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# Norwegian Wood



*Par Haruki Murakami  
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**Par Haruki Murakami : Norwegian Wood** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Norwegian Wood:

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**Description :** Description du produitFirst American PublicationThis stunning and elegiac novel by the author of the internationally acclaimed Wind-Up Bird Chronicle has sold over 4 million copies in Japan and is now available to American audiences for the first time. It is sure to be a literary event.Toru, a quiet and preternaturally serious young college student in Tokyo, is devoted to Naoko, a beautiful and introspective young woman, but their mutual passion is marked by the tragic death of their best friend years before. Toru begins to adapt to campus life and the loneliness and isolation he faces there, but Naoko finds the pressures and responsibilities of life unbearable. As she retreats further into her own world, Toru finds himself reaching out to others and drawn to a fiercely independent and sexually liberated young woman.A poignant story of one college student's romantic coming-of-age, Norwegian Wood takes us to that distant place of a young man's first, hopeless, and heroic love.

Prsentation de l'diteurWhen he hears her favourite Beatles song, Toru Watanabe recalls his first love Naoko, the girlfriend of his best friend Kizuki. Immediately he is transported back almost twenty years to his student days in Tokyo, adrift in a world of uneasy friendships, casual sex, passion, loss and desire - to a time when an impetuous young woman called Midori marches into his life and he has to choose between the future and the past.\*\* Murakami's new novel is coming \*\*

**COLORLESS TSUKURU TAZAKI AND HIS YEARS OF PILGRIMAGE** 'The reason why death had such a hold on Tsukuru Tazaki was clear. One day his four closest friends, the friends he'd known for a long time, announced that they did not want to see him, or talk with him, ever again'.comIn 1987, when *Norwegian Wood* was first published in Japan, it promptly sold more than 4 million copies and transformed Haruki Murakami into a pop-culture icon. The horrified author fled his native land for Europe and the United States, returning only in 1995, by which time the celebrity spotlight had found some fresher targets. And now he's finally authorized a translation for the English-speaking audience, turning to the estimable Jay Rubin, who did a fine job with his big-canvas production *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. Readers of Murakami's later work will discover an affecting if atypical novel, and while the author himself has denied the book's autobiographical import--"If I had simply written the literal truth of my own life, the novel would have been no more than fifteen pages long"--it's hard not to read as at least a partial portrait of the artist as a young man. *Norwegian Wood* is a simple coming-of-age tale, primarily set in 1969-70, when the author was attending university. The political upheavals and student strikes of the period form the novel's backdrop. But the focus here is the young Watanabe's love affairs, and the pain and pleasure and attendant losses of growing up. The collapse of a romance (and this is one among many!) leaves him in a metaphysical shambles: I read Naoko's letter again and again, and each time I read it I would be filled with the same unbearable sadness I used to feel whenever Naoko stared into my eyes. I had no way to deal with it, no place I could take it to or hide it away. Like the wind passing over my body, it had neither shape nor weight, nor could I wrap myself in it. This account of a young man's sentimental education sometimes reads like a cross between Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Stephen Vizinczey's *In Praise of Older Women*. It is less complex and perhaps ultimately less satisfying than Murakami's other, more allegorical work. Still, *Norwegian Wood* captures the huge expectation of youth--and of this particular time in history--for the future and for the place of love in it. It is also a work saturated with sadness, an emotion that can sometimes cripple a novel but which here merely underscores its youthful poignancy. --Mark

ThwaiteExtraitOneI was thirty-seven then, strapped in my seat as the huge 747 plunged through dense cloud cover on approach to the Hamburg airport. Cold November rains drenched the earth and lent everything the gloomy air of a Flemish landscape: the ground crew in rain gear, a flag atop a squat airport building, a BMW billboard. So-Germany again.Once the plane was on the ground, soft music began to flow from the ceiling speakers: a sweet orchestral cover version of the Beatles' "Norwegian Wood." The melody never failed to send a shudder through me, but this time it hit me harder than ever.I bent forward in my seat, face in hands to keep my skull from splitting open. Before long one of the German stewardesses approached and asked in English if I were sick. "No," I said, "just dizzy." "Are you sure?" "Yes, I'm sure. Thanks." She smiled and left, and the music changed to a Billy Joel tune. I straightened up and looked out the plane window at the dark clouds hanging over the North Sea, thinking of what I had lost in the course of my life: times gone forever, friends who had died or disappeared, feelings I would never know again.The plane reached the gate. People began unlatching their seatbelts and pulling baggage from the storage bins, and all the while I was in the meadow. I could smell the grass, feel the wind on my face, hear the cries of the birds. Autumn 1969, and soon I would be twenty.The stewardess came to check on me again. This time she sat next to me and asked if I was all right. "I'm fine, thanks," I said with a smile. "Just feeling kind of blue." "I know what you mean," she said. "It happens to me, too, every once in a while." She stood and gave me a lovely smile. "Well, then, have a nice trip. Auf Wiedersehen." "Auf Wiedersehen.Eighteen years have gone by, and still I can bring back every detail of that day in the meadow. Washed clean of summer's dust by days of gentle rain, the mountains wore a deep, brilliant green. The October breeze set white fronds of head-tall grasses swaying. One long streak of cloud hung pasted across a dome of frozen blue. It almost hurt to look at that faroff sky. A puff of wind swept across the meadow and through her hair before it slipped into the woods to rustle branches and send back snatches of distant barking--a hazy sound that seemed to reach us from the doorway to another world. We heard no other sounds. We met no other people. We saw only two bright, red birds leap startled from the center of the meadow and dart into the woods. As we ambled along, Naoko spoke to me of wells.Memory is a funny thing. When I was in the scene, I hardly paid it any mind. I never stopped to think of it as something that would make a lasting impression, certainly never imagined that eighteen years later I

