windows.

## Mr. and Mrs. Wataya

Mr. and Mrs. Wataya are Kumiko's parents. Neither of them has a very close relationship with their daughter. Rather, they focus their attention more on their only son and oldest child, Noboru Wataya. After their eldest daughter commits suicide (something they try to hide), the mother and father take every available opportunity to talk about how beautiful and intelligent the daughter was. Everyone loved her, Kumiko would later say. Mr. Wataya, and by extension his superficial wife, are opposed to Kumiko's marriage to Toru Okada. The Watayas are upper-class snobs, concerned with being part of the Japanese elite. Mr. Wataya says that Japanese society is dog-eat-dog and that only the strong survive. Furthermore, he believes that the only way to enjoy the good life is to get to the top of the heap as quickly as one can, sparing no one's feelings along the way. Ambition impresses Mr. Wataya. Ambition is what he and his wife expect from Noboru Wataya. Ambition is one thing, according to Kumiko's father, that Toru sorely lacks. Mr. Wataya supports a rigid class system and feels that the only people who matter are the ones in the upper echelons of society.

Mrs. Wataya's opinions are her husband's opinions. Too vain and vapid to formulate her own thoughts, she simply borrows whatever her husband thinks and says. Mrs. Wataya's father was a high-ranking official of some sort, and she was raised wanting for nothing. She is preoccupied with her looks.

## Boris the Manskiner

Boris Gromov, also known as Boris the Manskiner, is at one time a high-ranking Russian officer in China. Following some disgrace, he is sent to a hard labor camp in Siberia where he once again encounters Lieutenant Mamiya. Boris is a former darling of



a man named Baria, a member of the Stalinist government's inner circle. He earned the nickname "Manskinner" because of his taste for torture, specifically watching men skinned alive. Lieutenant Mamiya and Yamamoto were captured during a failed mission on the border of Outer Mongolia. On Boris' orders, a very large Mongol soldier with a curved-blade knife removed all the skin from Yamamoto's body. Lieutenant Mamiya kept his eyes closed the entire time but he could still hear the man screaming in agony.

## Yamamoto

Yamamoto is a civilian working with the Kwantung Army near the Chinese-Outer Mongolian border. He is the head of a secret mission and the small military detail assigned to accompany Yamamoto, which includes Corporal Oishi Honda and Lieutenant Tokutaro Mamiya. . Yamamoto is said to have experience negotiating covert situations and working in the shadows. The military men do not trust Yamamoto and they are not sure if he cares whether they live or die. Not long after leaving on the mission, Yamamoto leaves on horseback camp one evening with another soldier. He tells the lieutenant to go back to headquarters if he does not return within thirty-six hours. Yamamoto makes it back to camp and the men plan to ford the Khalkha river that evening. In the interim, Yamamoto tells Mamiya that he has a letter in his possession which cannot fall into enemy hands. At one point, he orders Mamiya to kill him if they should be captured. Mamiya agrees that he will shoot Yamamoto if that time comes. Protecting that letter is their first priority. They are captured by a Soviet-Mongolian detail headed by Boris Gromov, also known as "Boris the Manskinner" (544). Yamamoto is murdered; a Mongolian skins him alive. After Yamamoto dies, Boris leaves, Corporal Honda disappears, and Mamiya is dropped down a dry well and urinated on by the Mongolians.

## Mr. Ichikawa

Mr. Ichikawa is a realtor who knows the history of Setagaya better than just about anyone. He is an older man with forty years' worth of experience in the buying and selling of homes, lots and various other properties. Mr. Ichikawa belongs to the same era as Mr. Honda, Lieutenant Mamiya and Nutmeg Akasaka. He and Mr. Honda are from the same social strata; whereas, Nutmeg and the lieutenant belong to the middle and upper tiers of Japanese society, respectively. Toru goes to the real estate to have a chat with Mr. Ichikawa on his uncle's advice. He finds out that Mr. Ichikawa is more than happy to expound on what he knows about the area. Having been around so long, Mr. Ichikawa knows about the skeletons in people's closets. Ichikawa also knows that the price of the Miyakawi property will eventually come down. The older man gives no obvious clue as to whether or not he believes the house is jinxed, but he does ask if Toru knows that no owner of that house ever fares well. Mr. Ichikawa is no fool; he knows that business is business and does nothing to dissuade Toru from wanting to purchase the so-called haunted property.





