

*Haruki Murakami*

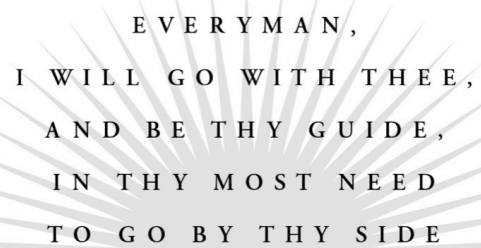
END OF THE WORLD AND  
HARD-BOILED WONDERLAND



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A NEW TRANSLATION BY JAY RUBIN  
FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR





EVERYMAN,  
I WILL GO WITH THEE,  
AND BE THY GUIDE,  
IN THY MOST NEED  
TO GO BY THY SIDE

HARUKI MURAKAMI

END OF THE  
WORLD AND  
HARD-BOILED  
WONDERLAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE  
BY JAY RUBIN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY THE AUTHOR



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THIS IS A BORZOI BOOK

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## INTRODUCTION

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*End of the World and Hard-Boiled Wonderland* is my fourth novel—the second *full-fledged* novel I wrote as a professional writer, after *A Wild Sheep Chase*.

It was published in Japan in June 1985. I was in my mid-thirties then, a bit presumptuous, perhaps, or else naively fearless, and my attitude was, *No problem—life is long and I can write as many novels as I want*. My career was just starting out, so I still lacked all the writing techniques and skills a novelist needs, but I thought I'd naturally acquire them one by one over time. So, I figured, there's nothing to worry about. What I need most right now, I decided, is confidence—the unshakeable conviction that once I decide to write something, I'll be able to finish it.

So in 1983, when the publisher Shinchosha asked me to write a brand-new novel, the kind that wouldn't first be published in a magazine, I immediately signed on. "Sure thing," I told them. This was my first time writing a novel like that, but I didn't feel hesitant or apprehensive about accepting.

My plan was to revise my earlier novella (or lengthy short story, you might say), entitled *The City, and Its Uncertain Walls*. I'd written this in 1980 for the literary magazine *Bungakukai*, but I wasn't happy with the story and I put it aside afterward, never publishing it as a book. I figured that when the right time came, I'd do a major rewrite. I wanted very much to go back to it, since the motif of the novel was important to me, worth taking the time to rewrite until I was satisfied with the result. Plus, I felt a strong sense of obligation toward the story, that I had a duty to return to it someday.

The problem was, I knew that to rewrite *The City, and Its Uncertain Walls* until I was satisfied with it (or simply to expand it), wouldn't be

enough to make it compelling. The novel depicted a world that was fascinating (and magical), yet far too quiet and low-key. There was no action in it that would attract anyone. The average reader might get tired of it halfway through, or even doze off. I knew I had to add another, completely different type of story, one with more energy and drive. I needed to write a novel where these two worlds—one of action, one of stillness—would spur on and inspire each other.

That was the rough plan I'd had in mind when I began writing *End of the World and Hard-Boiled Wonderland*. The problem was, I had no clue what sort of other world I should introduce and connect up with the existing story. "No matter," I thought. "Once I set my hand to it, it'll be fine." (At the time I actually did write by hand, using a fountain pen). So I began from scratch, with no real plan in mind, brazenly forging ahead.

That's how the novel came to consist of two very different types of story lines running in parallel. One is the "End of the World" story, at once tranquil and magical, the other the more frenetic "Hard-Boiled Wonderland," a kind of parody of a detective novel. As the author, I had no idea how these two very different stories would develop and intertwine. I just kept on writing the two stories however I wanted to, day after day, myself puzzled at times about how they would ever link up.

Many readers have asked me if I wrote the two stories separately and then put them together later on, but that's not how I did it. I wrote them in the same order as they appear in the novel, alternating one with the other. Doing this sparked and fired up my imagination in real time.

Perhaps it's like two construction crews on opposite sides of a mountain, digging to create a single tunnel. Drilling operations like this naturally require specialized surveying equipment, with the two holes meeting up at precisely the planned point, but with writing novels there's no such ingenious equipment, and all you can do is forge on, clinging optimistically (with no real basis for your optimism) to the hope that somehow the two will, eventually, neatly connect.

Honestly, though, I wasn't worried about it. I enjoyed writing both stories so much, I was sure, deep down, that things had to work out well in

the end. To put it another way, I trusted in the power of stories, and relied on that. It's a wonderful feeling to have that much faith in stories.

After a year and a half, the two tunnels, both diligently hollowed out from opposite sides, broke through the bedrock, connected up perfectly, and formed one novel. I was thrilled when I finished, like when an impressive, real-life tunnel finally opens to traffic.

Haruki Murakami

Translated by Philip Gabriel

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# CHRONOLOGY

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DATE: 1937

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War (to 1945). Battle of Shanghai. Japan occupies Nanjing.

DATE: 1939

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Raymond Chandler: *The Big Sleep*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Start of World War II in Europe.

DATE: 1940

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Ernest Hemingway: *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Carson McCullers: *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan invades French Indochina. Japan signs Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy.

Fall of France to German army. Dunkirk evacuation.

DATE: 1941

## LITERARY CONTEXT

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *The Last Tycoon* (posthumous).

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Operation Barbarossa: Germany invades the Soviet Union. Japan launches surprise attack on US Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor (December 7). US declares war on Japan

(December 8).