would recall it in such detail. I didn't give a damn about the scenery that day. I was thinking about myself. I was thinking about the beautiful girl walking next to me. I was thinking about the two of us together, and then about myself again. It was the age, that time of life when every sight, every feeling, every thought came back, like a boomerang, to me. And worse, I was in love. Love with complications. Scenery was the last thing on my mind. Now, though, that meadow scene is the first thing that comes back to me. The smell of the grass, the faint chill of the wind, the line of the hills, the barking of a dog: these are the first things, and they come with absolute clarity. I feel as if I can reach out and trace them with a fingertip. And yet, as clear as the scene may be, no one is in it. No one. Naoko is not there, and neither am I. Where could we have disappeared to? How could such a thing have happened? Everything that seemed so important back then—Naoko, and the self I was then, and the world I had then: where could they have all gone? It's true, I can't even bring back Naoko's face—not right away, at least. All I'm left holding is a background, sheer scenery, with no people up front. True, given time enough, I can bring back her face. I start joining images—her tiny, cold hand; her straight, black hair so smooth and cool to the touch; a soft, rounded earlobe and the microscopic mole just beneath it; the camel's hair coat she wore in the winter; her habit of looking straight into your eyes when asking a question; the slight trembling that would come to her voice now and then (as if she were speaking on a windy hilltop)—and suddenly her face is there, always in profile at first, because Naoko and I were always out walking together, side by side. Then she turns to me, and smiles, and tilts her head just a bit, and begins to speak, and she looks into my eyes as if trying to catch the image of a minnow that has darted across the pool of a limpid spring. I do need that time, though, for Naoko's face to appear.

And as the years have passed, the time has grown longer. The sad truth is that what I could recall in five seconds all too soon needed ten, then thirty, then a full minute—like shadows lengthening at dusk. Someday, I suppose, the shadows will be swallowed up in darkness. There is no way around it: my memory is growing ever more distant from the spot where Naoko used to stand—ever more distant from the spot where my old self used to stand. And nothing but scenery, that view of the meadow in October, returns again and again to me like a symbolic scene in a movie. Each time it appears, it delivers a kick to some part of my mind. "Wake up," it says. "I'm still here. Wake up and think about it. Think about why I'm still here." The kicking never hurts me. There's no pain at all. Just a hollow sound that echoes with each kick. And even that is bound to fade one day. At the Hamburg airport, though, the kicks were longer and harder than usual. Which is why I am writing this book. To think. To understand. It just happens to be the way I'm made. I have to write things down to feel I fully comprehend them. Let's see, now, what was Naoko talking about that day? Of course: the "field well." I have no idea whether such a well ever existed. It might have been an image or a sign that existed only inside Naoko, like all the other things she used to spin into existence inside her mind in those dark days. Once she had described it to me, though, I was never able to think of that meadow scene without the well. From that day forward, the image of a thing I had never laid eyes on became inseparably fused to the actual scene of the field that lay before me. I can go so far as to describe the well in minute detail. It lay precisely on the border where the meadow ended and the woods began—a dark opening in the earth a yard across, hidden by the meadow grass. Nothing marked its perimeter—no fence, no stone curb (at least not one that rose above ground level). It was nothing but a hole, a mouth open wide. The stones of its collar had been weathered and turned a strange muddy white. They were cracked and had chunks missing, and a little green lizard slithered into an open seam. You could lean over the edge and peer down to see nothing. All I knew about the well was its frightening depth. It was deep beyond measuring, and crammed full of darkness, as if all the world's darknesses had been boiled down to their ultimate density. "It's really, really deep," said Naoko, choosing her words with care. She would speak that way sometimes, slowing down to find the exact word she was looking for. "But no one knows where it is," she continued. "The one thing I know for sure is that it's around here somewhere." Hands thrust into the pockets of her tweed jacket, she smiled at me as if to say "It's true!" "Then it must be incredibly dangerous," I said. "A deep well, but nobody knows where it is. You could fall in and that'd be the end of you." "The end. Aaaaaaaah, splat. Finished." "Things like that must actually happen." "They do, every once in a while. Maybe once in two or three years. Somebody disappears all of a sudden, and they just can't find him. So then the people around here say, 'Oh, he fell in the field well.'" "Not a nice way to die," I said. "No, it's a terrible way to die," said Naoko, brushing a cluster of grass seed from her jacket. "The best thing would be to break your neck, but you'd probably just break your leg and then you couldn't do a thing. You'd yell at the top of your lungs, but nobody'd hear you, and you couldn't expect anybody to find you, and you'd have centipedes and spiders crawling all over you, and the bones of the ones who died before are scattered all around you, and it's dark and soggy, and way overhead there's this

