

TEN STORIES FROM BRAZIL

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“An Age of Speculative Farming”

Sonobe Takeo

This could be nothing more than a reverie during a sleepless night in the colonies. . . .

1

The *vagabundo*<sup>1</sup> would often notice these things.

“Hey, look, a whore (*puta*)!”

Hanaoka Ruriko, with her fake beauty spot, ignored the gobs spat onto the road by the Conde gang<sup>2</sup> (I didn’t make that name up) as she strutted through the warm, sticky breeze of the rainy season. It was the time of day when the Martinelli building’s advertisements<sup>3</sup> were illuminated, a half-eaten scoop of ice cream sat in the shadow of the palm trees in the Praça João Mendes, and the woman’s pure white legs, bound with garters covered in crimson roses, overflowed with a fresh energy. Unconnected to the half-breed girl, Ruriko, Conrad Nagel<sup>4</sup> was wooing movie-crazy *señoritas* from the screen of the Odeon Theatre. . . .

These were the many symbols of modern life in São Paulo, which has long indulged in dreams of peace enveloped by the sounds of the *caboclo*’s *bandolim* and the bells of the *tropeiro*’s horses. The two busy streets that emerged at a forty-five-degree angle from the Praça da Sé heading toward the Mosteiro de São Bento and the Teatro Municipal, respectively, formed a triangle when capped by the Rua São Bento on the final side.<sup>5</sup> Within this triangle (*triângulo*) the lack of idealism of the colonial-era Portuguese was laid bare.

Buildings, stores, cafés, women’s calves, beggars. Alongside these, at every corner the sight of *loteria* tickets being loudly hawked by crippled men. . . .

Hanaoka Ruriko. . . . Her hobbies were men, *sorvete*, cinema, smelling the soiled flesh of farmers, perverted sex, collecting cheap jewelry.

She always weaved through the dizzying triangle (*triângulo*) as a single seductive Oriental insect. She moved endlessly as a point along the edges of that triangle,

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as she passed through the entangled races, through the city of flesh mixed with that of the Portuguese—Italian, French, Spanish, German, Russian, and black—in her single-cut dress and snake-skin shoes, the perfumed secret of her flesh, visible through her gauzy wrap.

Then, just as the night wind from the coastal mountain range blew a handbill up to this beggar woman's feet, a new-model Ford stopped right before Hanaoka Ruriko, filling her field of vision as she looked up; it was the man indicated on her dance card<sup>6</sup> for that evening. The tomato parvenu Ōmura.<sup>7</sup> She was embraced in the filthy farmer's flesh she loved.

"Ōmura.<sup>8</sup> I might be too tired tonight. If only I could sleep behind rose-colored curtains, where there's a bath, a powder room, and a toilet, my heart pounding at the scent of someone's cigar (*charuto*). . . ."

"Ruriko, are you trying to say that you want to marry me?" the tomato parvenu said, dyeing his obscene breath with his gigantic heart.

While popping out her stylish, inside-out socks, Ruriko replied, "Idiot! Who would want to marry someone like you?"

Ōmura was speechless.

"Ōmura, don't take it so seriously. Kiss me."

The car sped off in the direction of the Odeon, where Conrad Nagel was playing.

## 2

Five kilometers from X station on the Central line<sup>9</sup>—the Ōmura farm.

The farm, made up of two hundred thousand tomato plants on a five-degree slope, included a ferocious guard dog, a farm manager from Tieté, and many agricultural laborers. Were the hands of its agricultural laborers on the front line of the tomato wars perpetually stained by the tomato juice, despite its being the off-season, because the morning activities of the market are about to be disrupted by the decreased supply and dramatically increased prices bearing down on greater São Paulo?

Hawks flew overhead. It was a bleak scene of tank after tank, with the *sapé*<sup>10</sup> huts of the natives huddled in the distance, palm trees here and there with a mountain range far in the background. The slope with the squirming burros and the temptation of the *mamão* fruit.

Near a well on the tomato farm, operated by the clever *Nipponico* who encamped here and took advantage of the meat-loving races, a number of laborers in torn clothing battled the stifling heat of latitude 23.5 degrees south, encircling a large vat used in the making of a Bordeaux solution.<sup>11</sup>

One of the laborers dissolved quicklime into the solution, choking all the while on the cloud of dust in the air. He then combined the dissolved lime with just the right amount of copper sulfate. The color of the Bordeaux solution that resulted from the combination became an extremely faint blue, like that of the autumn

sky in the laborer's hometown, making him sentimental. The greedy history of the immigrant pioneers became an opaque precipitate; the endless exploitative competition swirls in the mixture, dissolving into the Bordeaux solution.

Over the course of three months the solution was dusted on the plants by the laborers, who bore the sprayers upon their backs like debt; the resulting tomatoes, produced after these repeated attacks against the *macrosporum bacillus*<sup>12</sup>—the red tomatoes that had previously caused such fear in Japan that they had been nicknamed "poison eggplants"—did not even stir the appetites of the already exhausted farm workers.

The sprawling farm was one with no history to be proud of; it was merely one upon which chemical fertilizers were recklessly dumped. Nonetheless, its production during the previous period had been:

A: The initial planting of 20,000 had been such a success that it was immediately increased to 120,000.