# Objects/Places

## Clothes

The author pays microscopic attention to what the characters in the novel choose to wear. Every character is, to one extent or another, defined according to his/her wardrobe. For instance, Toru Okada's fashion choices speak to his unemployment and his position as a man who is more concerned with what is found inside him rather than on the outside. It is not until he joins Nutmeg and Cinnamon that his fashion landscape changes. Malta Kano's red vinyl hat becomes an unusual article of clothing only when the author describes the other articles in her outfit. The reader becomes more familiar with Kumiko's personality with each article of clothing mentioned. Her clothes reflect a love of order and simplicity. Kumiko's clothes are uncomplicated and tailored. They are well-made, carefully chosen, and Toru's wife takes diligent care of her clothes; she spends a good deal of time going to the dry cleaners.

Nutmeg Akasaka and her son Cinnamon are of particular interest considering the question of clothes in *THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE*. It is obvious from Toru's first meeting with Nutmeg that the woman lives and breathes fashion. Not simply fashion, however, she is passionate about style, hers and everyone else's. This passion for style is part of her personality. Nutmeg believes that everyone should dress with taste, no matter what the cost. This passion is also the motivation for Nutmeg purchasing all new clothes for Toru Okada. Nutmeg wants him to look presentable, not necessarily to the world but to her. Cinnamon's fashion perfection comes from a need to control his environment. He obviously has very distinct tastes which play out as part of his identity. Since the young man does not speak, his outward appearance literally makes a statement. Without words, sight becomes extremely important.

## A Deep Well

*THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE* figures two wells very prominently: the well behind the abandoned Miyawaki home, and the well in which Lieutenant Mamiya spends three days before he is rescued by Corporal Honda. Mr. Honda advises Toru Okada to go to the bottom of the deepest well when he needs to go down. For Toru and Lieutenant Mamiya, the depth of a well is comforting. Mamiya is dumbfounded by the presence in the light of the sun that shines to the bottom of his well each day for no more than a few minutes. The characters respond to this kind of isolation; it comforts and reassures them in some way. Toru goes to the bottom of the Miyawaki's well to get away from his life and think. After a time, going down the well becomes as familiar to him as life on the surface. The well becomes a place he is able to navigate at his own pace. He takes his time to discover things about the well that can only be known from the inside. Being in the well also opens new states of existence to the character. The close, dark, dry place is his portal for going through the wall. Lieutenant Mamiya tells Toru about leaving a part



of himself in the bottom of the well during the War. The man who visits Toru with the empty box is an empty shell who works a job for thirty years and finds no joy in living.

## Toru Okada's Dirty Tennis Shoes

Toru Okada wears dirty tennis shoes because he does not think about shoes. The character is unconcerned with his footwear because other things capture his attention without warning. Most recently, his wife's Kumiko leaves him feeling confused and unmoored. Also, the cat Noboru Wataya is nowhere in the vicinity. Things in his life begin changing before Toru has an opportunity to purchase more acceptable footwear. Telephone calls, a teenage girl and other strangers are symbols of change. Toru, more than other characters, can be identified as an anti-consumer in this novel. Nutmeg Akasaka buys him a new wardrobe. Not because Toru Okada cannot choose clothes for himself; he simply is free of having to care. No longer bound to an office, he is no longer responsible for a suit and tie and matching socks. Toru Okada can focus on getting to the bottom of things in his life. And since the feet have everything to do with movement, one could say the tennis shoes are part of Toru Okada's first self, the self which is deserted by both his wife and cat who leave for parts unknown.

