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**PREMONITION SHADES ON YORE
CANVAS IN HARUKI MURAKAMI'S *KAFKA
ON THE SHORE* AND *SPUTNIK
SWEETHEART***

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Abstract

Traumatic experiences from the past can have a profound effect on our present relationships. Haruki Murakami skilfully captured these experiences in his novels. In *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka's mother and sister abandoned him as a child leaving him with his tyrannical father. It created an overwhelming and lasting effect on Kafka's ability to forge close and healthy relationships. The deprivation of motherly love and sisterly affection made him have dreams about sexual intercourse with Sakura and a real encounter with Miss Saeki fulfilling his father's Oedipal prophecy. In *Sputnik Sweetheart*, Miu sees her alter ego indulging in filthy intimacy while being stuck overnight on a Ferris Wheel. The sight made her incompetent to form healthy sexual relationships with anyone, even her husband. She started having trouble trusting her own body, sexuality, and desires and had issues being close to others physically and emotionally. Learning to process and heal from our previous traumas is essential for establishing healthy connections in the present. Although it may be a drawn-out, tedious, and challenging process, it is achievable. The paper is an effort to explore and analyse the justification of the characters' actions.

Keywords: Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*, *Sputnik Sweetheart*, trauma, incest.

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INTRODUCTION:

Regarded as a forerunner in postmodern literature with elements of nihilism and surrealism in his writings, Haruki Murakami has been expanding on this core of darkness ever since he began writing. He creates corridors, libraries, tunnels, dismal passages, and deep wells in his writings. His narrators, generally iterations of the same person and most likely versions of Murakami himself, travel across them from everyday urban ennui to an unfathomable philosophical void. These stories lead back to the location where Murakami found them. He explains the strange incidents that occur in his works due to his everyday personal existence.

Existentialism, death, isolation, sex, trauma, solitude, self-exploration, coming of age and dreams are central threads in his works, all intertwined with Tokyo, cats and music. His characters are usually reticent, awkward, and distant. The places where they find themselves and, to a certain degree, the territories where their minds wander, all these complex, often dismal mental processes and previous anecdotes, combined with the author's rich and extensive countryside representations, lure readers to Murakami's writings. His compositions are distinguished by their cultural purity and objectivity to global civilisation.

His characters appear genuine, drawing and pulling us all into his reality, regardless of how weird the circumstances are. When he talks about people living in the subconscious and conscious worlds, readers assume he is talking about the anxieties, sorrows, and traumas within each of us through his characters. Unlike other contemporary writers, Murakami writes for everyday people, presenting a remarkable side of their existence. He is an aesthetically distinct and accessible writer who uses simple language to create intense

situations. To varying degrees of success, he focuses on a small quantity of existence and everyday tedium. His ability to express sentiments and sophisticated ideas in a lovely, emotional and sensitive style is exceptional. Even though the readers are miles apart from him, the elegance of Murakami's sentences and their structure makes readers feel nostalgic.

"Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction, but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn't something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside of you." (Murakami 4)

This passage from the opening chapter of Haruki Murakami's *Kafka on the Shore* perfectly expresses the anguish of the young protagonist. He renames himself Kafka, after his favourite author and escapes his home out of desperation to escape his controlling father and the family curse he believes he is destined to repeat. However, the nightmares that plague his waking existence and the memories of his mother and sister who went missing are more challenging to escape. *Kafka on the Shore* is a massive literary riddle first published in Japanese in 2002 and translated into English three years later. It features mysterious underworlds, time travel, and secret histories. The readers love figuring out how surreal visuals, silly figures, and unsettling coincidences work together. Every other chapter is narrated by Kafka, with the rest focusing on an older man named Satoru Nakata. After waking up from a coma he fell into during World War II, Nakata loses his ability to read and write but gets an unusual ability to communicate with cats.