DATE: 1942

LITERARY CONTEXT

Albert Camus: *The Stranger*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan occupies the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Burma, and Malaya.

DATE: 1944

LITERARY CONTEXT

Jorge Luis Borges: *Ficciones*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japanese defeat by US navy in the Battle of Midway.

DATE: 1945

LITERARY CONTEXT

George Orwell: *Animal Farm*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Allied landings in Normandy. German surrender ends World War II in Europe (May 8). US drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima (August 6) and Nagasaki (August 9).

Japan surrenders, ending war in the Pacific (August 15). Japan occupied by Allies; power passes to supreme commander General MacArthur. United Nations founded.

DATE: 1946

LITERARY CONTEXT

Junichirō Tanizaki: *The Makioka Sisters* (to 1948).

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Emperor Hirohito relinquishes divine status. War Crimes trials begin in Tokyo.

DATE: 1947

HISTORICAL EVENTS

New Japanese constitution declared under which Japan will have no military; parliamentary system set up, with full adult suffrage. India gains independence from Britain.

DATE: 1948

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Yasunari Kawabata: *Snow Country*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Russian blockade of West Berlin. Israel founded.

DATE: 1949

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Born in Kyoto (12 January), the only child of two Japanese literature teachers. Murakami will spend his childhood in Kobe.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Yasunari Kawabata: *Thousand Cranes* and *The Sound of the Mountain* both begin serialization (published in book form in 1952 and 1954 respectively).

Raymond Chandler: *The Little Sister*.

George Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Chinese Communist People's Republic proclaimed. Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist government retreats to Taiwan. Creation of NATO.

DATE: 1950

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

North Korea invades South Korea across the 38th parallel. Combined UN forces land at Inchon (September) to provide support to South Korea. China enters the war on the side of North Korea (November). China invades Tibet. Tibet is incorporated into Chinese People's Republic, with regional autonomy.

DATE: 1951

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Samuel Beckett: *Molloy*.

J. D. Salinger: *The Catcher in the Rye*.

DATE: 1952

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Ernest Hemingway: *The Old Man and the Sea*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS: San Francisco Treaty comes into effect, ending the Allied occupation of Japan. Japan Self-Defense Forces established for deployment within Japan only. US tests first hydrogen bomb. Dwight D. Eisenhower elected US President. Accession of Elizabeth II in UK.

DATE: 1953

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Raymond Chandler: *The Long Goodbye*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Death of Joseph Stalin. Armistice signed between North and South Korea.

DATE: 1954

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

French defeat to the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu. Vietnam War begins.

DATE: 1955

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Begins school.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Niwa Fumio: *The Buddha Tree*.

Vladimir Nabokov: *Lolita*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

First Taiwan Strait Crisis between China and Taiwan (second in 1958).

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) formed in Japan, which governs almost uninterruptedly for the rest of the century. Warsaw Pact formed.

DATE: 1956

LITERARY CONTEXT

Yukio Mishima: *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*.

Junichirō Tanizaki: *The Key*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan becomes member of United Nations. Hungarian Uprising crushed by Soviet army. British and French troops invade Egypt to recover the Suez Canal, nationalized by Nasser; humiliation of former colonial powers when they fail to obtain US support.

DATE: 1957

LITERARY CONTEXT

Jack Kerouac: *On the Road*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Soviet Union launches Sputnik 1, beginning the Space Race.

DATE: 1958

LITERARY CONTEXT

Truman Capote: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Jack Kerouac: *The Dharma Bums*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

China's Great Leap Forward begins.

DATE: 1959

LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Raymond Chandler.

Grace Paley: *The Little Disturbances of Man*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Fidel Castro seizes power in Cuba and forms a socialist government. Famine in China. Tibet repudiates 1951 agreement with China; Chinese sends army to Tibet; the Dalai Lama flees into exile in India.



DATE: 1960

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Inejirō Asanuma, Japanese socialist politician, assassinated.

DATE: 1961

LITERARY CONTEXT

Junichirō Tanizaki: *Diary of a Mad Old Man*.

Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*.

J. D. Salinger: *Franny and Zooey*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

John F. Kennedy becomes US President. Erection of Berlin Wall.

DATE: 1962

LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Ernest Hemingway.

Abe Kōbō: *The Woman in the Dunes*.

Jack Kerouac: *Big Sur*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Cuban Missile Crisis.

DATE: 1963

LITERARY CONTEXT

Yukio Mishima: *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*.

Kurt Vonnegut: *Cat's Cradle*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

March on Washington in support of civil rights; Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech. President Kennedy assassinated.

DATE: 1964

LITERARY CONTEXT

Kenzaburō Ōe: *A Personal Matter*.

Ariyoshi Sawako: *Not Because of Color*.

Saul Bellow: *Herzog*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan hosts Tokyo Olympics. China tests nuclear weapons. Civil Rights Act in US.

DATE: 1965

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Junichirō Tanizaki. Isube Masjui: *Black Rain*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

US bombing campaign in Vietnam (to 1968).

DATE: 1966

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Truman Capote: *In Cold Blood*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Chinese Cultural Revolution begins.

DATE: 1967

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Abe Kōbō: *The Ruined Map*. Kenzaburō Ōe: *The Silent Cry*.