## Swimming Goggles

Typically, swimming goggles help swimmers to see underwater. They function to clarify what one sees in the pool, to protect the eyes, to illuminate. In *THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE*, however, goggles are used to prevent the characters from seeing what is in front of them. This negative use of the goggles creates a paradox for the reader. What does it mean that something used to show the truth is now used to keep the light out? For example, the first time Toru goes to the Akasaka Fashion Design company, Cinnamon places swimming goggles on his eyes just before Nutmeg visits him in the "fitting room" (pg. 366). The purpose of the goggles in this instance is to keep the client off guard and off balance. At this point in the narrative, Okada says there is a thick substance over the goggles that prevents him from seeing anything. He goes on to remark that, along with being sightless for the moment, his sense of smell is also slightly out of kilter (367). This darkness is different from what Toru deals with at the bottom of the well. The darkness he experiences in the "fitting room" is meant to deprive. The darkness at the bottom of the well is intended to heighten the sensual experience; the bottom of the well becomes an expansive mental space in the dark. Darkness adds texture to the close environment.

## Telephones

For most of book one, a telephone call signifies some kind of change in Toru Okada's life. The first few paragraphs of Book 1 Chapter 1 entail a series of phone calls from women. The first to call one morning is a woman claiming she and Toru know each other. The calls from the unknown woman become more sexual each time. Next, he



receives a call from his wife asking him to look for the cat. His search leads him into the alley and to May Kasahara's backyard. Toru also ignores the phone several times in the first chapter of Book 1. In Book 1 Chapter 3, Toru talks to Malta Kano on the telephone for the first time. After this conversation, he meets her in the tearoom of the Pacific Hotel. This marks the first appearance of the red vinyl hat. These two calls, and the ones in between, mark instances during which the main protagonist's life makes a shift and the reader gains a broader view of the character's progression. The telephone is the first communication technology presented in the novel. In some ways, Toru's telephone conversations end with more questions than answers. He has several very short, almost accidental, telephone calls. For instance, Malta Kano calls him and then tells Toru she will call him again later. These misfires contribute to the reader's understanding of the imprecision of the medium.

## Computers

Computers are representative of Toru Okada's second self. His second self is the self that thrives and evolves at the bottom of the well. The computer is a medium with some secrecy involved. Without a camera, it is possible to lie about one's identity on the Internet. Toru's second self is also closely connected to Cinnamon and Nutmeg. In Book 3 Chapter 22, after a conversation with Ushikawa, Toru uses Cinnamon's passwords and chats with Kumiko on the Residence computer. Even though the text shows Toru's words, the starkness of the computer type creates distance between the characters and their feelings. The clunky block letters let the reader know how uncomfortable the conversation is for both Toru and his wife. Communicating in cyberspace is emblematic of the landscape of Toru's current situation; it is large with possibilities, but riddled with intangibles. This situation does, however, give Toru something to focus on besides his memories of Kumiko. Instead of brooding, he turns his attention to finding her and bringing her back.

## May Kasahara's Boom Box

May Kasahara is never without her boom box. In her first meeting with Toru, the boom box is in the backyard playing rock music. May Kasahara does not realize it, but she and Toru Okada have music in common. Frequently in her letters from the factory complex, May will tell Toru what is playing in the background while she spills her thoughts and feelings onto paper at odd hours of the morning. One particular day, Bruce Springsteen is playing in the background. The music connects the characters in that Toru and May do not take music for granted. Toru comments frequently on the classical music that plays on his radio. Sometimes, May Kasahara listens to her music full-blast when she is in the dormitory alone on weekends. The boom box gives her an outlet; sound resonates in the body. May Kasahara delineates herself by the music she listens to.



