

Dear Ishmael,

...I don't love you, Ishmael. I can think of no more honest way to say it. From the very beginning, when we were little children, it seemed to me something was wrong. Whenever we were together I knew it. I felt it inside of me. I loved you and I didn't love you at the very same moment, and I felt troubled and confused. Now, everything is obvious to me and I feel I have to tell you the truth... I am not yours any more.

I wish you the very best, Ishmael. Your heart is large and you are gentle and kind, and I know you will do great things in this world, but now I must say good-bye to you. I am going to move on with my life as best I can, and I hope that you will too.

Sincerely,

Hatsue Imada

Snow Falling on Cedars, by David Guterson, is an emotional story in which we see the life of a man who could not move on and a woman that did. The man, Ishmael, is hopelessly in love with the woman, Hatsue. His love for her can not be dissuaded by anything; not her words, her wishes, or her marriage. He holds on to Hatsue because of his feelings for her, even after he gains the knowledge that it is extremely improbable that he could ever be with her. Hatsue is much more logical and rational with her feelings. She saw her love with Ishmael for what it was. She realized she did not really love him and that she was still learning what love really is. She moved on with her life, whereas Ishmael could not.

Ishmael's view of love did not change throughout the novel. He met Hatsue as a child, and formed the idea that he loved her through his limited knowledge and through his adolescent view of relationships. His love was simplistic, yet real. He had concrete reasons for his love. He enjoyed being with her. He looked forward to meeting her in the hollow cedar tree. He went out of his way to see her, even if she did not see him. He thought of her no matter what he was doing. In the simplest sense of the word, he loved Hatsue.

Hatsue was the second to think she fell in love. She reacted to Ishmael. When they kissed on the boat, she did not think as much of it as Ishmael. She did not realize he loved her until he told her. She then realized she liked being with him, and returned his love partially in spirit, but completely in word. Her initial intent was to extend friendship towards Ishmael. They were friends since their early childhood, and Hatsue saw nothing more of it on her own. Deep down, she just wanted to be really good friends, even if she did not realize it at the time.

The turning point in their lives was not caused by the war, but this eventuality was brought about sooner because of it. When Ishmael told Hatsue that he would be going off to war, he was really asking her if she would wait for him. That day when they held each other it was not the same. They both realized that they were victims of circumstances out of their control. However, Ishmael believed they could overcome them. In fact, it was not the war that was the obstacle. It was the fact that Hatsue was not sure of her feelings. At that point Hatsue finally realized she did not love Ishmael, while Ishmael was as sure as ever of his love. Hatsue was finally in touch with her real feelings. She had become mature enough in her mind to understand the feelings she had, and she had none beyond that of friendship for Ishmael. She felt a moral obligation to tell Ishmael of her feelings, which she did. Upon receiving this letter Ishmael was crushed. Yet his love for Hatsue did not diminish. She told him that she would not be happy with him, and later he found she had married someone else. He could not accept the fact that Hatsue would never be with him. When Ishmael had proof of Kabuo's innocence late in the novel, he hesitated in bringing it forward. This reveals much about the type of love Ishmael had for Hatsue. His love was definitely the same love he had as a child for her. It was selfish love. He wanted to be with Hatsue, no

matter what she wanted. He did not care substantially about her happiness. Instead of accepting the fact that she was happy with Kabuo, he held resentment for their marriage and had he had weaker morals would have done anything to take them apart. He did not truly care about Hatsue; he only cared about having her for himself. Even when he came to her with the evidence and she told him again that it would make her very happy if he would find someone else, he could not. His life was miserable because he could not accept Hatsue's decision and true feelings.

Hatsue and Ishmael did not work out because they were incompatible. It was not due to circumstances; not the war, the camp where Hatsue was taken, their parents, or Kabuo. Ishmael loved Hatsue only because of what she did for him, he did not care for her. Hatsue never loved Ishmael, although for a time she thought she did. Once either one became mature enough to realize this, their relationship was doomed. Had Ishmael realized his love was not true love, he would have had to move away from Hatsue. In the novel the opposite is true, and Hatsue is forced to leave Ishmael. They were wrong from the start. The best they could have hoped for was friendship, which sadly they could not achieve because of Ishmael's need for the return of his love from Hatsue.