



The dogs that kill men and other stories

Description

The dogs that kill men

On the right-hand side, like a cheap painting of Mt. Fuji, Mt. Tokachi stood out boldly against the blue sky. Here is high ground and on the opposing left-hand side, as though it were a large wrinkled wrapping cloth spread out, one can gaze far across the rocky region.

A line weaves its way through the bottom of one of those wrinkles, gradually ascending towards this direction. It is a railroad connecting to Kushiro. The Tokachi River is also visible. The river looks as though it were a wire that had been played with like a children's toy. Yet in some spots it flickered a blinding glare. It was midday of midsummer. It felt like at any moment flames would spark up in the relentless continental heat of the blistering sun.

The labourers that had been breaking through the plateau were staggering, smeared with sweat as though they had just jumped out from a hot bath. Their dizzy eyes were red and murky like rotten Pacific herring. One of the supervisors went running. Another followed behind. Nearly one hundred labourers immediately began to stir.

"A runaway!"

"What the hell are you doing! Stupid jackass!"

The supervisors were seething. Someone was hit directly in the face. *Bam!* One could hear the sound of flesh being struck. At this time the boss came over on horseback. After handing pistols to two or three supervisors, he ordered them to immediately pursue the runaway.

"What a stupid thing to do."

"Who was it? He'll be caught in no time. And once again, that dog's gonna be happy!"

On the railroad below, the toy-like passenger train appeared to be heading up this way. One could hear the exhausted panting of the engine. Every now and then it would emit swirling plumes of white smoke, like cold morning breath.

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That evening, as usual, the supervisors carefully watched over the labourers as they returned from the work area. The sunset on their backs drew long shadows of figures shouldering pickaxes and shovels. When they finished circling the mountain and arrived at the living quarters, they could hear the gallop of horses coming from behind. He's been caught, everyone thought, as they stopped and looked back.

It was Genkichi. Genkichi's soaking wet body was bound tightly with rope. The end of the rope was fastened to a horse one of the supervisors was riding. When the horse sped up just a little (it was already going fast) the runaway would tumble over and be drug through the gravel mountain road. His shirt was torn, and there was blood coming from his forehead and cheeks. The blood, mixed with dirt, was a dusky black. Everyone remained silent and started walking again.

(With his body in poor condition, Genkichi often said that, no matter what, he wanted to see the mother he left behind in Aomori at least once more before he died. He was 23. Afterwards everyone learned that Genkichi had grabbed onto a plank and jumped into the Tokachi River, raging and muddy from the rains from two days before.)

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After supper, the supervisors summoned all the labourers to the backyard.

"It's happening again!"

"I really don't wanna go..." everyone seemed to say.

The boss and supervisors were in the backyard. Genkichi, still tied up, lie face down in the centre of the yard. While stroking the dog's back, the boss said something in a loud voice.

"Have they all been gathered?", asked the boss.

The supervisor said to the labourers, "That look like everyone?" and they said to the boss, "Yes, it's everybody."

"Well then, let's begin! Everyone, whaddaya think will happen next!" The boss rolled up his sleeves and gave Genkichi a kick.

"Get up!" The runaway unsteadily rose to his feet.

"So you can stand, huh?" Upon saying this, the boss suddenly struck the side of Genkichi's face. The runaway reeled just like an actor on stage. His head hung downward, crestfallen. He spat. Blood began to stream from his mouth. He spat blood two or three times.

"Look at me, bastard!"

The boss bared his chest. And then he signalled the supervisors, "It's time!"

One of them untied Genkichi. Then, a supervisor turned the Tosa dog, whose length was about the same as the height of an adult man, towards Genkichi. The dog growled from its gut, and looking at its limbs one could tell they were filling with power.

"Sic 'em!" he said. The supervisor released the Tosa dog. The Tosa bared its teeth, extended its front legs and raised its rear end high... Genkichi shook his body but, petrified, was unable to move. There was a moment of complete silence. Not even a breath could be heard.

With a roar the Tosa leapt. Genkichi screamed and swung his hands wildly. He was like a blind man groping about in search of something. In a single leap the dog sank its teeth into Genkichi. The two became entangled and writhed around two or three times in the dirt. The dog let go. Blood was all around its mouth. Shaking off the dirt, the dog circled the boss two or three times. Genkichi remained on the ground, twitching, before unsteadily standing himself up. Without even a howl the Tosa jumped right back at him. Genkichi was easily sent flying into the wall cordoning off the vacant backyard land. It had attacked again! Genkichi reoriented himself towards the dog, rested his back against the wall, and slid up on to his feet.