## The Moon

Toru Okada often has occasion to talk about the moon. He talks about the moon and how it affects his life via his wife's menstrual cycles, which "corresponded perfectly with the waxing and waning of the moon" (28). The moon creates shadows where there are none during the day. Toru tells Kumiko one especially difficult day that when the moon is full horses' brain waves become more susceptible to disturbance. Many horses, it turns out, actually die when the moon is full. The character demystifies Kumiko's periods for himself and thereby adjusts himself to a biological reality. Even though he has all the information he needs, he still can tell for himself that the moon's influence is otherworldly.

Another example of the moon's appeal is the boy's dream in Book 2 Chapter 3, "What Happened in the Night" (357). One late night in autumn, the boy is awake and listening to an unusual-sounding bird. He looks out the window at a full moon shining in the sky. Everything in the yard looks different under the stark cool light of the moon. The trees and the stones in the garden take on an unfriendly quality at night. Eventually, though, the moonlight becomes the boy's ally as he watches two men behaving strangely beneath the pine tree not far from his upstairs bedroom window.

## The Wind-Up Bird and Other Names

Names play an integral part in this novel. Certain characters in the novel are known by very distinct aliases: for instance Creta Kano and Malta Kano. Other characters are known in the text by more than one name or no name at all such as Mr. Honda and Corporal Oiishi Honda or the anonymous woman on the telephone. In another example, Toru Okada makes up the name "wind-up bird" as part of his description of an extremely unique bird cry that he hears coming from behind his house one day (9). According to Toru, the wind-up bird is a bird that sounds as though it is winding the world's spring. The bird's call insinuates itself into several other characters' narratives as well. The young boy who dreams in "What Happened in the Night" hears it late one evening and he gets up out of bed (357). May Kasahara gives Toru and Kumiko the nickname "Mr. and Mrs. Wind-Up Bird." It is also the title of Cinnamon's computer chronicle. Through some inexplicable means, Nutmeg's son gives his creation Toru Okada's nickname. This provides a wonderful juxtaposition for Kumiko and Toru naming the cat Noboru Wataya, after Kumiko's brother even though the cat is later renamed Mackerel.

## Nutmeg Akasaka's Gold Cigarette Lighter

Nutmeg is a woman who is accustomed to fine things. The cigarette lighter she uses with her Virginia Slims is gold and sleek. Nutmeg shows that she appreciates wealth, hence, the gold. Also, she uses the same lighter all the time. This tells the reader that Nutmeg Akasaka is also responsible about her wealth. She is never without the gold lighter because she knows the value of quality goods and keeps track of her valued possessions. The lighter could represent a number of things from consumption to greed,



but in this case, it figures more prominently as a metaphor for control. As long as Nutmeg is in charge, things work her way. She is careful about her appearance; the lighter is a detail that might miss a lesser woman's eye. The character wants Toru to know she is in charge. Gold is a color associated with royalty and opulence. Nutmeg's statement is bold but understated: wealth is worth holding onto.



# Themes

## Desire

In a significant way, desire is part of the foundation of the novel. Each character is led to a specific place or series of places in accordance with his/her quality and level of desire. Toru, Kumiko, Noboru Wataya, Creta Kano, just to name a few, are all victims of their desires. Kumiko's desire for sexual adventure leads her to a venereal disease and a feeling of unfathomable self-hatred. May Kasahara's fatal motorcycle accident can be attributed directly to her desire to indulge some uncontrollable part of herself. Noboru Wataya has a desire for power in widening circles. His desire manifests itself through incestuous behaviors with his two younger sisters. One sister commits suicide; the other sister remains bound to Noboru Wataya and still remains in danger of being completely enslaved to him.

