

South of the Border, West of the Sun: A Novel

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South of the Border, West of the Sun is the beguiling story of a past rekindled, and one of Haruki Murakami's most touching novels.

Hajime has arrived at middle age with a loving family and an enviable career, yet he feels incomplete. When a childhood friend, now a beautiful woman, shows up with a secret from which she is unable to escape, the fault lines of doubt in Hajime's quotidian existence begin to give way. Rich, mysterious, and quietly dazzling, in South of the Border, West of the Sun the simple arc of one man's life becomes the exquisite literary terrain of Murakami's remarkable genius.

In South of the Border, West of the Sun, the arc of an average man's life from childhood to middle age, with its attendant rhythms of success and disappointment, becomes the kind of exquisite literary conundrum that is Haruki Murakami's trademark. The plot is simple: Hajime meets and falls in love with a girl in elementary school, but he loses touch with her when his family moves to another town. He drifts through high school, college, and his 20s, before marrying and settling into a career as a successful bar owner. Then his childhood sweetheart returns, weighed down with secrets: `<blockquote>` When I went back into the bar, a glass and ashtray remained where she had been. A couple of lightly crushed cigarette butts were lined up in the ashtray, a faint trace of lipstick on each. I sat down and closed my eyes. Echoes of music faded away, leaving me alone. In that gentle darkness, the rain continued to fall without a sound. `</blockquote>` Murakami eschews the fantastic elements that appear in many of his other novels and stories, and readers hoping for a glimpse of the Sheep Man will be disappointed. Yet South of the Border, West of the Sun is as rich and mysterious as anything he has written. It is above all a complex, moving, and honest meditation on the nature of love, distilled into a work with the crystal clarity of a short story. A Nat "King" Cole song, a figure on a crowded street, a face pressed against a car window, a handful of ashes drifting down a river to the sea are woven together into a story that refuses to arrive at a simple conclusion. The classic love triangle may seem like a hackneyed theme for a writer as talented as Murakami, but in his quietly dazzling way, he bends us to his own unique geometry. --Simon Leake

Born in 1951 in an affluent Tokyo suburb, Hajime -- beginning in Japanese -- has arrived at middle age wanting for almost nothing. The postwar years have brought him a fine marriage, two daughters, and an enviable career as the proprietor of two jazz clubs. Yet a nagging sense of inauthenticity about his success threatens Hajime's happiness. And a boyhood memory of a wise, lonely girl named Shimamoto clouds his heart.

In South of the Border, West of the Sun, the simple arc of a man's life -- with its attendant rhythms of success and disappointment -- becomes the exquisite literary tableau of Haruki Murakami's most haunting work. When Shimamoto shows up one rainy night, now a breathtaking beauty with a secret from which she is unable to escape, the fault lines of doubt in Hajime's quotidian existence begin to give way. And the details of stolen moments past and present -- a Nat King Cole melody, a face pressed against a window, a handful of ashes drifting downriver to the sea -- threaten to undo him completely. Rich, mysterious, quietly dazzling, South of the Border, West of the Sun is Haruki Murakami's wisest and most compelling work.

Other Books

Murakami Haruki and Our Years of Pilgrimage. This book is a timely and expansive volume

on Murakami Haruki, arguably Japan's most high-profile contemporary writer. With contributions from prominent Murakami scholars, this book approaches the works of Murakami Haruki through interdisciplinary perspectives, discussing their significance and value through the lenses of history; geography; politics; gender and sexuality; translation; and literary influence and circulation. Together the chapters provide a multifaceted assessment on Murakami's literary oeuvre in the last four decades, vouching for its continuous importance in understanding the world and Japan in contemporary times. The book also features exclusive material that includes the cultural critic Katō Norihiro's final work on Murakami - his chapter here is one of the few works ever translated into English - to interviews with Murakami and discussions from his translators and editors, shedding light not only on Murakami's works as literature but as products of cross-cultural exchanges. Murakami Haruki and *Our Years of Pilgrimage* will prove a valuable resource for students and scholars of Japanese studies, comparative and world literature, cultural studies, and beyond.

?, ?, ?, ?, ? . The Murakami pilgrimage: A guide to the real-life places of Haruki Murakami's fiction. ... New York: Vintage Books. ... In: Murakami H. *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman: Twenty-Four Stories*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 273-290. Murakami ..."