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This collection of ten connected stories or dreams has a surrealistic atmosphere. Some are weird, others are grotesquely funny. Among the ten nights, the first, second, third, and fifth nights start with the same sentence "*This is the dream I dreamed.*" Whether Soseki actually had these dreams or whether they were complete fictions is not known.

Ten Nights' Dreams Details

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From Reader Review Ten Nights' Dreams for online ebook

Holmlock says

Natsume S?seki, documents a series of his dreams to share with the world. For the most part, these tales don't read as normal short stories. They read as exactly what they are, dreams, with all the surrealism and absurdity of dreams. They're interesting enough to keep the pages turning, but one stands out above the rest and is what really makes this book worth a read. "The 3rd Night's Dream" is an unsettling tale in which the narrator carries on his back a blind child who seems to posses an uncanny omniscience of the world around them. It's quite good. I'll say no more so as not to spoil it.

A very, very short book, not really worth a purchase unless part of a larger collection. However, if your library has a copy it wouldn't hurt to check it out.

Kathleen says

"Somehow the world has become unsettled. A battle may break out at any moment. There is panic in the air, as though an unbridled horse has plunged wildly from a burning stable and is day and night running amok, round and round the house and grounds, raucous grooms in pursuit."

Nick G says

Intriguing, but not as much as I was looking for. Maybe I missed something - *I hope I missed something* - but I'm not sure.

I was so excited to find this book, couldn't wait for it to arrive from Amazon. I'm facinated by dreams. I feel dreams are one of the still-untapped frontiers of the human experience, and I love to incorporate vivid dreams into my own writing. I couldn't wait to see Soskei's approach, see what sort of creation resulted from dreaming and writing by him. I mean, I read he was a major influence on many Japanese writers, including Murakami, and most of the reviews made this book sound amazing.

But for me, it falls flat. Mostly, it feels lost in translation. I'm sure that much more is there when read in Japanese, but in this version the sentences are minimalistic in a bad way. Details are conveyed with about as much enthusiasm and depth as a pamphlet about flossing that my dentist always has in stock. A lot of these stories are very cool based on the strangeness of the details alone, but that is all you get. I wanted so much more. Of course, meanings can be speculated, but no more concretely than when hearing about someone else's strange dream then having them ask "what does it mean?". You can create all the connections and 'deeper meaning' you want, but nothing is certain.

That is what the book is, I believe. Soseki had a dream, then wrote it down. Interesting of course; he had facinating dreams and was outright about letting us know (most of the stories start out with the phrase 'This is the dream I dreamed'), but I thought perhaps there was more, that I had missed some of the depth. I immediately jumped on Google to search for analysis of this book, but there isn't much. I did find this quote though, from a forum posting: "One scholar, analyzing the components of the dreams, concluded that Soseki

had actually dreamed them."

In the end, I'm pissed that I paid \$15 for this, maybe 30 pages, of actual writing. The rest is a summary of Soseki's life in a format fit for the back of a cereal box, that and about 40 pages of the definitions for Japanese terms used in the works. Oh, and almost [completely] forgot, each story has a black and white picture or two of the most generic image of something "Japanese" from the story (example of a hair style, straw sandals, a paper lamp, etc.), that left me feeling like the expected reader was a second grader discussing Japan one day in Social Studies. Yep, that's it. This book treated me like I was a second grader studying Soseki for a day, prepared with top of the line technology available in 1983 (although this version was actually published in 2000).

General H. Sassafras says

I've always been a fan of Japanese literature - it always has a darker, depressing level in even the most light-hearted, jaunty stories.

Souseki Natsume is one of the more famous Japanese authors, with more of a nostalgic feel as though we would think of (if you can stand him) Hemingway or J.D. Salinger - a classic author who most people love with good reason.

These all have a subtle undertone of depression and angst - partly because Souseki himself was plagued by chronic depression throughout his life; He stands out as an author of, I suppose 'modern Japanese literature' - and anyone who is genuinely interested in the more cynical nuances of Japanese literature/society may find that reading his dreams (which - for those who care - Akira Kurosawa did a movie version of several) is a great gateway into the heart of 'Japan.'

