



Translucent Tree

Nobuko Takagi

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The characters in *Translucent Tree* (Vertical, 978-1-934287-14-9) are steeped in love and also handle peripherally the concepts of home and belonging. In this novel, winner of the Tanizaki Award, Go and Chigiri meet again after twenty-five years. Go can still picture the teenage girl Chigiri once was, perched in a tree while a film crew, of which Go was a part, made a documentary about Chigiri's father, the last swordsmith in the town of Tsurugi. Life (children, jobs, marriage) has exhausted both of them, but still they recognize each other and the attraction is immediate.

Japanese author Nobuko Takagi writes with a fluidity that complements the hard, metallic background story about swords and daggers and the families that made them. Her descriptions of sex, especially, sluice through the reader's conscious with careful deftness; American sex rarely appears so wholly, unabashedly pleasurable on the page without devolving into a trite display of flesh.

Like the greatest love stories from around the world, *Translucent Tree* is a sad one. But it's also one that makes us look inward, to wonder if we too have been lucky enough, willing enough, to welcome the kind of passion that changes us.

(August 18, 2009)

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