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“Fukushima – Lucky Island” (Fukushima-Glückliche Insel)

Abstract

When the power of nature suddenly transforms human lives and brings structured concepts of living out of balance, as it was done by the great earthquake 2011 in Japan, then it becomes clear that the human species has not much under its control. This moment culminating in a triple catastrophe – earthquake, tsunami, nuclear accident - marks in the novel a cut in the careers and lives of a French journalist, a German scientist, an Austrian top manager and an American CIA agent, all living as expats in Japan. The narratives, which are told by a fictional author, are started in a multi-perspective around this historical moment, with the focus on different locations in Tokyo, in the damaged nuclear power plant and in a remote region in Western Japan. From these snapshots, the narrative strands of the stories are developed. Tempo and rhythm of the narrative move between the breathless depiction of the catastrophe and the standstill of time in a Zen monastery.

Scattered pieces of social and personal lives gradually assemble into a new puzzle.

Clarification emerges from the crisis. The journalist, the agent, and the scientist provide information about disastrous developments. Investigative journalism and the clarification of a murder case by secret agents uncover far-reaching criminal activities in which the nuclear industry, politics, and the mafia play an ominous role. Gradually life is coming back to balance and even a disrupted family is reunified. But some cases remain unsolved. Finally, one person is missing. It is the scientist. His diary is published at the end of the book by the narrator.

The novel has different facets, fiction and nonfiction, so it is documentary, societal, scientific, romance and thriller all in one. Above all, it provides insights into the dazzling and condensed life of Western expats in Japan. It sheds light on the stirring, frightening and tragic moments in the crisis. It deals with the fascination of modern Japan, but also with the horror of the unleashed nuclear technology. It is about being uprooted and about flight, about becoming a stranger in a foreign country and in one's own, and finally about the search for oneself.