Richard Brautigan: *Trout Fishing in America*.

Gabriel García Márquez: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Six Day War fought between Israel and an Arab coalition. Israel gains Gaza Strip and Sinai desert from Egypt; Golan Heights from Syria; and West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan.

DATE: 1968

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Commences his studies at Waseda University, where he meets Yoko Takahashi.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Richard Brautigan: *In Watermelon Sugar*.

John Irving: *Setting Free the Bears*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan becomes world's second largest economy (to 2010). Martin Luther King assassinated. Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

DATE: 1969

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Yukio Mishima: *Spring Snow*.

Kurt Vonnegut:

*Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Death of Jack Kerouac.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Apollo 11 moon landing. Sino-Soviet border conflict.

DATE: 1970

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Yukio Mishima.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

US invades Cambodia.

DATE: 1971

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

Marries Yoko Takahashi and suspends his studies at Waseda University. The couple work in a record shop by day and a coffee bar by night to save money to open a jazz club.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Richard Brautigan: *Revenge of the Lawn*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Okinawa Reversion Agreement signed: US to restore to Japan all territories it has administered since the 1952 San Francisco Treaty, namely Okinawa Prefecture.

DATE: 1972

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Yasunari Kawabata.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

US President Richard Nixon visits China. Normalization of relations between Japan and China. US and USSR sign Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I).

DATE: 1973

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Thomas Pynchon: *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Kurt Vonnegut: *Breakfast of Champions*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Yom Kippur War. Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries announces oil embargo against the US and other countries that supported Israel in the Yom Kippur War.

DATE: 1974

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Peter Cat, coffee shop and jazz bar, opens in Tokyo, which they run for seven years.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Grace Paley: *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Nixon resigns in wake of Watergate scandal.

DATE: 1975

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Graduates from Waseda University with a major in theater and film arts.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Vietnam War ends. Bill Gates and Paul Allen found Microsoft.

DATE: 1976

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Ryū Murakami: *Almost Transparent Blue*.

Raymond Carver: *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Death of Mao Zedong.

DATE: 1978

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

Begins to write the manuscript of what will become his first novel.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed between Japan and China.

DATE: 1979

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

First novel, *Kaze no uta o kike* (*Hear the Wind Sing*, 1987) published (first of the “Trilogy of the Rat.”) Wins the Gunzo Award for New Writers.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Italo Calvino: *If on a winter's night a traveler*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Soviet Union invades Afghanistan. Chinese government imposes one-child policy. SALT II signed. Shah of Iran forced into exile; Ayatollah Khomeini establishes an Islamic state; American embassy siege in Tehran. Margaret Thatcher becomes the UK's first woman Prime Minister.

DATE: 1980

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

*1973-nen no pinbōru* (*Pinball*, 1973, 1985) published.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Ryū Murakami: *Coin Locker Babies*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Ronald Reagan elected US President. Iran–Iraq War begins (to 1988).

DATE: 1981

## AUTHOR'S LIFE



Peter Cat is sold and Murakami begins to earn a living from writing. Publishes his first translated novel, a Japanese translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *My Lost City*.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Raymond Carver: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*.

Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Maiden voyage of Space Shuttle. HIV/AIDs pandemic begins.

DATE: 1982

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Hitsuji o meguru bōken* (*A Wild Sheep Chase*, 1989) published. It wins the Noma Literary Prize (for emerging writers).

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Isabel Allende: *The House of the Spirits*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Falklands War between Argentina and UK.

DATE: 1983

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Runs his first marathon in Greece, on a course from Athens to Marathon. Publishes *Fushigi na toshokan*, a novella for children (The Strange Library, 2014).

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Kenzo Kitakata: *The Cage*.

Raymond Carver: *Cathedral*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

US troops invade Grenada after government overthrown.

DATE: 1984

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Travels to the United States, meeting Raymond Carver (whose complete works he will later translate into Japanese) and his wife Tess Gallagher.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Deaths of Truman Capote and Richard Brautigan.

Sandra Cisneros: *The House on Mango Street*.

Milan Kundera: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Landslide victory for Reagan in US presidential elections. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassinated.

DATE: 1985

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandārando (Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, 1991)* published, and is awarded the Tanizaki Prize.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Margaret Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*.

John Irving: *The Cider House Rules*.

Cormac McCarthy: *Blood Meridian*.

Grace Paley: *Later the Same Day*.

Gabriel García Márquez: *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Reform begins in USSR under new General Secretary of the Communist Party, Mikhail Gorbachev.

DATE: 1986

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Murakami and Yoko leave Japan, living in Europe for three years, in Greece and Italy. Murakami spends one month in the UK.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Nuclear explosion at Chernobyl. Gorbachev–Reagan summit.

DATE: 1987

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Noruei no mori (Norwegian Wood, 1989)* published. It is a bestseller in Japan, where Murakami suddenly becomes famous.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Ian McEwan: *The Child in Time*.

Toni Morrison: *Beloved*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

October 19/20: “Black Monday”/“Blue Tuesday” (Japan) – world stock market crash. In Japan the effects are comparatively mild and the economy recovers quickly.

DATE: 1988

## AUTHOR’S LIFE

*Dansu Dansu Dansu (Dance Dance Dance, 1994)* published.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Death of Raymond Carver. Salman Rushdie: *The Satanic Verses*.

