

The Shadow of a Blue Cat

Naoyuki Ii, trans. from the Japanese by Wayne P. Lammers. Dalkey Archive, \$17.95 trade paper (280p) ISBN 978-1-56478-641-8



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In this bittersweet and satisfying novel, 51-year-old Yuki Yajima contemplates the events that have led to his recently having become the father of a two-month-old, his unplanned second child born 17 years after his first daughter. Yuki, who has "a tendency to forget that institutions and laws are merely a thin outer shell covering the living bodies and myriad desires that lie underneath," revisits three main periods of his past: the summer in his teens when he visited his bachelor uncle; his early employed life alongside Ogita, a college friend who would later betray him; and the past year of his life, in which Yuki discovers that Ogita is dying of cancer and Yuki's teenage daughter starts hanging out with a guy Yuki doesn't approve of. As the narrative cycles through layers of time, what emerges is a ruminative and deliberate (some might call it slow) portrait of a man who does his best to think things through and forge ahead despite life's disappointments and curveballs. (July)

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