Eadweard says

My dreams are not this interesting.

Jee Koh says

Natsume Soseki's *Ten Nights' Dreams*, translated by Takumi Kashima and Loretta R. Lorenz, comprises ten dreams written like very short stories. Or are they short stories that appear dreamlike? The strongest of them have the mysterious quality of dreams.

In "The Eighth Night," the narrator-dreamer at a barber shop could see people passing by the lattice-window reflected in the mirror in front of him. When he turned around, however, to see a woman counting her yen, she could not be seen. After he paid and went out of the shop, he saw five oblong basins full of goldfish. The goldfish seller, eyes fixed on the goldfish before him, hardly cared about the busy people passing by.

The dream of "The Tenth Night" was strongly sexual. A young man had to keep tapping the snouts of a never-ending line of pigs. When one pig finally succeeded in licking him, he collapsed.

Other dreams have the rigor of a moral lesson. Challenged by a monk to achieve meditation, the narrator-samurai in "The Second Night" attempts strenuously to meditate, but is defeated by his refusal to be beaten by a monk. "The Third Night" tells the story of a murderer who carries his victim on his back in the shape of a child.

The weaker dream-stories in the collection either do not rise above the anecdotal (like the ninth dream) or end with less surprise than they portend (like the fourth and fifth dreams). My favorite is the tenth and final dream, which reminds me of Legion in the Gospels. The Panama hat, given by the dying young man Shoutarou to his friend Ken-san, who told the story to the narrator, is also a beautiful touch.

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Pari says

I received a free e-copy via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.
I didn't know what to expect. I have always loved anthologies and this might be my favourite.
Japan is such a wonderful country. The tradition, culture, systems are so different from ours (Indian) yet so similar. It was so fascinating to read about them.
My dreams are not this vivid or interesting. No one ones if they are dreams or fiction, but they were awesome.
Some of my favourites were the Second Night, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Ninth nights. I didn't understand many of them. The Goldfish seller, for example. And the snake charmer, without the snake.

Onírica says

No por ser de un escritor clave se convierte necesariamente en una obra imprescindible que degustar. La recopilación de sueños es interesante por la curiosidad que despierta el saber cómo es el mundo onírico de Soseki Natsume, por supuesto. Pero el resultado no sacia y el contenido no revela nada excepcional que aporte brillo a la literatura japonesa. Ni a la obra total del escritor.

Leir says

This is the good read I read.

A book was handed to me by a young man and a crow. I sat at my desk and read it with rapidity. Dream language filled my mind, sending it spinning in a furious and divine wind. It puzzled and challenged me. It reminded me of a plain prosed wake. A wake I'll have to finish again, as I will with this. There are riddles in

this book. Riddles I have solved - others I have not.

I picked up my Havana hat - and discovered why.

Pawarut Jongsirirag says

Wayward Child says

Very surreal and imaginative, but, above all, beautiful, even though there is a creeping feeling. I have to admit, I was scared while reading the dreams. It felt like reading a script of a horror movie.

Perhaps that was because I had had an argument with my mother just before I started reading this. And, the words in the first dream petrified me: "But, I am going to die, there is no way around it."

I quarreled with my mom because of that - because she is dying and accepting it. Don't get me wrong, she is not ill, she does not have cancer or any other kind of fatal disease. The reason why she's dying is that she has turned into a zombie, rotting before my eyes, no hopes, no dreams, no ambitions or goals for the future. I can't stand watching her like that anymore, and that's why I confronted her, which escalated into a huge fight.

But, these dreams, they reminded me of my own fears and doubts. Maybe that's why I was so scared while reading them. I was afraid that my own mother would metaphorically turn into one of these demons, haunting the living, because she wasn't strong enough in life to fix her own problems. That's what I've been afraid of, I just wasn't aware of it.