Banana Yoshimoto: *Kitchen*.

DATE: 1989

## LITERARY CONTEXT

John Irving: *A Prayer for Owen Meany*.

Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day*.

Banana Yoshimoto: *Goodbye Tsugumi*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Death of Emperor Hirohito in Japan. Nikkei index achieves an all-time high (December 29). Chinese government forces violently suppress student protest in Tiananmen Square, Beijing (June 4). Communist control in Eastern Europe collapses. Berlin Wall falls (November 9). Tim Berners-Lee invents the Worldwide Web.

DATE: 1990

## AUTHOR’S LIFE

Returns to Japan.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Apartheid dismantled in South Africa; Nelson Mandela released after 27 years’ imprisonment.

DATE: 1991

AUTHOR'S LIFE

Moves to the United States to become a visiting scholar at Princeton University (to 1993).

LITERARY CONTEXT

Martin Amis: *Time's Arrow*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Dissolution of the Soviet Union. Breakup of Yugoslavia and start of the Yugoslav Wars. Start of the Gulf War. Japan's economic bubble bursts and period of stagnation (the "lost decade") follows.

DATE: 1992

AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* (*South of the Border, West of the Sun*, 1999) published. Delivers Una's Lecture at the Towner Center for the Humanities at UC Berkeley.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Cormac McCarthy: *All the Pretty Horses*.

Joyce Carol Oates: *Black Water*.

Donna Tartt: *The Secret History*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Bill Clinton elected US President.

DATE: 1993

AUTHOR'S LIFE

Takes up position as writer in residence at Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts (to 1995). *The Elephant Vanishes*, a collection of 17 short stories, first published in English translation.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Philip Roth: *Operation Shylock*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

World Trade Center bombing.

DATE: 1994

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Nejimaki-dori kuronikuru* (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, 1997) published (to 1995).

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Kenzaburō Ōe wins Nobel Prize for Literature.

Yoko Ogawa: *Memory Police*.

Dag Solstad: *Shyness and Dignity*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Mandela's ANC takes power in South Africa following elections.

DATE: 1995

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Returns to Japan following Great Hanshin earthquake and sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* wins the Yomiuri Literary Award.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Members of the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo release sarin gas on three Tokyo subway lines, killing 13 and injuring 5,500 people. Earthquake strikes Hanshin region of Japan, killing approximately 6,400 people.

DATE: 1996

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Completes his first ultramarathon around Lake Saroma in Hokkaido, Japan.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Dag Solstad: *Professor Andersen's Night*.

DATE: 1997

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Andāguraundo* (*Underground*, 2000), Murakami's first work of non-fiction, based on interviews conducted with survivors of the Aum Shinrikyo gas attack, published (to 1998).

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Lee Child: *Killing Floor*.



Ryū Murakami: *In the Miso Soup* and *Audition*.

Philip Roth: *American Pastoral*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Transfer of Hong Kong sovereignty from the United Kingdom to China.

DATE: 1999

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Supūtoniku no koibito* (*Sputnik Sweetheart*, 2001) published.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Ha Jin: *Waiting*.

Jonathan Lethem: *Motherless Brooklyn*.

Dag Solstad: *T. Singer*. Colson Whitehead: *The Intuitionist*.

DATE: 2000

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Kami no kodomo-tachi wa mina odoru* (*After the Quake*, 2002), a collection of 6 stories, published.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

George W. Bush elected US President. Vladimir Putin becomes Russian President.

Slobodan Milosevic's regime collapses in former Yugoslavia.

DATE: 2001

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Jonathan Franzen: *The Corrections*.

Hiromi Karakami: *Strange Weather in Tokyo*.

Ian McEwan: *Atonement*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Terrorist attack by Al-Qaeda on the Twin Towers in Manhattan (11 September). US and allied military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

DATE: 2002

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Umibe no Kafuka (Kafka on the Shore, 2005)* published.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Orhan Pamuk: *Snow*.

DATE: 2003

AUTHOR'S LIFE

Publishes Japanese translation of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Kenzaburō Ōe: *Somersault*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

US-led coalition invades Iraq.

DATE: 2004

AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Afutā dāku (After Dark, 2007)* published.

LITERARY CONTEXT

David Mitchell: *Cloud Atlas*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japan deploys 1,000 soldiers from its self-defense force to take part in noncombat activities in Iraq. Bush re-elected. Indian Ocean tsunami. Facebook launched.

DATE: 2005

AUTHOR'S LIFE

Moves to Cambridge, Massachusetts to become artist-in-residence at Harvard University.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Never Let Me Go*.

Cormac McCarthy: *No Country for Old Men*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

Hurricane Katrina floods New Orleans. Terrorist bombings in London.

DATE: 2006

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*, a collection of 24 short stories, first published in English translation, which wins the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. *Kafka on the Shore* wins World Fantasy Award for best novel. Receives the Franz Kafka Prize. Publishes Japanese translation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Cormac McCarthy: *The Road*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Iran joins "nuclear club." North Korea tests nuclear weapon. Saddam Hussein sentenced to death.

DATE: 2007

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Murakami's memoir, *Hashiru koto ni tsuite kataru toki ni boku no kataru koto* (*What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, 2008) published. Publishes Japanese translation of Raymond Carver's *The Long Goodbye*.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Junot Díaz: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Olga Tokarczuk: *Flight*.

