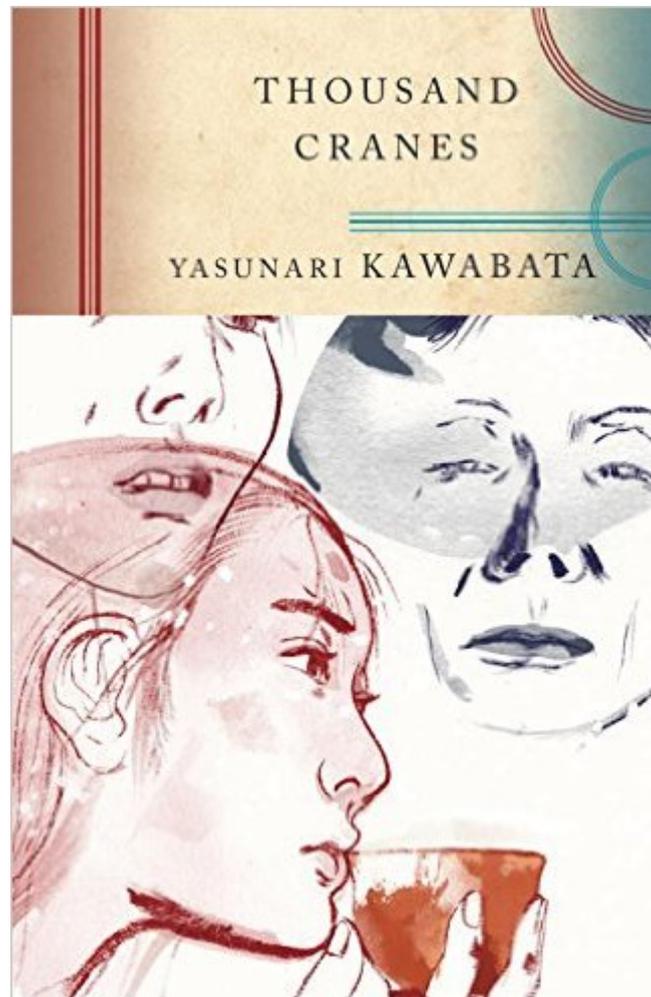


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Thousand Cranes



Synopsis

Nobel Prize winner Yasunari Kawabata's *Thousand Cranes* is a luminous story of desire, regret, and the almost sensual nostalgia that binds the living to the dead. While attending a traditional tea ceremony in the aftermath of his parents' deaths, Kikuji encounters his father's former mistress, Mrs. Ota. At first Kikuji is appalled by her indelicate nature, but it is not long before he succumbs to passion—a passion with tragic and unforeseen consequences, not just for the two lovers, but also for Mrs. Ota's daughter, to whom Kikuji's attachments soon extend. Death, jealousy, and attraction convene around the delicate art of the tea ceremony, where every gesture is imbued with profound meaning.

Book Information

Paperback: 147 pages

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Customer Reviews

Mishima Yukio, that troubled, brilliant, versatile author of numerous great novels, said that if a Japanese writer was going to receive the Nobel Prize, it should be Kawabata Yasunari. The latter did win the prize in 1968, four years before his death. Both Kawabata and Mishima should be numbered among the great writers of the 20th century, both committed suicide, and both were Japanese. That's where the similarity ends. Any novel of Kawabata's opens the deep treasure of Japanese understatement, the minimalist style of *sumi-e*, haiku, and Noh theatre. Every sentence says less than expected, but as some people like to say nowadays, "less is more." So true.

THOUSAND CRANES is brief and to many Western readers could appear overly simple and without strong flavor. To assume this would be to miss the main attraction of the novel, which, admittedly, might not be for everyone. In delicate brush strokes, the author deftly paints the picture of a complex

relationship which would have attracted Henry James, had he not been so stoutly Victorian in his choice of plots. A young man has an affair with Mrs. Ota, his father's former mistress, rejects the meddling of a second woman, also a former mistress of his father's, and is attracted, full of guilt and hesitation, to Mrs. Ota's daughter. Like much Japanese writing, the novel is full of natural symbols as well as the signs of the seasons. Tiny details assume great importance, take on important symbolism----two tea bowls used by deceased lovers, an ugly birthmark on a woman's breast----details which would be drowned in the mass of verbiage present in most Western writing. Tea ceremony and the delicate beauty of old ceramics suffuse the pages.

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