Desire is what motivates Nutmeg Akasaka to become a fashion designer. It is what motivates her consumption of goods and services. She wants to look good; she wants to enjoy her money. Her son shows the same characteristics. He has become acquainted with a certain way of living that is entirely contingent on making and wisely distributing money. Mother and son both delight in things that please the eye, being as it is one seat of desire. Toru Okada's desire for an alternate/altering space is what takes him to the bottom of the well. He becomes increasingly more motivated to spend time in the mysterious darkness, trying to move through a wall he can barely see with his eyes. Toru also desires his wife's return.

Lieutenant Mamiya desires confession and completion. He tells his story to Toru because he wants to unburden himself and perhaps be given absolution for witnessing the War. Saying what happens is vital to growth and the lieutenant chooses Toru out of a sense of trust and friendship. Mamiya wants someone to understand the power of his days in the well. Furthermore, younger man is willing to accept the gift of narrative the lieutenant gives him. Mamiya's written letters provide something concrete that Toru can refer to whenever he chooses.

## Silence

The most obvious example of silence in the text is Cinnamon. He chooses verbal silence over audible communication. Somehow, this character has relinquished his right to speak. Life becomes a pantomime for the young man and the eye of the person must remain on Cinnamon or risk missing an important part of the instructions on where to go or what to do. He spends his days being looked at. He is beautiful and handsomely dressed. He stops speaking before beginning school. His choice is startling at first, but Nutmeg and her husband learn to live with his silence. Cinnamon would rather be visually appraised than heard.



Another pivotal silence occurs when Toru meets Malta Kano and Noboru Wataya at the tearoom of the Pacific Hotel. Toru tells him the story of the shitty island after which Noboru Wataya stands up and attempts to say something in response but stays quiet. Before leaving Malta and Toru at the table, Noboru's face turns several different blotchy shades of red. Kumiko's brother holds his tongue and walks away. One morning Toru smells new cologne behind his wife's ears. She ignores his comment, saying she is late for work. After Kumiko leaves, he finds Christian Dior packaging in the wastebasket and becomes concerned by his wife's avoidance. He subsequently decides not to say anything about this to Kumiko.

## The Limitations of Spoken Language

Murakami's novel plays with language in each chapter. Language changes when people are face-to-face or talking to one another over a telephone. There is even specific language used in electronic and handwritten letters and eyewitness accounts. These are the devices used in this novel. Regardless of the method of transmission, however, the characters constantly talk to one another and to themselves. One kind of conversation falls into another as characters come to know one another and be known, or so they think. The characters all choose to tell their own individual stories; they all engage in revelation of some sort, and this wish to speak for oneself is well met. What lies beneath all the conversations, however, is the question of how well one human being can actually know another human being. Toru and other characters return to the matter repeatedly. Toru does not know his wife; Kumiko does not know herself; Mrs. Wataya takes her husband's views and opinion as her own without the slightest hesitation.

May Kasahara's letters are not delivered to Toru. Her communications are still in the envelopes adrift somewhere between one reality (writing the letters) and the other (reading the letters). Still, even if the letters never reach the intended destination, May Kasahara documents her life and mails it out into the world to be read by someone at a later time. She is not terribly disappointed when she learns that Toru does not receive the letters; she "looks up at heaven and moves on to the next subject" (606).





# Style

## Point of View

The majority of the novel is narrated by the main protagonist, Toru Okada; however, the author uses point of view deftly, especially in terms of the characters' use various media to communicate with one another. Kumiko, along with May Kasahara, Lieutenant Mamiya and Cinnamon Akasaka, all connect with Toru through the written word. The women and Mamiya all write him letters. Furthermore, Kumiko and Cinnamon Akasaka interact with Toru by computer. To begin, May Kasahara's letters are intended to establish closeness between two neighbors who become friends of a sort. Conversely, Kumiko's written messages are specifically intended to maintain and/or increase the distance between Toru and herself. Similarly, Lieutenant Mamiya writes letters to Toru Okada in part to provide a written eyewitness account of the Manchurian conflicts. More significant than this, however, is Mamiya's desire to share part of Japan's true history with those younger than he. The Lieutenant teaches social studies for thirty years. He approaches Toru Okada the way a teacher approaches a student. Mamiya, however, is also a man of his time. Evidence of this is the tone of his letters; they are genteel and courteous almost to a fault. This proves that Mamiya has respect for traditions which function to serve both parties. Civility is very much alive for Mr. Mamiya which draws respect from Toru Okada.