When asked to track down a missing pet, Nakata is thrust down a perilous path that parallels Kafka's. Shortly, prophecies come true, doorways to other universes open, and fish and leeches shower from the sky. Nevertheless, what connects these two personalities, and is it a force that either can control? The clash of different universes runs throughout Murakami's works, and he frequently weaves fantastical threads via human experience, metaphysical possibilities, and Japanese culture and history. Military ghosts, biological attacks and murky plots are all included in *Kafka on the Shore*. Murakami's work straddles historical periods and draws on various cultural traditions. From food and literature and ghost stories, references to Western life and Japanese customs converge. He also enjoys musical references in all his books. Prince and Led Zeppelin keep the runaway Kafka comfortable as he explores the streets of an unfamiliar city. He soon seeks safety in an opulent private library. While he spends his days reading over old volumes and thinking about a peculiar painting and the enigmatic owner of the library, he also befriends the librarian, who exposes him to classical music such as Schubert. Murakami's art is even more captivating because of his melodic sensibility. He regularly blurs the barrier between reality and a fantasy world and is regarded as a master of magic lying in the mundane. The characters in *Kafka on the Shore* are confronted with a plethora of supernatural distractions, ranging from a love-sick ghost to a flute constructed from cat souls. There are no simple solutions to these problems. Instead, they leave us in awe of the human spirit's ability to deal with the unanticipated. While Kafka appears suspended in time, compassion and sincerity at the heart of his quest propel him forward. Eventually, he accepts his inner turmoil, and his experience mirrors that of the reader: the farther you go, the more you discover.

The experience of being left by a family member can be highly traumatic, leaving the individual feeling forsaken, alone, and unsupported. It can be especially difficult for children, who may feel unworthy of love or attention. Additionally, the experience may induce insecurity and a lack of faith in other people.

In *Kafka on the Shore*, Kafka Tamura was deserted by his mother and her sister when he was four. Separated at a very early age, he did not feel attached to other females around him. He is a shy, introverted child with no friends at school. Kafka's bond with his father was strained. After eleven years of feeling rejected, he resolved to leave his oppressive father and his Oedipal prophecy. After leaving his residence, Kafka travels to another city to escape the curse foretold by his father. All he could think about was his mother and sister everywhere he went. Kafka is escaping his father's curse and hunting for his missing mother and sister. As a result, when he meets Sakura on a bus, he assumes she is his sister as his sister would be about the same age as Sakura. Soon after, he seeks refuge in a library, wherein he meets Miss Saeki, who runs the Komura Memorial Library. People are attracted to her because of her elegance and simplicity, but she is just an empty shell of a person who survives the processes of existence. She lives mainly in her memories and fantasies of the period before her lover died.

Additionally, she emerges as a fifteen-year-old spirit trapped in eternity in the everlasting realm. Miss Saeki laments most of her life following her lover's death, believing she only committed follies and should have passed away long ago. Nevertheless, Kafka is intrigued by her intelligence and beauty. She makes him feel nostalgic. He sees her as a sexual companion but, at the same time, a motherly figure.

As a fifteen-year-old lad with no feminine affection, Kafka has no clue how to act in and around females. While staying with Sakura overnight, he imagines her while she jerks him off. He has no idea of the morality of refraining from doing this with his sister. He is a desolate young man who grew up in a household with a strict upbringing. He develops the theory that Miss Saeki is his mother; yet, one night in the library, he engages sexually with her, fulfilling the Oedipal prophecy.

The anguish of a young child being abandoned by their mother and sibling will never be fully healed. It will always be a part of the child's life, plaguing them in their nightmares and haunting their memories. There are numerous ways to deal with this trauma, but there is no way to forget it. This abandonment profoundly influences Kafka, leaving him feeling neglected, unloved, undesired and unworthy.

To convey the tale of a twisted triangle of distinctively unrequited loves, *Sputnik Sweetheart* transports us to a cosmopolitan Japan full of coffee shops, the Beatles, jazz bars and Jack Kerouac. A college student, solely identified as K, falls in love with Sumire, his junior. She dropped out of the university to chase her dream of being an author, and K was her closest confidante and friend. However, her adherence to a messy writer existence prevents her from making any romantic commitments—until she meets Miu, a seventeen-year-old, betrothed, and far more polished businesswoman. When Miu offers Sumire a job as her secretary, she accepts without hesitation, immersed in these new sentiments of love. Sumire begins working with Miu, whose wine company necessitates extensive travel worldwide. When Sumire goes missing on an island off the coast of Greece, K is summoned to join the search team. He soon finds himself

lured back into her world, plagued by sinister, disturbing images.

Murakami incorporates elements of magical realism into the novel, leaving the narrative open to interpretation by the reader. While searching, we come across elements of magical realism in two documents by Sumire, in which it is revealed that when Miu was younger, she had an out-of-body experience while she was stuck in a Ferris wheel for an entire night. She then uses a pair of binoculars to spy on her apartment and is horrified to see herself in her room with another man. She finds herself in a hospital the next day, terribly injured, with her hair changed utterly white overnight. Miu is said to have split into two personas that night and that alternative realms exist in the universe. As a result, when Sumire vanishes without a trace, K speculates that she may have transported herself into a parallel universe where she could be together and happier with Miu. K returns to Japan and his teaching career, believing that Sumire will return to their world eventually.