Deaths of Kurt Vonnegut and Grace Paley.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Al Gore and UN climate scientists win Nobel Peace Prize. Nancy Pelosi first woman to be elected Speaker of US Congress. iPhone launched.

DATE: 2008

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Awarded an honorary doctorate from Princeton University. Publishes Japanese translation of Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Toni Morrison: *A Mercy*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Barack Obama becomes first Black President of the United States. Global financial crisis.

DATE: 2009

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Murakami awarded Jerusalem Prize for the Freedom of the Individual in Society, which he travels to Israel to accept. *Ichikyū-hachi-yon* (1Q84, 2011) published (to 2010), its title inspired by George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Mieko Kawakami: *Heaven*.

Kenzaburō Ōe: *Death by Water*.

Hilary Mantel: *Wolf Hall*.

William Trevor: *Collected Stories*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Democratic Party of Japan victorious in elections, ending more than 50 years of almost unbroken rule by the LDP.

DATE: 2010

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Jennifer Egan: *A Visit from the Goon Squad*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Healthcare Reform Bill passed by President Obama. Deepwater Horizon (BP rig) oil spill in Gulf of Mexico. US combat mission ends in Iraq. Most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Japan hits the Tōhoku region, precipitating a tsunami. 19,759 people confirmed to have died. Fukushima nuclear accident caused by the earthquake and tsunami. Arab Spring begins; civil war in Syria. Osama Bin Laden killed by US Navy Seals.

DATE: 2011

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Publishes *Ozawa Seiji-san to ongaku ni tsuite hanashi o suru* (*Absolutely on Music: Conversations with Seiji Ozawa*, 2016).

DATE: 2012

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japanese government nationalizes three of the Senkaku Islands which are the focus of a territorial dispute between Japan and China and Taiwan. Anti-Japanese demonstrations take place across China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in response. Obama re-elected US President. Mars Science Laboratory “Curiosity Rover” lands on Mars.

DATE: 2013

#### AUTHOR’S LIFE

*Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, kare no junrei no toshi (Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage, 2014)* published.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Donna Tart: *The Goldfinch*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Edward Snowden leaks classified documents revealing mass surveillance by the US National Security Agency. Boston Marathon bombing. Black Lives Matter movement begins. China launches Belt and Road Initiative.

DATE: 2014

#### AUTHOR’S LIFE

*Onna no inai otokotachi (Men Without Women, 2017)*, a collection of 7 short stories, published. Wins the Welt-Literaturpreis.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Joyce Carol Oates: *Lovely, Dark, Deep*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Russia annexes Crimea. ISIS declares Islamic Caliphate.

DATE: 2015

#### AUTHOR’S LIFE

*Shokugyō to shite no Shōsetsuka (Novelist as a Vocation, 2022)*, essay collection, published.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Buried Giant*.

Hanya Yanagihara: *A Little Life*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Japanese parliament passes bill enabling troops to be deployed abroad in exceptional circumstances. Iran agrees deal on nuclear program with world powers. Paris Climate Accord commits majority of countries to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Islamic terror attacks in Paris. Refugee crisis in Europe. US Supreme Court rules that all states must recognize same-sex marriage. “One-child” policy ends in China.

DATE: 2016

## AUTHOR’S LIFE

Wins Hans Christian Andersen Literature Award.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Paul Auster: *4 3 2 1*.

Sayaka Murata: *Convenience*

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Donald Trump elected US President. UK referendum on EU membership results in “Leave” vote. Missile and nuclear testing in North Korea.

DATE: 2017

## AUTHOR’S LIFE

*Kishidanchō goroshi* (*Killing Commendatore*, 2018) published.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

*Store Woman*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Trump takes up office of President, promising to “make America great again.” North Korean crisis (to 2018). Imprisonment in camps of Uyghurs and Turkic Muslims in China begins.

DATE: 2018

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Trade War: Trump imposes tariffs on imports from China. Trump announces his intention to withdraw the United States from the Iranian nuclear agreement but negotiates with North Korea's Kim Jong-un over denuclearization. #MeToo movement goes global.

DATE: 2019

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Abdication of Emperor Akihito in Japan after a 30-year reign; succeeded by his son as Emperor Naruhito. Hong Kong protests (to 2020). President Trump impeached. Amazon rainforest wildfires. First COVID-19 case in Wuhan, China.

DATE: 2020

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

of 8 short stories, published. *Murakami T* published (English translation 2021). *Ichininshō Tansū* (*First Person Singular*, 2021), a collection

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Don DeLillo: *Silence*.

Jenny Offill: *Weather*.

HISTORICAL EVENTS: Start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Worldwide Black Lives Matter protests after killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. Joe Biden elected as President; Kamala Harris elected first Black Vice-President of the US.

DATE: 2021

## AUTHOR'S LIFE

Waseda International House of Literature opens at Waseda University, containing Haruki Murakami's archive and copies of his books.

## LITERARY CONTEXT

Kazuo Ishiguro: *Klara and the Sun*.

## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Trump supporters storm the Capitol building in protest against election results. US commits to rejoin Paris Climate Agreement. COVID-19 vaccine created. Last US

troops withdraw from Afghanistan – Taliban take over country. Summer Olympics held in Tokyo.

DATE: 2022

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

Awarded Prix Mondial Cinco del Duca.