Murakami also tests the boundaries of point of view by including reprints of recent articles from local one or two local Tokyo papers (387, 422 and 481). On one hand, these newspaper articles place the characters' lives along a definite historical continuum. In other words, the characters become players in their own local history as the specific blends into the general. In this case, Toru, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, the Miyawaki family, even Noboru Wataya, become part of local lore, part of the narrative of the Setagaya section of Tokyo. This also gives the reader the benefit of having dual context for each event.

Finally, Book 3 Chapter of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* features the transcript of a computer conversation between Toru and his wife Kumiko 22 (Pgs. 486-491). Seeing the computer print gives the reader a feeling of bring privy to someone else's most private thoughts and feelings. There is, however, also a certain coldness to this point of view. First of all, the print on the page reaffirms the fact that computers are machines; they do not feel the things one types on the keyboard. Next, the computer lettering renders Toru and Kumiko's real time conversation sterile and less than warm. This is partly so because of the nature of Kumiko's side of the conversation. All she wants is for Toru to move on with his life and let go of her completely; mind, body, and soul. And to some extent, the boxy letters on the page make it more possible to sense the desperation Toru feels. The possibility of seeing Kumiko is limited to how well Toru makes his case using technology that merely gives and receives literal messages. Without the benefit of sight or touch, he is confounded by the technology he must use to speak to his beloved, damaged wife.





The only two instances featuring a neutral, omniscient narrator are Book 3 Chapters 3 and 11 ("What Happened in The Night" and "Is This Shovel a Real Shovel? What Happened in the Night: 2" found on pages 357 and 419, respectively. The narrator tells the story of the boy's dreams that center on a pine tree outside the boy's window. The omniscient narrator also adds the quality of being told a bedtime story. The neutrality of the narrator is significant in dream sequences because it does not factor in any kind of editorializing. The reader is told what happens and is then left to interpret the information in whatever way the reader deems suitable.

## Setting

The novel takes place in several different locations in and around the city of Tokyo and Japan itself. Still other events unfold in China, Mongolia and the former Soviet Union. In addition, a rather intricate group of indoor personal spaces are also at play in the novel. The most important personal space is Toru and Kumiko's moderately-priced house in the lovely area of Setagaya. They move into the house at the suggestion of Toru's uncle.

A second private, indoor space in the novel is the Residence, which includes Cinnamon's office and the "fitting room," where the upper crust women go for their special "treatments" with either Toru Okada or Nutmeg Akasaka. Constructed on the site of the former "Hanging House," the Residence resembles a concrete bomb shelter on the outside but inside it is elegant, efficient, and most importantly, the Residence is impenetrable.

Also there is Room 208 from Toru's recurring dream. The hotel room is usually dark. A bottle of Cutty Sark, two glasses and an ice bucket are permanent fixtures in the room. There is a bed with a chair nearby. A waiter leads Toru Okada to this room.

Finally, the Akasaka Fashion Design is located in a high-rise building. The offices here are the same as the ones found at the Residence. There is a "fitting room" here as well as an outer waiting room and an office for Cinnamon.

A private outdoor space is May Kasahara's backyard. It is here Toru first meets her, working on her tan, listening to rock music. May claims that all the cats in the neighborhood pass through her backyard.

The "alley" behind the Okadas' house is a mysterious space. Blocked at both ends, the alley is really nothing more than a narrow pathway between several houses built in the mid-twentieth century. Neighbors blocked the ends to prevent strangers from wandering between the houses. The alley is a no-man's land that neutralizes the character's transitions from one space to another.

