

Mizuki's Awakening: Tracing a Journey from Illusion to Identity in *The Full Moon Coffee Shop* by Mai Mochizuki

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Abstract:

This paper examines the quiet yet profound self-exploration of Mizuki Serikawa in *The Full Moon Coffee Shop* by Mai Mochizuki, viewed through the interlinked aspects of magical realism, animal studies, and humanistic-existential theories. The narrative uses celestial symbolism and cosmic imagery to retrace Mizuki's self, identity, purpose. The coffee shop acts as a tiny space where emotions are unpacked and explains the inner quest for one's identity. Under the moonlit night, emotional healing takes place, where cats act as catalyst for catharsis.

Keywords:

1. Self-realization
2. Existentialism
3. Identity formation
4. Personal Reflection

The Full Moon Coffee shop explores themes of identity, loneliness and choice. It explores how in a magical café that opens only on Full Moon night, delicious celestial desserts and astrological wisdom are served by talking tortoiseshell cats to each visitor according to their inner state. Like a tailored gourmet experience, guests visiting the café receive celestial desserts that reflect their emotional and existential needs as they cannot pick out one from a selection of drinks and snacks on their own. Central to the narrative is the story of Mizuki Serikawa, a woman caught between the brilliance of her past and the uncertainty of her present who attains clarity and purpose after moving through chaos and confusion.

For Mizuki, the café quietly reveals the confusion she carries within. She was served a stack of Full Moon Pancakes drizzling with Astral syrup and a sphere of butter on top of them, along with a cup of black tea. She found the combination of butter and the Astral syrup to be extraordinary. After taking a sip of the black tea, she felt warmth radiating throughout her body and finds them quite extraordinary and nostalgic. The cats begin explaining about the power of letting go of negative emotions like regret, jealousy and obsession from mind. Mizuki who lived in a state of urban isolation always had a guilt of choosing scriptwriting as her career over role of schoolteacher and got disappointed when the path she chose did not benefit as her pitch was rejected by a TV production company. When she thought this for a moment, tears had begun to trickle down her cheeks because, those were not the only things she wanted to let go, but also feared what others thought of her, the terror of being criticized and her refusal to acknowledge the truth. The cats explained her that crying can do a world of good as water washes everything away.

Now, they added a cup of Astral milk fresh—from the Milky Way— into the tea cup. As soon as the milk splashed in, the amber-coloured tea took on a pearly colour. The cats offer insights into the process of transition that an individual undergoes in every phase of life—much like how the cold water becomes hot

water, and the leaves turn it into tea. Then milk is added, transforming it into something entirely different again. The tea begins as simple water, but experience transforms it completely.

The cats further explained that there are certain things that one must learn in each unique phase of life, which made Mizuki to know about the idea of mapping life phases along planetary paths —beginning with the Moon, followed by Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and finally Pluto.

The master cat began to explain. First comes the Moon phase, from birth to the age of seven. It is when a person develops their perception, sensitivity, and emotions. Next is the Mercury phase, spanning ages eight to fifteen. The individual's world is still small, but they begin to emerge into society and absorb all sorts of knowledge. Among humans, this aligns with the early years of school. Then comes the Venus phase; from sixteen to twenty-five, one begins to take an interest in appearance, discovers what pleasure means, and learns to love. Venus is the phase of leisure, romance, and self-expression. It coincided with the last years of high school and college. After that is the Sun phase, from twenty-six to thirty-five. Building on the knowledge of Mercury and the joys of Venus, the individual now learns what it means to forge their own path in life. And at this point comes the Mars phase—from thirty-six to forty-five. It is a time to take ownership of everything learned and allow one's true power to shine. The master cat went on to explain that: Jupiter phase spans ages forty-six to fifty-five, Saturn phase from fifty-six to seventy, Uranus phase from seventy-one to eighty-four, Neptune phase from eighty-five until death, and the Pluto phase refers to the very moment of death itself. The cats analyzed her horoscope and concluded that she is currently in her Mars phase and that she had passed her Moon and Mercury phases without any trouble but got stuck in the Venus phase. While the Venus phase typically draws one towards love and romance, she turned her attention towards personal interests such as writing novels and joining the university's literary club.

Mizuki felt that her past had been wonderful, but the present did not feel the same. They made her realise that it was during the Sun phase that she had shone so brightly. But not now, because there were certain lessons meant to be learned during that phase, and she had failed to grasp them. They explained that the reason for her present condition is that, she just kept on going, without even stopping to think about what made her successful in the field of scriptwriting then. The main obstacle that Mizuki faced till now is that she hasn't paid attention to things happening around her, which eventually made her to realize that she has been ignoring reality all these days. The cats insisted on her to know about herself. They explained her that different people start from different places. Some might start as water, milk, or earth. The cats then compare Mizuki's life to a plant and says that, as long as the roots are happy, the plant will produce beautiful flowers. And if it does not then one has to look at the roots. They explained to her that to produce the best work, she should need a home where her inner self can truly relax which made her realize that home is where the heart is, they did not want her to move somewhere but wanted her to make her current home as comfortable place to live and work. When Mizuki attains this part of realization, it will naturally lead her to a decision to make visions into reality, insisted the Master cat.

'Understand yourself, and you'll be able to care for yourself. As long as you do that, you'll shine like the star that you are,' the Master left Mizuki with a final refection.

The Full Moon Coffee Shop weaves a gentle, whimsical tale where talking cats, a cozy café and celestial signs guide characters toward self-discovery. The three cats who run the café — Caelus, the Roman equivalent of Uranus which is a Singapura breed and Cronus, the Greek equivalent of Saturn and their Master Cat not merely serve desserts but serve values and insights on one's life. Through Mizuki's awakening, the story ultimately emphasizes that it is not the stars that shape one's fate, but the quiet choices made in stillness.

References:

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