It started snowing today in my city, and, although I prefer snow and winter to the other seasons, it seemed

dull and uninteresting to me after the argument. But, as always when sometimes bad happens to me, I gut it out. I put on a coat and went out on my balcony to smoke a cigarette. I watched the tiny snow flakes or, as Japanese say yuki (?? and indulged myself in the beauty surrounding me. I then went inside and read this work of art and things got back to its place again. The snow seemed perfect to me again.

This is fantasy, this is ecstasy, this is intoxication with beauty beyond our world and far beyond our reach. We do not live solely for ourselves. We live for others too and also for that sense of surreal, unreachable and unexplainable. At least I do. Fantasy is the other side of me, the one I will never turn away from.

Florencia says

The First Night

'The sun rises. And the sun sets. And the sun rises and sets... When the red sun rises in the east and sets in the west, then I will... Will you wait for me?'

The Second Night

'I cannot reach the state of nothingness.' Whenever I felt I was about to reach it, the pain seemed to become more intense, bringing me back. I felt anger. I felt regret. I felt deep chagrin at my failing attempt. Tears flowed from my eyes... But I remained sitting patiently. I had to endure this gut-rending sorrow.

The Third Night

I began to feel afraid of him even though he was my son.

The Fourth Night

The old man still made his way straight through the river, singing.
'The river will deepen.
The day will darken.
The world will straighten its path.'

The Fifth Night

The captain scrutinized my face in the firelight and asked me if I would live or die. It was the custom in those days to ask a captive that question. To answer that one would live meant submission; that one would die meant no surrender at any cost. I answered shortly.

The Sixth Night

At last I had to accept the fact that the Ni? does not reside in the wood of the Meiji period. I also learned the reason why Ukei is alive today.

The Seventh Night

One night when I was alone on deck watching the stars, a foreigner came up and asked me if I knew any astronomy. Here I was almost ready to kill myself as a non-entity. What did I need to know about astronomy? But I kept silent. The foreign man began to tell me about the seven stars over Taurus. He said that the stars and the sea were something God had created. Finally he asked me if I believed in God. I just kept silent, looking up at the sky.

The Eighth Night

As I crossed the threshold into a barber shop, I saw several people there, all dressed in white, who asked in chorus if they might help me.

I stood in the middle of the room, looking around. It was square. The windows on two sides were open and on the other two walls hung mirrors. I counted six mirrors.

The Ninth Night

The world has somehow become unsettled. A battle may break out at any moment. There is panic in the air...

The Tenth Night

Sh?tar?, doffing his Panama hat, politely declined, again and again. The woman asked him whether he preferred to be licked by pigs, since he would not venture to jump off the precipice.

Tonight

This is the dream I dreamed.

I was sitting at a table for one. The room was covered in a timid, dim light. I began to notice a scent. One that lifted my spirits in ways I cannot explain. While I was trying to guess the origin of such irresistible scent, I saw a woman approaching me. She was wearing a white apron.

“Miss, where is this exquisite aroma coming from?,” I gently asked.

“Over there,” she answered, pointing at my right. I could not discern a thing.

“What is it?,” I asked, almost whispering.

“What do you think it is?”

“I believe it is the scent of hope,” I replied, as I felt my soul absorbing all the poetry of the room. All the history of my homeland.

The woman got closer to me, stared at me for a while and then said:

“It is the scent of lemon pie. You are at my coffee shop. You read two books, had three lattes and two pieces of lemon pie. I want to close my shop and go home. Are you ever going to leave?”

Dec 10, 15

* Also on my blog.

Serdar says

I just reread this in preparation for a project that I've been doing about a number of the author's other works. It's an unusual piece of work for Natsume in big part because he was not a writer who generally lent himself to bouts of surrealism or flights of fantasy. Whenever things like that appeared in his works, they were always momentary and passing, and they were more about adorning the text that he was composing instead of being a primary component of it. But the one thing that comes through with this work is that he had a very good grasp of how to translate dream logic into fiction, such as the way that in dreams we always seem to know that things are a certain way, but without ever quite knowing why. In theory this is a footnote to the rest of his work in more ways than one, but I found myself enjoying it above and beyond its value in that respect.