tiny, tiny circle of light like a winter moon. You die there in this place, little by little, all by yourself." "Yuck, just thinking about it makes my flesh creep," I said. "Somebody should find the thing and build a wall around it." "But nobody can find it. So make sure you don't go off the path." "Don't worry, I won't." Naoko took her left hand from her pocket and squeezed my hand. "Don't you worry" she said. "You'll be O.K. You could go running all around here in the middle of the night and you'd never fall into the well. And as long as I stick with you, I won't fall in, either." "Never?" "Never!" "How can you be so sure?" "I just know," she said, increasing her grip on my hand and continuing on for a ways in silence. "I know these things. I'm always right. It's got nothing to do with logic: I just feel it. For example, when I'm really close to you like this, I'm not the least bit scared. Nothing dark or evil could ever tempt me." "Well, that answers that," I said. "All you have to do is stay with me like this all the time." "Do you mean that?" "Of course I mean it." Naoko stopped short. So did I. She put her hands on my shoulders and peered into my eyes. Deep within her own pupils a heavy, black liquid swirled in a strange whirlpool pattern. Those beautiful eyes of hers were looking inside me for a long, long time. Then she stretched to her full height and touched her cheek to mine. It was a marvelous, warm gesture that stopped my heart for a moment. "Thank you," she said. "My pleasure," I answered. "I'm so happy you said that, Really happy," she said with a sad smile. "But it's impossible." "Impossible? Why?" "It would be wrong. It would be terrible. It-" Naoko clamped her mouth shut and started walking again. I could tell that all kinds of thoughts were whirling around in her head, so rather than intrude on them I kept silent and walked by her side. "It would just be wrong-wrong for you, wrong for me," she said after a long pause. "Wrong how?" I murmured. "Don't you see? It's just not possible for one person to watch over another person for ever and ever. I mean, say we got married. You'd have to go to work during the day. Who's going to watch over me while you're away? Or say you have to go on a business trip, who's going to watch over me then? Can I be glued to you every minute of our lives? What kind of equality would there be in that? What kind of relationship would that be? Sooner or later you'd get sick of me. You'd wonder what you were doing with your life, why you were spending all your time babysitting this woman. I couldn't stand that. It wouldn't solve any of my problems." "But your problems are not going to continue for the rest of your life," I said, touching her back. "They'll end eventually. And when they do, we'll stop and think about how to go on from there. Maybe you will have to help me. We're not running our lives according to some account book. If you need me, use me. Don't you see? Why do you have to be so rigid? Relax, let your guard down. You're all tensed up so you always expect the worst. Relax your body, and the rest of you will lighten up." "How can you say that?" she asked in a voice drained of feeling. Naoko's voice alerted me to the possibility that I had said something I shouldn't have. "Tell me how you could say such a thing," she said, staring down at the ground beneath her feet. "You're not telling me anything I don't know already. 'Relax your body, and the rest of you will lighten up' What's the point of saying that to me? If I relaxed my body now, I'd fall apart. I've always lived like this, and it's the only way I know how to go on living. If I relaxed for a second, I'd never find my way back. I'd go to pieces, and the pieces would be blown away. Why can't you see that? How can you talk about watching over me if you can't see that?" I said nothing in return. "I'm confused. Really confused. And it's a lot deeper than you think. Deeper . . . darker . . . colder. But tell me something. How could you have slept with me that time? How could you have done such a thing? Why didn't you just leave me alone?" Now we were walking through the frightful silence of a pine wood. The desiccated corpses of cicadas that had died at the end of the summer littered the surface of the path, crunching beneath our shoes. As if searching for something we'd lost, Naoko and I continued slowly down the path in the woods. "I'm sorry," she said, taking my arm and shaking her head. "I didn't mean to hurt you. Try not to let what I said bother you. Really, I'm sorry. I was just angry at myself."