On some level, Miu and Sumire, as well as Sumire and K, have amicable relationships. However, Miu cannot return Sumire's love, and Sumire cannot return K's love. Miu is also wedded, yet she does not have sexual relations with her spouse. K is dating an unhappy married woman (the parent of one of his students). There are no happy romantic relationships in this novel, and Murakami does not come close to describing any in his other novels. We are all *Sputniks*.

Albeit intertwined with a love story and a detective story, *Sputnik Sweetheart* is eventually remembered as a poignant reflection on human need. Although *Sputnik Sweetheart* appears to be grounded in reality, the narrator quickly learns that there is a realm of fractured

spirits and puzzling disappearances. In reality, the unexpected and irrelevant episode helps tie everything together. Murakami sets the perfect mood and then skilfully weaves the storyline together.

Miu was a successful businesswoman who had big plans for the future. She had everything going for her except that one thing. She could not maintain a steady sexual relationship with anyone after age twenty-five. Miu had an out-of-body experience in Switzerland when she saw herself at her apartment with another man, Ferdinando, whom she believed was following her. She spent the night stranded on a broken-down Ferris wheel. In the cold and loneliness, she looked into her apartment with binoculars and witnessed herself having sex with him. The man was torturing her in unfathomable ways. The sight caused her to feel as if she were divided in two, strange experiences that vanished her sexual desires. This trauma lingered with her for countless years. Even though she continued with her life, marrying and expanding her business, the trauma stuck with her like a leech. She could not maintain a regular sexual life with her husband even because the vision of another man handling her stuck with her and made her feel dirty and unworthy of love or compassion from anyone else. The trauma Miu experienced is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a mental health condition caused by a distressing incident, either experienced or witnessed. Flashbacks, depression, nightmares, low self-esteem, acute anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event are all possible symptoms. Sexual abuse can result in PTSD and other mental health issues or cause risky behaviours like unsafe sexual activity or addictions.

When Sumire opened her heart to Miu, Miu could not reciprocate Sumire's love and affection for her. Her sexual desire for everyone disappeared after the shocking,

painful encounter when she was twenty-five. Her husband acknowledged her situation and continued to support her. However, she could only provide emotional support to her husband and Sumire. Such experiences could be terrifying and upsetting for anyone. Her experience that night had profound and life-changing consequences. Miu experienced many feelings, including disbelief, shock, fear, rage, and depression. She also experienced remorse or shame over what had transpired and feelings of estrangement from friends and family.

CONCLUSION:

The present is a product of the past. Past traumas impact a person's current relationships, influence how they process and deal with negative emotions, and may affect how they connect with others. People will face numerous hardships and afflictions in their lives. These examples of past experiences affect how a person handles emotions, relationships, and interactions. The more traumatic the experience, the more likely it is to impact them negatively.

Kafka was raised without a female idol to care for and look after him. As a result, admitting his sexual desires for Miss Saeki, whom he mistook for his mother, is comprehensible. That Oedipal curse occurred when he accidentally slept with her. His affections for Sakura were equally dubious, though there was no evidence linking Sakura to Kafka. He did, however, regard her to be his sister. These conflicting emotions rendered him unable to develop meaningful relationships with anyone.

Miu witnessed the horrible sight of herself being sexually abused by a stranger while stranded on a Ferris wheel. Sexual abuse by anyone can leave a lasting wound inside anyone's heart. Miu was unable to form a sexual relationship with anyone after that day. Sumire and Miu's husband admired her, but she could not gratify them. The

experience emerged later in her life as fear, mistrust, and anger towards sex, which had a long-lasting effect on her. Both Kafka and Miu were tormented by their pasts, making it challenging to form meaningful relationships with others.

Understanding and recovering from past experiences is critical for forming healthy bonds in the present. Although it may be a long, tiresome, and complicated procedure, achieving the goal is possible. Helplessness, humiliation, defectiveness, and self-blame are symptoms but not realities. No matter how tough it may appear, with some support, it is possible to come to grips with what occurred, restore a feeling of security and confidence, and begin to recover and move on with life.

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