

# A romantic mystery masterpiece set in contemporary Japan Depicting love and people with masterful skill.

Mizuki Tsujimura is one of Japan's leading novelists. The novel commemorating the 15th anniversary of her career as an author sold more than 600,000 copies!



## Summary: HAUGHTINESS AND GOODNESS (*Gouman to Zenryou*) (Mizuki Tsujimura)

Submitted August 18 2023

[Bibliographic information]				
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### Summary

Having grown up in Tokyo and running an import agency, Kakeru Nishizawa had plenty of experience in romance and little desire to get married, but in his late 30s, he had a change of heart and started using a marriage matchmaking app. Through the app, he met and began dating Mami Sakaniwa, a serious and virtuous woman who was always considerate of others, but they put off marriage for over two years. After Mami gets stalked, they finally decide to get married. But just as they book the wedding venue, Mami suddenly disappears. In order to locate her, Kakeru heads to Mami's hometown where she lived until she turned 30 and speaks with her parents, friends, and former arranged-marriage suitors. Along the way, he comes to learn that he was completely unaware of the difficulties his fiancée was facing.

### Author

Born in 1980. Tsujimura graduated from the Faculty of Education, Chiba University. She debuted in 2004 with *A School Frozen in Time*, for which she won the 31st Mephisto Prize. In 2011, she won the 32nd Yoshikawa Eiji Prize for Newcomers for *Tsunagu*, the 147th Naoki Prize for *Kagi no nai yume o miru* in 2012, and the 15th Honya Taisho Award for *Lonely Castle in the Mirror* in 2018. Tsujimura's many works include "0, 8, 0, 7," *Shima ha Bokurato*, *True Mothers*, *Aozora to Nigeru*, *Kamiawanai Kaiwa to*, *Aru Kako ni Tsuite*, *Kohaku no Natsu*, and *Yamihara*.

### Awards for this title

Winner of the 7th Booklog Award for fiction in 2019

Nominated for the 36th Sakunosuke Oda Award (2019), etc.

### Characteristics of the Japanese readership

Readership at Japanese bookstores is 30% male and 70% female. Compared to other literature, it features a larger ratio of younger readers, especially women, with nearly 20% of female readers being under the age of 30.

### Explanatory note from the publisher

This work consists of two parts, the first of which is told from Kakeru's perspective and the second part from Mami's.

The first part describes how Kakeru investigates the reason for his fiancée's disappearance from his perspective. The theme of this work has strong elements of a mystery novel, and gradually emerges in the progression from the first half to the second. This theme is the haughtiness of men and women in labeling and evaluating the people with whom they will share their lives, and the difficulty for a woman born and raised in a rural area to choose her own path through life as an individual without fear of what her parents and other members of the community may think.

The second part is where the true circumstances of Mami's life and her disappearance are revealed. Mami was troubled by the fact that marriage functions as a status in communication with people around her, the belief of the older generation that marriage and being provided for by a man makes women happy, and her weak sense of self that would not allow her to freely decide. What is the choice that Mami made after facing herself in the place where she disappeared? This is a story of the struggles of women in their 20s and 30s, which is considered the age at which to get married, to survive in Japanese society.

### Readers comments

- Heartbreaking, simply heartbreaking. Has a novel ever so squarely addressed the state of contemporary marriage and the feelings surrounding it? This is another masterful work from Tsujimura, who precisely expresses her innermost unspoken thoughts through her novels.
- This seemed more like a self-analysis book for adults than a romance novel.
- “You are humble and have low self-esteem, but are very narcissistic. That’s why you are afraid of getting hurt and of change”  
- These words describe me perfectly.