Shinjuku station is where Toru Okada goes to watch people and empty his mind. Each day for nearly two weeks, he situates himself on a bench and observes people walking by. This is where he first meets Nutmeg Akasaka and where he notices the young man with the guitar passing by on foot.



Dunkin' Donuts is Toru Okada's restaurant of choice while watching people at the station. Most often, his lunch consists of one doughnut and a cup of coffee.

## Language and Meaning

Overall, the language used in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is spare and economical. There are no long, drawn out passages, and Murakami uses descriptive passages mostly in the service of individual characters' letters or memories. One must also consider that this novel was originally written in Japanese. Reading a text in translation presents its own set of challenges. Since word-for-word translation is never possible, the English-language version becomes a kind of "representation" of the novel in Japanese. That being said, the translated version does maintain the novel's fluid pacing and moves smoothly from chapter to chapter. Murakami's use of poetry is also an interesting phenomenon. More than once, Mr. Honda will speak in haiku-like verse. An example of this can be found on page 51. The old man says, "I am me and / He is him: / Autumn eve," and "I am he and / He is me: / Spring nightfall." The reader will notice that Mr. Honda's words are formatted like poetry, with quotes and slashes separating the lines. This arrangement on the page also helps the reader to hear Mr. Honda's voice as it pauses between thoughts. Also, the dialogue throughout the novel is pared-down. Characters' conversations do not continue for pages and pages. The characters' remembrances and memories occupy a good portion of the novel. In these passages, descriptions take precedence over conversation.

The word choices seem appropriate depending on which character happens to be narrating. May Kasahara, like any teenager, uses words like "weird" and phrases like "ya know?" Lieutenant Mamiya, however, uses language that is much more formal, more reminiscent of a Japan that no longer exists for many. In writing, his phrasing is deliberate and the lieutenant shows a familiarity with social niceties belong to a past preceding Toru's parents. Kumiko's language, however, is always clipped generally shorter sentences. The conversation she types to Toru on the computer uses the same kind of terse language.

The language of the novel is also decidedly uncomplicated. None of the characters use jargon of any sort. One exception to this is Noboru Wataya's use of "sexual economics" and "excretory economics." These two phrases reveal a certain amount of cynicism on the author's part. The phrases also serve to inform the reader of academia's infamously elitist tendency to invent its own exclusive and excluding, vocabulary. Spinning straw out of gold, Noboru Wataya invents two terms that have meaning only for a select few.

## Structure

THE WIND-UP BIRD CHRONICLE is divided into three books. Each book covers a specific period of time in Toru Okada's life. Book 1 takes place during June and July of 1984. Book 2 moves from July to October 1984. Book 3 focuses on October 1984 through December of 1985. Each book is divided into chapters that average 7 or 8



pages. Some chapters are longer than others. Book 3 covers the longest period of time and has a total of thirty-nine chapters. Each chapter heading gives the reader an idea of what to look for in that section. For example, Book 2, Chapter 9 is titled "The Well and Stars" and "How the Ladder Disappeared." Using chapter headings as clues, the reader becomes a detective, as the non-linear story line weaves its way through linear time. In a way, the author leads the reader through the narrative. Chapter headings such as the ones Murakami uses also lend structure and order to the characters' chaotic lives. That is to say no matter what occurs in the chapter, no matter how fantastic or terrifying, there is a time stamp affixed to it by the author. Keeping a record of precisely when something happens guarantees, in a way, the reality of the event. Many of Toru Okada's experiences are very similar to others such as the recurring dream he has about Room 208. In a life like Toru Okada's, timing is extremely important. The three books are representative of the three selves of Toru Okada. The chapter headings let the reader know what the main protagonist's process is; the headings offer a kind of road map to the character's life. When compiling a chronicle, "when" becomes a priority. The demarcation of time is important when one is keeping a record which could prove guilt or innocence; good or evil.