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Yoshimoto, Banana. Goodbye, Tsugumi

Maria Shirakawa has spent her childhood waiting, along with her mother, for her father to obtain a divorce from his first wife. Mother and daughter spent those years living in the seaside inn of Maria?s aunt and uncle, only seeing Maria?s father on the few occasions he was able to get away from his life in the city to visit. Maria grew up alongside her cousin Tsugumi, a young woman with a frail and sickly body but a vibrant and almost malicious spirit. Freed from common behavioral norms by the deep conviction that she could die at any moment, Tsugumi is rude, loud-mouthed, spoiled, and too clever by half. She can also be enchanting and mischievous when the mood strikes her. Maria is always torn between annoyance and admiration for her cousin, who is free to flirt with boys and concoct elaborate pranks and revenge schemes with an ease Maria?who is bound by a determination to be the perfect daughter for her distant father?can only admire and resent by turns. When Maria and her mother are finally able to join Maria?s father in the city and become a true family, she finds that she misses Tsugumi bitterly. When Maria?s aunt and uncle determine to sell the inn and move to another town, Maria heads back to spend one last summer with her infuriating and enchanting cousin.

Deliberately paced, with very little emphasis on plot, *Goodbye, Tsugumi* is a delicate character study. Some awkwardness in sentence structure can perhaps be blamed on the translation from Japanese. For those readers who enjoy quiet, lyrical works and are willing to forego action for insight.

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