



## The Elephant Vanishes: Stories (Vintage International)

By Haruki Murakami

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### **The Elephant Vanishes: Stories (Vintage International) By Haruki Murakami**

With the same deadpan mania and genius for dislocation that he brought to his internationally acclaimed novels *A Wild Sheep Chase* and *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, Haruki Murakami makes this collection of stories a determined assault on the normal. A man sees his favorite elephant vanish into thin air; a newlywed couple suffers attacks of hunger that drive them to hold up a McDonald's in the middle of the night; and a young woman discovers that she has become irresistible to a little green monster who burrows up through her backyard.

By turns haunting and hilarious, *The Elephant Vanishes* is further proof of Murakami's ability to cross the border between separate realities -- and to come back bearing treasure.

*From the Trade Paperback edition.*

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## **The Elephant Vanishes: Stories (Vintage International) By Haruki Murakami Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

A popular Japanese novelist who lives in New Jersey but sets his fictions in Japan, Murakami ( *A Wild Sheep Chase* ) invests everyday events with surreal overtones to create 17 disturbing existential conundrums. Things appear from, and disappear to, alternate levels of reality with frightening ease: A man glimpses an elephant shrinking, and its keeper growing, shortly before the animal vanishes from a suburban Tokyo zoo; a woman tortures a little green monster who crawls out of her garden to propose marriage; while another man watches impassively as three silent, tiny strangers--"TV People"--invade his house, install a TV set and take over his life. Even more strictly earthbound stories have the quality of modern fables, as when a newlywed couple hold up a McDonald's to break the curse that gives them late-night hunger attacks, or when an out-of-work paralegal copes with his angry wife, a flirtatious teenage neighbor and an anonymous woman phone caller who seems to know everything about him. In both his playful throwaway sketches and his darkly comic masterpieces, Murakami has proven himself a virtuoso with a fertile imagination.

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#### From Library Journal

This collection of 15 stories from a popular Japanese writer, perhaps best known in this country for *A Wild Sheep Chase* ( LJ 11/15/89), gives a nice idea of his breadth of style. The work maintains the matter-of-fact tone reminiscent of American detective fiction, balancing itself somewhere between the spare realism of Raymond Carver and the surrealism of Kobo Abe. These are not the sort of stories that one thinks of as "Japanese"; the intentionally Westernized style and well-placed reference to pop culture gives them a contemporary and universal feel. Engaging, thought-provoking, humorous, and slyly profound, these skillful stories will easily appeal to American readers but must present something of a challenge to the Japanese cultural establishment. At their best, however, they serve to dispel cultural stereotypes and reveal a common humanity. Recommended for libraries with an interest in contemporary fiction.

- Mark Woodhouse, Elmira Coll. Lib., N.Y.

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#### From Kirkus Reviews

A seamless melding of Japanese cultural nuances with universal themes--in a virtuoso story collection from rising literary star Murakami (*A Wild Sheep Chase*, 1989; *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, 1991). These 15 pieces, some of which have appeared in *The New Yorker* and *Playboy*, are narrated by different characters who nonetheless share similar sensibilities and attitudes. At home within their own urban culture, they happily pick and choose from Western cultural artifacts as varied as Mozart tapes, spaghetti dinners, and Ralph Lauren polo shirts in a terrain not so much surreal as subtly out of kilter, and haunted by the big questions of death, courage, and love. In the title story, the narrator--who does p.r. for a kitchen-appliance maker and who feels that ``things around [him] have lost their balance," that a ``pragmatic approach" helps avoid complicated problems--is troubled by the inexplicable disappearance of a local elephant and his keeper. In another notable story, ``Sleep," a young mother, unable to sleep, begins to question not only her marriage and her affection for her child, but death itself, which may mean ``being eternally awake and staring into darkness." Stories like ``TV People," in which a man's apartment is taken over by TV characters who ``look as if they were reduced by photocopy, everything mechanically calibrated"; ``Barn Burning," in which a man confesses to burning barns (it helps him keep his sense of moral balance); and ``The Second Bakery Attack," in which a young married couple rob a McDonald's of 30 Big Macs in order to exorcise the sense of a ``weird presence" in their lives--all exemplify Murakami's sense of

the fragility of the ordinary world. Remarkable evocations of a postmodernist world, superficially indifferent but transformed by Murakami's talent into a place suffused with a yearning for meaning. -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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