#### LITERARY CONTEXT

Yiyun Li: *The Book of Goose*.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Russia invades Ukraine. Shinzo Abe, former Prime Minister of Japan, assassinated. Roe v. Wade overturned by US Supreme Court; constitutional protections for abortion severed. Inflation rises worldwide. Protesters in Iran march against the country's treatment of women. Pakistan flooding crisis. Death of Queen Elizabeth II.

DATE: 2023

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

*Machi to sono futashika na kabe* (*The City and Its Uncertain Walls*, 2024) published. Wins the Princess of Asturias Award for Literature.

#### AUTHOR'S LIFE

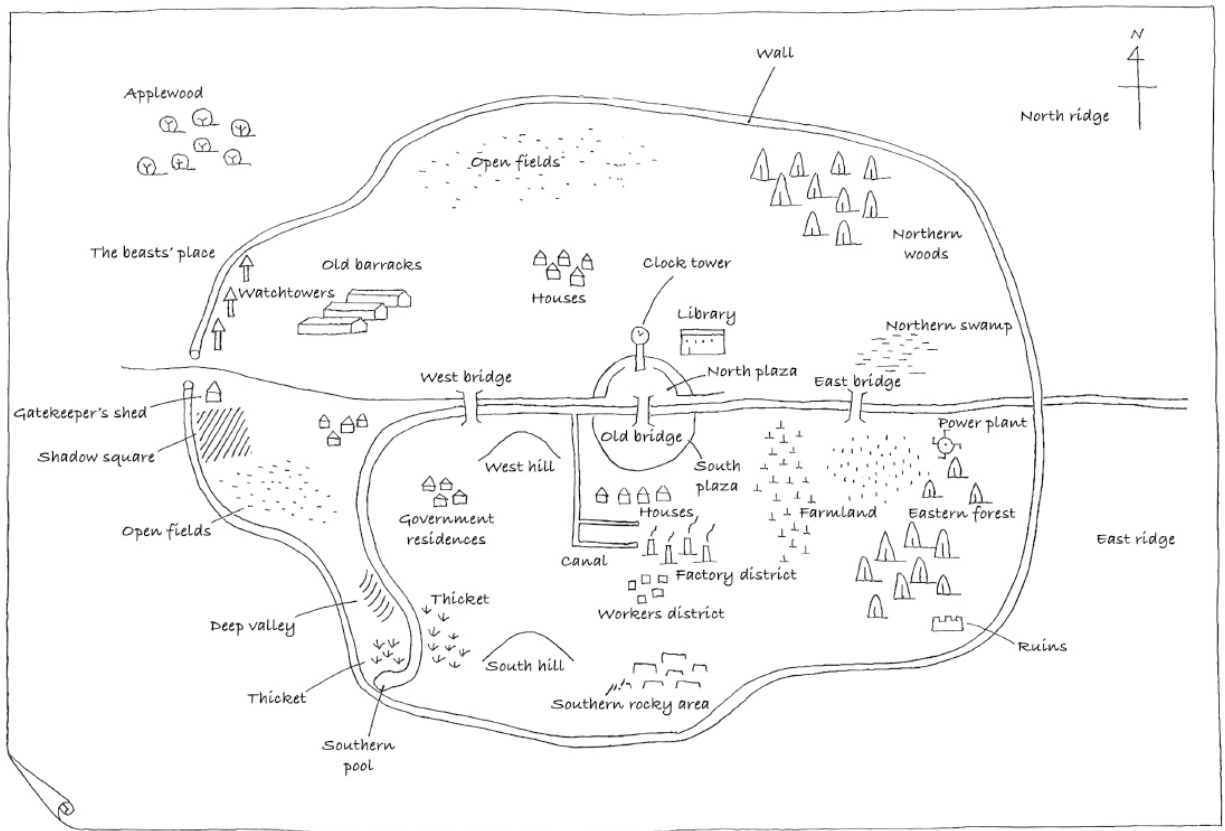
Death of Cormac McCarthy.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS

Turkey–Syria earthquake. Israel– Hamas war – worldwide protests calling for ceasefire. G20 leaders agree to pursue tripling renewable energy capacity globally by 2030.



Why does the sun go on shining?  
Why do the birds go on singing?  
Don't they know it's the end of the world?  
    "The End of the World"



## Elevator, Soundlessness, Overweight

The elevator continued its extremely gradual ascent. At least I thought it was ascending, but I couldn't be sure. The slowness obliterated all sense of direction. Maybe it was descending—or doing nothing. I had simply reached the easiest conclusion based on the immediate situation: the elevator must be ascending. This was just a guess. I had no evidence at all. It might have gone up twelve flights, down three flights, and circled the earth—I couldn't tell.

This elevator was different in every way from the cheap, no-frills, barely evolved well bucket in my apartment house. The two were so different I could hardly believe both were mechanical devices that had the same machinery made for the same purpose with the same name. They were as far apart from each other as it was conceivable for two elevators to be.

First was the question of size. This elevator was big enough to serve as a cozy office. You could outfit it with a desk, a locker, a filing cabinet, and a kitchenette, and you'd probably still have room to spare for three camels and a medium-size palm tree.

Second came hygiene. It was as immaculate as a brand-new coffin. The walls and ceiling were made of bright, shiny, utterly unblemished stainless steel, the floor covered with a shaggy moss-green carpet.