Everyone couldn't help but watch. The bloodied face looking back at them was unrecognisable. They could see the blood flowing from his jaw, past his throat, all the way to his exposed, panting chest. Once he stood up, Genkichi wiped his face with his arm, and seemed to try and ascertain where the dog was. When it roared as if in triumph, in that moment, as if Genkichi spat out something incomprehensible,

"I'm scared! Mom!" he screamed.

He turned around and tried to wriggle up the wall much in the manner of a cat. The dog latched its jaws into him from behind.

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That evening a supervisor accompanied two labourers as they shouldered Genkichi's corpse to the mountain. There they dug a hole and buried him. Mt. Tokachi was even more visible in the moonlight than in the afternoon. The dirt, tossed by a shovel into the hole, made an eerie sound as it hit the box below. On the way back, just as the supervisor was off taking a piss, one comrade said to another

"Y'know, one day I'm definitely gonna kill that fuckin' dog..."

Scar

Through their *group* structure, the MOPR (Red Aid) is establishing its presence directly inside various regional factories. The plan is to expand and strengthen the movement through a foundation of common people. In group no. xx ((Marks such as x's and asterisks are from the practice of self-censorship called *fuseji* (to conceal a letter). Many writers and publishers used this as a way of getting around censors in Imperial Japan.)) of district xx, members would increase by one or two whenever a group meeting was held. New members would give a short introduction when they showed up. One time, a woman in her forties started coming to the meetings.

The group supervisor introduced her saying, "This is Nakayama's mother. Nakayama is the one who ended up in Ichigaya." Nakayama's mother fidgeted a little bit.

"I really just feel so dishonest, coming to this aid meeting because my daughter was sent to prison..."

When I was thinking about how she's been gone for two or three months, a phone call came from the local police. They told me to go pick her up from the police at such and such a place. Taken aback, I headed over there already half in tears. She was brought out from some detention room below. Her face was pale and dirty and her body, being locked up for god knows how long, buzzed with a terrible smell.

According to my daughter, she was doing something like investigating, and apparently got caught. Even so, my daughter was at home for around ten days before suddenly disappearing again. And then, after two or three months, I got another call from the police. This time a different station. I bowed countless times, bringing along apologies upon apologies for my lack of guidance as a parent. Around the second time, my daughter said how awful it was, that the cops jeered at her, saying "You're still investigating huh?" I told her there's no reason to fret over such a thing. I'm just glad you got out of there quickly.

Upon returning home, we talked about various things regarding our work. She said, "Mom, you don't need to bow down like that to those cops."

My daughter just wouldn't quit the movement no matter what. So I gave up. And then, just as expected, she disappeared soon again. As a matter of fact, I didn't hear from her at all for over six months. At that point, I was waiting like a fool in utter anticipation every day for a notification from the police. (*laughter*)

Sometimes a spy would show up, so I'd open up the house to him and offer tea. I'd carefully bring up questions about my daughter but they wouldn't know a thing. And then, it must've been eight months by then, my daughter suddenly returned. But, her face, something about it was more severe than before. I felt a lump in my throat when thinking about the hardship she must've experienced during that time. Even so, we were able to have a nice talk.

That night, for the first time in a while, probably a year, we went to the public bath together. "Mom, let me wash your back." What an unusual thing for her to say. These words filled me with such joy. I forgot all the troubles up until that point.

Even so, when I casually glanced at her body after we entered the bath, I immediately felt all the blood drain from my face. My daughter, surprised as I was by my state, asked, "What's wrong, mom?"

"It's not what's wrong with me, or wrong with this or that, or, well, it's what's happened to your body", I said. Even though we were in public, I was half in tears. All over her entire body were violet scars.

"Oh, this?" she said as if it were nothing, "the cops gave me those."

Laughing, she followed up by saying, "See, this is the kind of shit they put me through. Now don't you understand how wrong it is to give those bastards even one cup of tea!"

She may have been laughing while saying that but nothing in my life has struck me in such a way. It exceeds all logic. The next day my daughter disappeared again and this time turned out to be the time she ended up in prison.

"Even now I cannot forget the scars that adorned her body." Nakayama's mother said this and bit her lip.

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