### Readers comments

- An elderly female matchmaker who appears in Tsujimura’s *Haughtiness and Goodness* calls *Pride and Prejudice*, written 200 years ago, “the ultimate novel about marriage,” and argues that haughtiness and goodness are the barriers that hinder marriage in modern Japan. The former is blind faith in one’s own values, and the latter is an obedience to one’s parents’ wishes (or lack of initiative). How does one break through these two barriers and enter into marriage? This book tackles this question head-on.  
– Nozomi Omori (translator & critic), published in *Shukan Shincho*, April 11, 2019
- Love and marriage tend to be judged on the basis of choosing and being chosen. This is painful for me because I feel that I have not been chosen by anyone nor given the right to choose. The reason for this is that the happiness one finds there arises from comparisons with others. Kakeru and Mami were kindred spirits, so to speak, who met with the awareness that they had to get married and break out.  
– Momo Tachibana (writer), published by da Vinci Web (updated May 14, 2019)
- The cruelty and hope of spouse hunting. The light and darkness in everyone’s heart. This is a novel that can provide counseling, especially for those struggling with marriage and love.  
– Nobuko Yoshida (book reviewer) published in *Asahi Shimbun*, March 4, 2023

### Book review excerpts

(1) p7 – 11

(2) Line 10, p129, to line 9, p131 (omissions) / line 14, p132, to line 8, p133

#### Section 1

She ran through the night.

She ran as fast as she could and without stopping, through the darkness of a poorly-lit residential area, just to get to somewhere brighter.

Her body was shaking. It was horrible. Sad. Scary. Painful.

She only stopped when she came to an open street in the shopping district in front of the station and saw some other people. It was then she realized how much she shook and how ragged she was breathing. The air felt thin.

She wondered momentarily if she should ask the people around her for help. Then, the glare of car headlights pierced the night from a side street. The instant she saw that it was a yellow cab with its sign showing vacant in red, she was running again.

“Wait, stop! Please!”

With no regard for her surroundings, she raised her hand and stepped in front of the car. Fortunately, the driver noticed her and opened the door.

“Toward Toyosu, please.”

As she tumbled into the back seat and the door closed, she broke into a sweat as she remembered. She took out a phone from her pocket. Her fingertips were numb, and she could not operate it well.

Quickly, quickly, quickly.

Where is it? Quickly.

She found the name Kakeru Nishizawa in the call history. It was frustrating. She saw him so often and they were supposed to be dating, but she couldn’t find his name without going back through her call history. The call connected and started to ring.

“...Hello?”

The moment she heard the voice on the other end of the phone, her breath escaped with a high pitched sound, like air released from a balloon. Kakeru, Kakeru, help me, she thought.

“He’s there”

There were tears in her voice. “What?” the voice on the other end of the phone muttered. Her vision clouded with tears. She could see the driver behind the wheel glancing at her through the rear view mirror. I forgot to ask permission from the driver to call him, she thought. Even at a time like this, she was concerned about such things. She always asked permission when in a taxi. It’s rude to suddenly make a phone call in a car, she thought, even if other people don’t ask any more, she still did.

She brought her hand to her chest and drew in a breath. She didn't mean to cry, but the tears started to fall. They ran down her cheek.

"I think he's there, in my house. What can I do? I can't go home"

"Who is 'he'?"

Where is Kakeru now? Certainly not at home. It feels like he is with other people. I don't know if it's a work function or with friends, but I'm sure he's out drinking. "...Hey, when you say it like that, but I'm sure he..." There are several voices who seem to be his friends. Both male and female voices.

The tone of Kakeru's voice on the phone changes and becomes serious.

"Where are you now, Mami?"

"Near the station. I just got in a taxi. I'm sorry, but can I go to your house now?"

"Sure, of course, that's fine. But what do you mean by 'he's in my house'?"

The commotion on the other end of the phone faded, as if Kakeru had moved to a quieter place.

A cold breath escaped her nose.

"When I came home after work, there was a light on in the window and he was inside. I didn't go in; I ran away."

"I'm sorry, I'm out right now, but I'm going home now, too,"

said Kakeru.

"Hey Kakeru, who are you phoning? Your girlfriend?"

Someone's voice sounds on the other end of the line. "Shut up," Kakeru replied in exasperation. He returned to the conversation and said to Mami seriously,

"If you arrive first, stop the taxi in front of the house and stay inside. It's best not to be alone."

