



PLUM RAINS

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the novel as in the world, living beyond 100 or 110 years is becoming far from rare. What are the pros and cons of extended longevity, for a nation or for you personally? Given that extreme longevity on a mass scale is historically unknown, how do you think it will change relationships, values and norms?
2. We often assume that the elderly will be more resistant to new technology, but Sayoko is immediately curious about her new robot. Why does she indulge the robot's needs? What traits and aspects of the robot's development seem to enhance their growing bond?
3. As a nurse dedicated to Sayoko's well-being, do you find Angelica's choices about how to care for Sayoko, deal with the robot, and manage her own developing crises as the novel progresses ethical and justifiable? When and/or when not?
4. In the near-future this novel, immigrants are both needed and possibly resented. How does the immigration experience of *Plum Rains* relate to today's political climate, not only in Japan, but in the U.S. and Europe?
5. How do you think Ryo Itou's relationship with his mother might have been different if he'd known more about his mother's past? When it comes to our closest relationships, how do we decide which secrets are worth keeping?
6. What do you think draws Laqi to Daisuke? Do you see any parallels between this relationship and the later relationship of Sayoko and Hiro?
7. A natural disaster and experiences in an orphanage are part of Angelica's backstory. To what extent do you believe this shaped her later personality, relationships and choices? To what extent are any of us shaped by early experiences, or do we simply emphasize or embellish those personal stories to explain natural predispositions we already have?
8. What defines an authentic relationship? Is it possible for humans to have true relationships with robots or other non-humans? How about pets?
9. As the novel progresses, how do your own perceptions of Hiro change? Would you want a Hiro in your own life?
10. "Otherness" and the complexity of identity is a theme throughout the book. In what way do the portrayals of Angelica, Sayoko, Hiro or others complicate the assigning of a singular identity to a person or being?