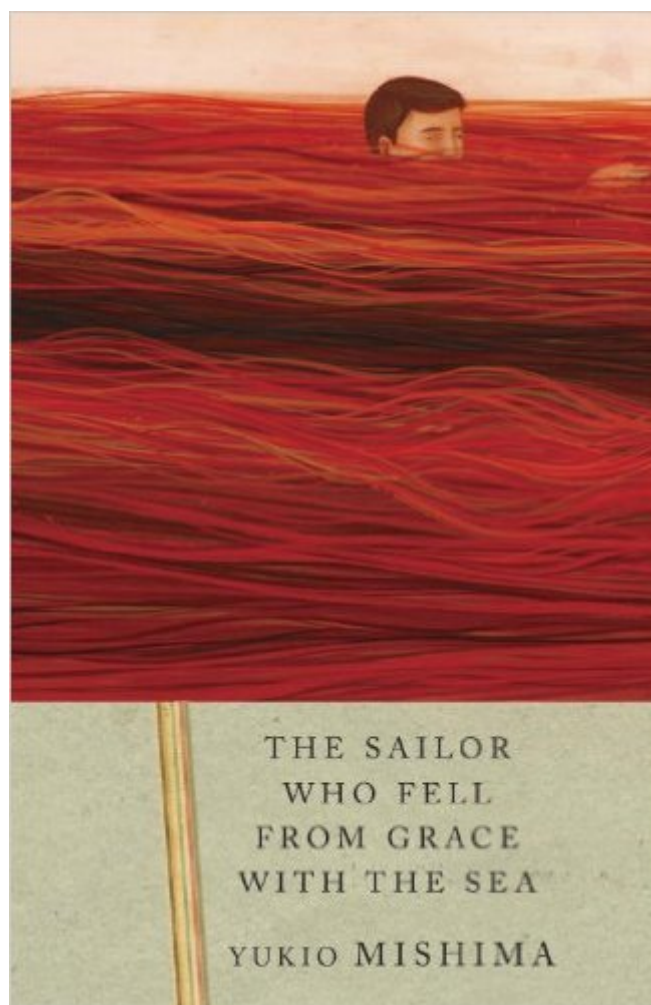


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The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With The Sea



Synopsis

Yukio Mishima's *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea* explores the vicious nature of youth that is sometimes mistaken for innocence. A Thirteen-year-old Noboru is a member of a gang of highly philosophical teenage boys who reject the tenets of the adult world "to them, adult life is illusory, hypocritical, and sentimental. When Noboru's widowed mother is romanced by Ryuji, a sailor, Noboru is thrilled. He idolizes this rugged man of the sea as a hero. But his admiration soon turns to hatred, as Ryuji forsakes life onboard the ship for marriage, rejecting everything Noboru holds sacred. Upset and appalled, he and his friends respond to this apparent betrayal with a terrible ferocity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In post-World War II Yokohama, Japan, a seaport town, the sailor Ryuji, has become disillusioned with his life at sea and finds himself craving what the land has to offer. Ultimately, he marries the widow, Fusako, the owner of a Western imports shop and mother of Noboru, an adolescent boy struggling to come to terms with his own sense of identity and place in the world. These three people, as well as the presence of the land and the sea, itself, form the central characters in Yukio Mishima's haunting masterpiece of tragedy, *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea*. As a true sailor, one whose ultimate quest is inexorably bound to the sea, Ryuji has become Noboru's hero. In Noboru's eyes, Ryuji can do no wrong--until one day Noboru sees Ryuji and Fusako making love. At that point, the young boy realizes his hero has fallen. Ryuji has lost his attachment to the sea, has failed at his quest and is becoming more and more a lover of life on land. When he finally falls under

Fusako's spell and forsakes the sea entirely, Noboru, who, himself, has come to feel that only violence can grant him the power and control he seeks, realizes that Ryuji's only salvation lies in death. *The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea* is a highly symbolic and multi-layered novel. While it is not necessary to have knowledge of Japanese culture or politics in order to enjoy the book, it does add yet another dimension of meaning to the story as well as deepen an understanding of Mishima, himself. Noboru clearly represents "traditional" Japan. His values are those of an old, patriarchal Japan, and when the story opens, Ryuji symbolizes all the values Noboru holds most dear--stoicism, strength of spirit and the Samurai tradition.

Yukio Mishima's economically composed 'The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With The Sea' (1965) is a short, grim novel that gracefully weaves together a number of complex themes and achieves its purpose without hitting a single false or awkward note. Mishima excels at depicting the constant state of tension that results from the disparity between the demands of man's social role and the truth of his inner reality; all of the book's characters struggle with at least these two conflicting elements of their psyches. Ryuji, the sailor of the novel's title, additionally lives part of his life in a very specific dream world of his own careful devising. In this fantasy, or is Ryuji perceiving a genuine layer of a deeper reality? Ryuji believes himself to be an archetypal hero fatally set aside from the rest of mankind but destined for some unimaginable, transcendent future glory. This private mythology and self-idealization provides Ryuji with a kind of charismatic halo which others find mysterious and very attractive, but difficult to specifically identify or even acknowledge. In contrast, Noboru, the young son of Ryuji's widowed fiancée Fusako, is snared between his docile, school-boy persona and his calculating, brutal, and sociopathic real self. When Ryuji and Noboru meet, the boy perceives the well-muscled sailor as a sterling example of steely, unfettered manhood, while Ryuji sees in Noboru and his mother an opportunity to make his peace with life and a chance to exchange his elitist, perhaps neurotic claims to a higher destiny for something warm and tangible.

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