Third was its almost frightening silence. When I entered, the doors glided shut soundlessly (literally, making no sound at all), and all sound ceased from that moment on. You couldn't tell if the elevator was sitting still or moving. Still waters run deep.

Another point was the absence of most of the equipment that normal elevators should have. First, there was no panel fitted with buttons and

switches—no buttons for choosing your floor, no buttons for opening and closing the doors, no emergency button, nothing. Which made me feel utterly defenseless. Not only were the buttons missing, but there were no lights showing what floor you were on, no plate listing the elevator's capacity or safety precautions or the name of the manufacturer. If there was an emergency exit, I couldn't tell where it was. No, it was an absolute coffin. There was no way an elevator like this could have received a fire-department permit. Elevators were supposed to have certain rules and regulations.

Staring at the four blank stainless-steel walls around me, I recalled a great escape I had seen Houdini perform in a movie when I was a kid. Wrapped in several lengths of rope and chains, he had been stuffed into a big trunk, which then had been wound around with a heavy chain and dropped over Niagara Falls or frozen in the North Sea. I took a slow, deep breath and calmly compared my situation with Houdini's. I had the advantage of not being tied up, but the disadvantage of not knowing the trick.

Far from knowing the trick, I didn't even know if the elevator was moving or not. I tried clearing my throat, but the sound that came out of me was very strange. It sounded less like a throat clearing and more like a soft lump of clay being hurled against a flat concrete wall. I couldn't believe my own body had made that sound. I tried clearing my throat again with the same result, so I gave up clearing my throat.

I stood there stock-still for a very long time, but the doors wouldn't open. The elevator and I could have been the subjects of a still-life painting, *Man and Elevator*. My uneasiness increased minute by minute.

The elevator might have broken down, or the elevator operator—assuming there was such a person—might have forgotten that I was on board. That happens to me sometimes: a person will forget that I exist. But in either case, I was sealed inside this stainless-steel compartment. I listened hard for any possible sound, but nothing reached my ears. I pressed an ear against a stainless-steel wall, but still I heard no sound. All I did was leave a white ear shape on the wall. The elevator seemed to be a special metal box

made expressly to absorb every kind of sound. I tried whistling “Danny Boy,” but what came out was like the sigh of a dog with late-stage pneumonia.

Giving up, I decided to lean against a wall and kill time by counting the change in my pocket. For someone in my line of work, though, such “killing of time” was an important kind of training, like a professional boxer’s constant squeezing of rubber balls, not time killing in the proper sense. Only through repeated action was it possible to even out a tendency toward lopsidedness.

I always made it a point to carry a decent amount of change in my pants pockets: hundred-yen coins and five-hundred-yen coins in my right pocket and fifty-yen coins and ten-yen coins in my left pocket. I carried one-yen and five-yen coins in my hip pocket, but I made it a rule never to use them in calculations. I would shove my hands into my right and left pockets simultaneously, and while counting the total value of the hundred-yen and five-hundred-yen coins with my right hand, I would count the total value of the fifty- and ten-yen coins with my left.

This kind of calculating must be hard to imagine for people who have never done it, and in fact it is quite difficult at first. You perform separate calculations with the right and left brains and bring the two together at the end like joining the two sides of a split watermelon. It rarely works until you’re used to it.

I can’t say for sure that I’m actually using the right and left brains separately like this. A professional brain physiologist—which I am not—might describe the procedure in different terms, but I can say that it *feels* as if I’m using my right and left brains separately when I am doing calculations. And the fatigue I feel afterward is very different in nature from the fatigue that follows ordinary calculating. So it’s just more convenient to think about it as though I’m doing right-pocket calculations with my right brain and left-pocket calculations with my left brain.

I suspect I may be more pragmatic than most people in the way I think about the things and events and beings in the world, not so much because I have a personality that views everything in terms of their convenience and

usefulness (although I recognize that I do have such a pragmatic streak) but because there are so many obvious cases in which a pragmatic grasp of things comes closer than a conventional interpretation to an understanding of the essence of those things.

For example, how much of a problem would it be on the everyday level to think of the earth not as a spherical body but as a gigantic coffee table? This is an extreme example, of course: I'm not suggesting that we reshape everything arbitrarily this way. But it's a fact that taking a pragmatic view of the earth as a gigantic coffee table would totally eliminate the vexing little problems that arise from thinking of it as a globe—such basically useless concepts as gravity, the international dateline, and the equator. How many occasions are there in the life of an ordinary human being when he has to deal with the problem of the equator?

And so it is that I try my best to view everything pragmatically. I believe that the world as we know it has come into being full of possibilities—infinite possibilities—and choosing among those possibilities should be, to some extent, left to the individual human beings who comprise the world. The world is a coffee table made of condensed possibilities.

Now to return to the previous subject. Performing parallel computations with the right and left hands is by no means simple. Even I took a long time to master it. Once one does master the technique, however, one cannot easily lose the ability. It's like bicycling or swimming. Which does not mean that you can dispense with practice. Only through constant practice can you improve and refine your ability. This, then, is why I always make sure to keep change in my pockets and use any spare time I have to perform calculations.

