

Kanazawa

David Joiner

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A husband and wife must reconcile their differing visions of their future in David Joiner's evocative novel *Kanazawa*.

Emmitt's work as an English professor leaves him distressed and disconnected. He believes leaving his position and signing a lease on a traditional Japanese home will help him rediscover his sense of self and purpose. His wife, Mirai, neither shares his belief nor appears for the lease signing appointment. The couple begins reevaluating their needs, grappling with their fears about the future, and acknowledging the ways that their pasts (Mirai's thwarted dreams, in particular) shaped them.

The book is an homage to Japanese culture, the city of Kanazawa, and the Kanazawan writer Izumi Kyōka. Indeed, Kyōka's works are Emmitt's main source of intellectual respite, thanks to the challenge represented in reading and translating them. He is preoccupied with classic Japanese literature, feeling both connected to, and as though he missed out on, the history it represents. His tendency to romanticize Japan's past causes friction with Mirai, who feels that the past is better left alone.

Emmitt's desire to remain in Kanazawa conflicts with Mirai's desire to live in Tokyo. His dream of living in and renovating a machiya, a traditional townhouse, clashes with her need for stability. The push and pull between Emmitt's needs and his marriage's stability is evidenced by the breathless, tense conversations that the couple has about their living situation and Emmitt's decision-making. Within these conversations, both characters become more real. Their motivations and foibles solidify, revealed in careful layers that illuminate the multifaceted, interrelated issues within their relationships with each other and family members.

With its deliberate, expressive descriptions of the city and the mountains that surround it, *Kanazawa* is a character-driven novel that illustrates the importance of communication and compromise.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (January / February 2022)

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