



## Spring Snow

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In 1912 Kiyooki Matsugae, the handsome only son of an old and very wealthy samurai family, is one of the most privileged young men in Tokyo society. Sensitive and prone to melancholy, however, he feels alienated from his family, insecure, and unmotivated. Although powerfully drawn to Satoko, a twenty-year-old girl with whom he was reared, he is too fearful to declare his love.

Tradition demands that Satoko's family find her a husband. Because the love between her and Kiyooki remains unacknowledged, she must commit herself to marriage to the Emperor's son. Kiyooki, finding his courage or perhaps stimulated by the rivalry, confesses his desire, and he and Satoko become lovers. As the intricate political and social machinery of the betrothal proceeds inexorably, their secret affair intensifies. When Satoko becomes pregnant, the lovers find themselves in a trap from which they cannot escape. Both are doomed.

In their culture, their romance is at once social anathema and political treachery. The novel dramatizes the clash between private and public lives and the collision of past and present, as Japan emerges from its long isolation. On another level, we see that the individual is captive to his own emotions and imprisoned by the social structure in which he lives. The young lovers, in the spring of their lives and the bloom of their love, cannot escape the snow-cold reality of their world.

Mishima embodies this bleak, existential drama in a vibrant poetic style, lavish with word paintings of the workings of nature, body, and mind. An entire panorama of personalities and social classes serves as backdrop to the love story and offers us a fascinating glimpse of another time, another culture.

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