



# Donguri shimai

[Acorn Sisters]

By Yoshimoto Banana

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どんぐり姉妹

吉本ばなな

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The chance meeting of a lifetime, a gift from God . . . Such an encounter is inevitably the start of a tale. Once tools like Facebook make it possible to keep tabs on everybody's whereabouts, though, romantic chance meetings are unlikely to happen ever again. In this era, the world needs an author like Yoshimoto Banana. She writes at depth on the mystery of chance in a small tale, showing us the importance of its serendipity—how unexpected chance can give us inspiration, how it can be the strength for us to grasp good fortune.

In this work, two sisters, Donko and Guriko, lose their parents when they are still children and reach adulthood in an unstable environment. Well acquainted with heartache, the two take the time outside their regular jobs to start up an anonymous, free personal website, where they reply to users' reports of various troubles. Via email, Guriko takes on the malaises spreading throughout the society of the day; at the same time, though, she somehow cannot bring herself to search for her own special someone over the Internet. Somewhere inside she has the conviction that when the time comes, she will know with absolute certainty.

One day in a seaside town, she meets a person who appears to be the mother of the man she is looking for. It is then that she learns of his sad fate. Nonetheless, Guriko quietly persuades herself that this was not just a chance meeting—rather, her own thoughts, which she had previously sent out, had bounced from person to person before actually connecting.

This novel teaches us to treasure and maintain the feeling of anonymous goodwill and shows the importance of imagining what lies behind a meeting that appears to be by chance. Do our lives become so much more effective just through prompt information delivered under a real name? This story is essential reading for modern people, who will want to consider their Facebook-type daily lives, so hurried that they strip away the empty canvas of chance. (OM)

## Yoshimoto Banana

Born in 1964. Her novel *Kitchin* [trans. *Kitchen*] was awarded the Kaien Prize for New Writers in 1987. Awarded the Izumi Kyōka Prize for Literature in 1988 for “Munraito shado” [Moonlight Shadow]. Won the Minister of Education Encouragement Prize for New Artists in 1989. Awarded the Yamamoto Shūgorō Prize in the same year for *Tsugumi* [trans. *Goodbye Tsugumi*]. Recipient of numerous international awards. Translations of *Kitchin* and other works have been published in more than 30 countries.

## 吉本ばなな

1964年生まれ。小説『キッチン』で1987年海燕新人文学賞、1988年「ムーンライト・シャドウ」で第16回泉鏡花文学賞受賞。1989年に芸術選奨文部大臣新人賞、同年『TUGUMI』で第2回山本周五郎賞受賞。世界的な文化賞を多く受賞し、『キッチン』他、諸作品は海外30数カ国で翻訳、出版されている。



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神様がくれた運命の、偶然の出会い……。物語の始まるきっかけはそんな出来事がお約束だったけれど、「フェイスブック」等で、あらゆる人びとの消息がつかめるようになれば、ロマンチックな偶然は、ほとんど起こらなくなるかもしれない。そうした時代にあって、吉本ばななは、偶然の神秘を小さな物語の中に深く描き、そのセレンディピティ——ふとした偶然をきっかけにひらめきを得て、幸運をつかみ取る力——の大切さを教えてくれる、やはり現代世界にとってなくてはならない作家であるだろう。

作中の姉妹、どん子とぐり子は、子供の頃に両親を失い、不安定な環境の中で大人になった。心の痛みをよく知る姉妹は、やがて仕事の傍ら、さまざまな悩みを受け付けては返答する匿名、無料の個人サイトをネット上で開く。メールのやりとりを通じて、この時代に広がる病をひきうけるぐり子は、しかし自分の大切な友人（彼）の消息だけは、どうしてもネットで検索する気になれない。「その時」がくれば、絶対にわかるはずだと、彼女はどこかで確信しているのだ。

そしてある日、海辺の街で彼の母親らしき人と出会い、悲しい運命を知る。しかし、ぐり子はその出会いは単なる偶然ではなく、かつて発信した自分の思いが、めぐりめぐって本当に繋がったと、しずかに納得するのだった。

匿名の善意の気持ちを大切に、待ち続けることや、偶然に見える出会いの背景を想像することの大切さを、この小説は教える。実名で速やかな情報だけが人生には有効なのか。偶然の余白を消し去るほど慌ただしいフェイスブック的生活を省みなくなる、現代人必読の中編。(OM)

Also published in: Chinese

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