

Book Review: *The Cat Who Saved Books* by Sosuke Natsukawa and Translated by Louise Heal Kawai

Abhishek Thakur

Assistant Professor of English, Sandip University, Sijoul, Madhubani, Bihar, India

Cats hold a significant place in Japanese literature, with notable examples dating back to the early days of modern Japanese literary works. Natsume Soseki's *I Am a Cat*, a satirical portrayal of Meiji-era society through the perspective of a cat, stands as one of the pioneering classics. (In 2021, Chiroru Kobato faithfully adapted the story into a manga, which was translated by Zach Davisson.) Another influential author, Junichiro Tanizaki, published the novella *A Cat, a Man, and Two Women* three decades later.

Haruki Murakami's literary works also prominently feature cats. In *Kafka on the Shore*, for instance, one of the main characters possesses the ability to communicate with felines. Over the past decade, English translations of Hiro Arikawa's *The Travelling Cat Chronicles*, Takahashi Hiraide's *The Guest Cat*, and Genki Kawamura's *If Cats Disappeared from the World* have all captivated readers.

In this distinguished company, Sosuke Natsukawa's *The Cat Who Saved Books*, translated by Louise Heal Kawai, finds its place.

"The Cat Who Saved Books" by Sosuke Natsukawa, is a heartwarming and enchanting tale that explores the profound impact of books on our lives. This delightful story takes readers on a journey filled with courage, compassion, and the transformative power of literature.

The narrative centers around Rintaro Natsuki, a young boy who inherits a tiny second-hand bookshop called Natsuki Books after the passing of his beloved grandfather. The bookshop becomes Rintaro's refuge, allowing him to immerse himself in the world of literature as he finds solace within its towering shelves of captivating stories. However, when faced with the possibility of closing the shop, Rintaro's world is once again thrown into turmoil.

Enter Tiger, a talking tabby cat who seeks Rintaro's assistance in a mission to save books from those who have imprisoned, mistreated, and betrayed them. What follows are three magical adventures, with Rintaro and Tiger forming an unlikely duo, fighting to protect the books they hold dear. The duo's journey not only reveals the incredible bond between humans and animals but also explores the profound impact that books can have on individuals and society.

Natsukawa weaves a captivating narrative that effortlessly transports readers into a world where books become living entities, each possessing its own story and significance. The author's vivid descriptions breathe life into the characters and settings, allowing readers to become fully immersed in the story's enchanting atmosphere.

One of the notable strengths of "The Cat Who Saved Books" is the underlying message it conveys about the importance of literature and the role it plays in our lives. The book reminds us that books are not mere collections of words on paper but powerful vessels of knowledge, comfort, and inspiration. Through Rintaro's journey, readers are encouraged to appreciate the value of reading, as well as the positive impact it can have on personal growth and empathy.

Moreover, the endearing relationship between Rintaro and Tiger adds an extra layer of charm to the story. Their unlikely partnership highlights the importance of companionship, friendship, and the unconditional love that animals can offer. This dynamic duo captures the hearts of readers, making them cheer for their success and marvel at the strength they find within themselves.

Sosuke Natsukawa's storytelling prowess is brilliantly translated by Louise Heal Kawai, who preserves the essence of the original Japanese narrative. Kawai's translation seamlessly brings the characters and their emotions to life, allowing readers to connect with the story on a profound level.

In conclusion, "The Cat Who Saved Books" is a captivating and heartwarming tale that celebrates the magic of literature. Sosuke Natsukawa's enchanting storytelling, coupled with Louise Heal Kawai's exceptional translation, makes this book a must-read for those who appreciate the transformative power of books. This charming narrative reminds us of the joy, solace, and inspiration that can be found within the pages of a well-loved book.

References/Reviews:

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