## MURAKAMI



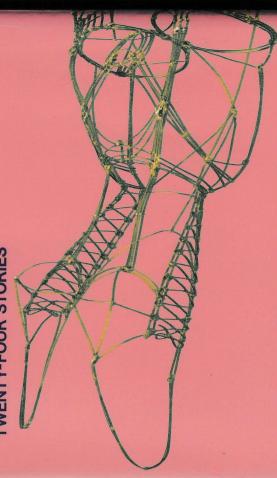
BLIND WILLOW, SLEEPING WOMAN

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## めくらかなぎと眠る女

## な上帯極

TWENTY-FOUR STORIES



ニューヨーク発24の短篇コレクション

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**本願**據

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t started on a perfectly beautiful Sunday afternoon in July - the very first Sunday afternoon in July. Two or three chunks of cloud floated white and tiny in a distant corner of the sky, like well-formed punctuation marks placed with exceptional care. Unobstructed by anything at all, the light of the sun poured down on the world to its heart's content. In this kingdom of July, even the crumpled silver sphere of a chocolate sweet paper discarded on the lawn gave off a proud sparkle, like a legendary crystal at the bottom of a lake. If you stared at the scene long enough, you could tell that the sunlight enfolded yet another kind of light, like one Chinese box inside another. The inner light looked like countless grains of pollen - grains that were soft and opaque and that hung in the sky, almost motionless, until, at long last, they settled down upon the surface of the earth.

On the way home from a Sunday stroll, I had stopped in the plaza outside the picture gallery. Sitting at the edge of the

pond, my companion and I looked across the water towards the two bronze unicorns on the other shore. The long rainy season had finally ended, and a new summer breeze stirred the leaves of the oak trees, raising tiny ripples now and then on the surface of the shallow pond. Time moved like the breeze: starting and stopping, stopping and starting. Softdrink cans shone through the clear water of the pond. To me, they looked like the sunken ruins of an ancient lost city. Before us passed a softball team in uniform, a boy on a bicycle, an old man walking his dog, a young foreigner in jogging shorts. The breeze carried snatches of music from a large portable radio on the grass: a sugary song of love either lost or about to be. I seemed to recognise the tune, but I couldn't be sure. It may have just sounded like one I knew. Half listening, I could feel my bare arms soaking up the sunlight - soundlessly, softly, gently. Every once in a while, I would bring my arms up to face level and stretch them straight out. Summer was here.

Why a poor aunt, of all things, should have grabbed my heart on a Sunday afternoon like this, I have no idea. There was no poor aunt to be seen in the vicinity, nothing to make me imagine her existence. She came to me, nonetheless, and then she was gone. If only for some hundredth part of a second, she had been in my heart. And when she moved on, she left a strange, human-shaped emptiness in her place. It felt as if someone had zipped past a window and vanished. You run to the window and stick your head out, but no one is there.

まるで窓の外を誰かがさっと通り過ぎてそのまま見えなくなって そんな日曜日の午後に、 い込まれていくのを感じることができた。 まわりには貧乏な根母さんの姿はなかったし、貧乏な叔母さんの存在 まっすぐのばしてみた。 なぜよりによって貧乏な根母さんが僕の心を捉えたのか、 貧乏な根母さんはやってきて、 僕はぼ たしかに聞いたという確信は持てなかっ んやりとその音楽に耳を傾けてい 11 そして彼女はそのあとに不思議 たる しょロディーの いての 歌 18 ボップ を横切 太陽の光が僕のむきだしの両腕に それはただ別の何 どこかで前 な人型の空白を残していった。 を想像させる何、 に乗 僕は時 に聞いた覚えがあるよ 僕には見当もつかな 分の一秒かのあいだ って微か かさえなかった 折腕を顔 かに似ているだ に聞 こえて Ijíj

柔らかい花粉だった。 別の光があることがわかった。 誇らし気に光り輝 空に白く浮かんでいた。 丸めて捨てられたチョコレー 葉を微かに震わせ、 初の日曜日 そもそもの始まりは、 向い側にある 小さな雲の塊りが 一角獣の銅像を眺めていた。 絵画館前の広場に寄った。 浅い池の水面 太陽の光は何物にも遮られずに、 文句のつけようもなく見事に晴れあが じっと見ていると、 トの銀紙 その光の中の光は、 二つか三つ、 に時折小さな波を立 長 そして池の縁に腰を下ろし、 箱の中に箱がある仕掛 よく吟味された品の良い句読点みたいに、 い梅 まるで無数の細 Hi がやっと明けたばかりだった。 心おきなく世界に降り注いでいた。芝生の上に にあっては、 い花粉のように見えた。 けのように、 そんな風 連れと二人で何をするともな 湖底の伝説の水品のごとく 光の中にもうひとつ 新しい夏の風 ずっと遠くの 止まり、

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