That day I had three 500-yen coins, eighteen 100-yen coins, seven 50-yen coins, and sixteen 10-yen coins in my pockets for a total of 3,810 yen. No trouble at all. A calculation like this was easier than counting the number of fingers on my hands. Satisfied, I leaned against a stainless-steel wall and stared at the doors in front of me. They were still not opening.

I had no idea why elevator doors would stay closed for such a long time. But after thinking about it a little, I concluded that I could safely reject both

the mechanical-breakdown theory and the inattentive-operator theory because both were unrealistic. Of course, I am not saying that mechanical breakdowns and official inattention could never happen in reality. Quite the contrary: I am well aware that such accidents occur all the time in the real world. What I want to say is that in an exceptional reality—by which I mean, of course, in this ridiculously smooth-surfaced elevator—the unexceptional can be eliminated for all practical purposes as paradoxically exceptional. Is it conceivable that people inattentive enough to neglect its mechanical maintenance or to forget to operate it after having allowed a building visitor to board it would have built such an eccentrically elaborate elevator?

The answer is, of course, no.

They would never do such a thing.

So far, they had been absolutely hypervigilant, concerned with every little detail as if they measured each step they took with a ruler. When I entered the building, I was stopped by two security guards, asked whom I wished to see, had my name checked against a list of scheduled visitors, had my driver's license examined and my identity verified on the central computer, had my body scanned with a metal detector, and only then was I cooped up in this elevator. Visitors to the national mint were not subjected to such rigorous investigation. It was inconceivable that, after doing all that, they would suddenly lose their scrupulous attention at this stage.

The only remaining possibility, then, was that they had deliberately placed me in this situation. They didn't want me to be able to tell anything about the elevator's movement. Which is why they were moving it so slowly I couldn't tell whether it was going up or down. They might have installed a security camera on it, too. The front security office had had a bank of TV monitors, and I wouldn't have been surprised if one of them showed the elevator's interior.

I thought about searching for a camera lens to pass the time, but even if I found one, there was nothing to be gained from that. I'd probably just make them more suspicious, in response to which they might slow the

elevator down even more. I didn't want that to happen. I was late for my appointment as it was.

I decided not to do anything special but to stay relaxed. I was here to perform my properly assigned task, nothing more. There was nothing to be frightened of, no need to tense up.

I leaned against the wall, shoved my hands in my pockets, and counted my change again. 3,750 yen. No trouble at all, finished in the blink of an eye.

3,750 yen?

A different result.

I had made a mistake.

I felt my palms begin to sweat. I hadn't made a single mistake calculating the change in my pockets in the past three years. Not one. Any way you looked at it, this had to be a bad sign. I would have to recover any lost territory before the bad sign could emerge as a full-fledged disaster.

I closed my eyes and emptied out my left and right brains the way you wash off eyeglass lenses. Then I pulled my hands out of my pockets and spread them open to let the palms dry, completing these preparatory actions with all the mastery of Henry Fonda readying himself for a gunfight in *Warlock*. Not that it matters, but *Warlock* is one of my favorite movies.

Once I was sure my palms were dry, I shoved my hands into my pockets again and started my third calculation. If the third total matched either of the other two, there was no problem. Everybody makes mistakes. I had to admit that my unusual situation had my nerves on edge, and I had been feeling a touch overconfident, which explained my elementary error. Anyhow, confirming the correct figure: that should save me. Before I could reach the point of salvation, however, the elevator doors opened. Without the slightest warning or sound, the doors slid open to either side.

Because I was concentrating so hard on my pocket change, I didn't realize at first that the doors had opened. To put it a little more precisely, my eyes saw that the doors had opened, but for a while I was unable to grasp what that meant in concrete terms. What it meant, of course, was that the two spaces the closed doors had been keeping apart were now joined



together. It also meant, simultaneously, that the elevator had arrived at its destination.

I stopped moving my fingers in my pockets and glanced out through the open doors. Outside was a corridor, and standing in the corridor was a young woman—a fat young woman in a pink suit and pink high heels. The fabric of her suit was beautifully tailored and smooth, and her face was just as smooth. She looked at me for a moment as if to confirm that I was the right person, and then she nodded smartly as if to say, “This way, please.” I gave up counting my change, pulled my hands from my pockets, and stepped out of the elevator. As soon as I was outside, the doors closed behind me.

Standing in the corridor, I turned to view my surroundings but saw nothing that might tell me about the situation in which I found myself. All I knew was that the space seemed to be the corridor of a building, but a school kid would have known that much.

The building’s interior was almost weirdly plain. Like the elevator, it was fashioned of high-quality—but featureless—materials. The floors were of glossy polished marble, the walls white with a yellowish tinge like my morning muffins. Both sides of the corridor were lined with solid, heavy wooden doors, on each of which was mounted a metal number plate, though the numbers themselves seemed completely random. After 936 came 1213, which was followed by 26. Nobody numbers rooms like that. It was crazy.

The young woman said almost nothing to me. Her mouth formed the words “This way, please,” but her voice made no sound. Before my current job, I had spent two months in a course on lipreading, so I could just manage to tell what she was saying. At first, though, I thought there might be something wrong with my ears. What with the soundlessness of the elevator and the odd way my throat clearing and whistling had sounded to me, I had no confidence at all in my hearing.

I tried clearing my throat again. The sound I made was still on the quiet side, but it was a lot more normal than when I had cleared my throat in the elevator. This came as a relief and gave me back some confidence in my