"Okay. But please, come quickly!"

Another moan escaped her mouth. This may be the first time I have ever expressed my needs so strongly to Kakeru in this way, she thought. After she spoke, she covered her mouth with a sudden "I'm sorry." Her hands stiffened.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't say this. But please help me. Help me, Kakeru."

"Damn it!"

Kakeru exclaimed in frustration.

"No, I'm sorry. I went out drinking and left you alone."

Mami could hear Kakeru was leaving the restaurant. She was still crying. Already clearly concerned about her, the driver asked, "Are you okay?" as soon as the call finished.

"Are you okay, young lady?"

"...Yes... I'm fine."

I'm not though, Mami thought as she answered, I'm not okay at all. She brushed away the tears that were welling up again.

Quickly, quickly, quickly.

Kakeru is coming now. I'm grateful and thankful, but I'm still scared. I don't know if I'm going to be okay again. I'm scared. I'm so terrified, I'm in tears.

Please, I beg you.

I'm scared. Kakeru, help me.

Help me.

Please, help.

## Section 2

"Women, especially, are expected to have a baby after they get married. The clearer the vision, the better, right?"

"Did it seem to you that Mami did not have that vision?"

"That's how it appeared to me when she was here, at least. I guess it's different now."

Onozato narrowed her eyes.

"She had an atmosphere about her that she'd come because she was old enough to get married and because that's what those around her had told her to do, rather than because she wanted to get married herself. So, it may not be entirely wrong to say that it was more the mother who was enthusiastic about the idea, as you said earlier. I don't think Mami was afraid of birth, old age, or being alone. Rather it was the parents who were terrified of this. So, they had to do something and gave her a push."

Onozato pulled back the corners of her mouth in a smile, and shook her head.

"The child will probably consent to getting married if the parents say so, but this is more a social demand arising from fear and anxiety rather than the child's own will. If it works out and they can get married for those reasons then I'm fine with that. Because if they didn't, then such people wouldn't get married."

"Is that right?"

The way Onozato said it felt unkind and Kakeru frowned.

"But not absolutely everyone has to get married though, right? People are free to stay single if they don't want to get married. I happened to have wanted to get married, but there are other ways of living without doing so that are fine."

But as he said it, a thought occurred to him. He softened his tone a little and continued.

"But this is not Tokyo, and that kind of thinking may not apply here."

While diversity of lifestyle may be tolerated in the city, it may not be easily accepted here, where Mami used to live. When discussing spouse hunting, it is often said that the sense of shame associated with remaining single is different in the city and the countryside. But Onozato shook her head.

"It makes no difference if it's Tokyo or Gunma. As I said, they have no will with regard to staying single or anything else."

"Huh?"

"Most people who are told by their parents to get married, including Mami, want things to stay the same forever, without getting married or anything. At the age of 30, both women and men have a stable job and relatively established hobbies and friendships, and are comfortable with their own way of living. But they do not have the courage to choose to stay the same. They do not even have the will to stay single and not get married."

Kakeru was lost for words.

- Omitted -

"However, perhaps because of the abundance of information available today, they tend to demand romance as a prerequisite for marriage. This person isn't right for me or I'm not feeling it — if the love they see in dramas or hear about doesn't seem possible, even if they are inexperienced in love, they think, 'This is not the one.' On top of that, when others point out that they may have unrealistic standards, they immediately deny it. 'I don't have high standards at all. They just weren't the right fit for me. I'm not aiming too high. I know I can't expect too much in love,' they say so humbly and defensively."

"But," said Onozato, looking up at Kakeru as if testing him,

"While they are all so humble and have such low self-esteem, they are very narcissistic. They don't want to get hurt or to change. 'I was not expecting much, I just wanted to find a little happiness, so why did things turn out like this?' Even if they start looking for a spouse because their parents told them to, their romantic preferences may not be so easily subjugated. I suspect this was the case for Mami."