B: Even considering the average price per crate to be 15 *mil réis*, the average daily shipment was between seventy and eighty crates, for a grand total of roughly ten thousand. The proceeds from this were 150 *contos*.

The upshot of this was that even though Ômura stealthily skimmed off the majority of the profits at market, requests to sharecrop came in one after another from thickheaded *Brazilieros* who had been astonished by the sales, only to be followed by a swarm of heroic *Nipponicos*, enslaved by their gambling "savvy." One from Itaquaquecetuba, one from Itaquera, one from Mogi, others from Suzano, Romanópolis, São Miguel. . . .

Their speculative spirits were aroused as though struck by a hammer; as the mountains of *mamona* dregs<sup>13</sup>, powdered bone, saltpeter, and potassium chloride (among others) that had been resting in the storehouses of the ambitious fertilizer entrepreneur began to crumble away, operations expanded willy-nilly. Anyone who did not move quickly to seize his portion of the wealth by producing tomatoes soon became the object of derision, as one ignorant of the ways of the world. No one paid any thought to diversification<sup>14</sup> or producing quality goods. The tomato-farming families—even those poor families that had just set foot on Brazilian soil—responded to the call, swaying on their horse-drawn carts as they moved to the farm, filled with anticipation.

Of course every day there were other migrants who marched down the Santos wharf toward the frightening customs office, hearing the sound of gunfire behind them in Manchuria. Indeed, the so-called migrants were gradually being replaced by individuals filled with new ideas and novel schemes. The Ômura farm was oblivious to this, completely absorbed in tracking down its next big take.

3

Even the hot sidewalks of São Paulo cooled late at night, under the rows of sycamore trees.<sup>15</sup>

Hanaoka Ruriko walked the road to her apartment, treading on the pollen-covered ground and feeling a fleeting romanticism (*romantismo*) as she looked upon the slightly blurred night scene in the direction of Bras, until she entered the heavy door, which the black woman had opened for her.

In those rooms was Hanaoka Ruriko's deviant playground: a double bed hidden behind a floral-patterned curtain of Indian silk.

She kept a youth in those rooms.

This was her so-called stray dog, a preoccupied young man who had just come to Brazil. Having just been awoken with a smack, he stared at her lewd figure as she sat cross-legged atop her bed, after merely unhooking the waist of her skirt. Then he spoke.

"Did something happen to you? Or was it the stinky farmer?"

For a moment Ruriko was caught off guard, then she suddenly grabbed his hair and while shaking him responded, "You think you'd be able to live without me?"

"Let's not make empty threats."

"I'm serious, damn it!"

"Then where should I go?"

The stray dog, pale, rolled on the carpet looking sad.

The springs of the mattress groaned beneath her as she looked down on him pityingly.

"Forgive me. I am going to get married."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh my stray dog, do even you still have the capacity for chagrin?"

"So rather than smacking me around, you want to be cradled in a farmer's strong arms when you sleep. Is that it?"

"Would you begrudge me some rest?"

"No, but. . ."

So saying he crawled toward Ruriko to give her feet an imploring kiss.

With this, their pathetic deviant play finally began.

The stray dog's cries; Ruriko's mad laughter; kicking, collapsing; sound, sweat.

"I don't want to leave. After all—I live not in Brazil, but in you, Ruriko."

"Idiot, idiot, idiot. Ha, ha, ha. . ."

4

Tomato prices were far lower than expected. Ômura, though, continued to carry himself as if he were full of confidence.

He thought he could still snatch a profit despite the bleakness of the situation.

The entire area in and around the Mercado Central<sup>16</sup> was spotted with the footprints of the *kuronbô*<sup>17</sup> workers whose feet tread on the rotted fruits and vegetables. When the tomato parvenu Ômura arrived at the offices of the *comprador* Kurose on Rua 25 de Março the next morning, he passed through the throng of

sallow vegetable growers on his way to the meeting room on the second floor. There he met Kurose.

"Ômura, why don't you just play along? You know, on that matter I mentioned earlier. . . ."

"What? You know, that growers' association already has an advance contract with the Colombo<sup>18</sup> canning company for two thousand crates—at 200 *reis* per kilo, no less. . . . No matter how *misturado*<sup>19</sup> it might be, it is not very good news for you. It would be safer for you to leave things to me. Hehehe. . . ."

Afterwards Ômura spat onto the wall of the *mercado*—the central nerve of life in São Paulo—and then raced his new-model Ford toward the Hotel Noroeste, the lively building that stood facing the Largo da Sé, the muscles in his face twitching all the way. "That upstart Kurose. He just got started recently but now he is acting like a big *comprador*. Damn him. It would be one thing if I were just another tomato grower. This is the great Ômura he is dealing with. . . ."

"So I take it that there is no way that I can convince you. . . ." The thought of Kurose's scheming face as he said this stuck in his craw.

Hanaoka Ruriko, already at the entrance in her daytime makeup, was being chased off by the black doorman because of her palpable eroticism, visible through the emerald green georgette fabric.

Ômura arrived just as she was about to kick him with those snakeskin shoes of hers, yelling, "I'm not a prostitute, *kuronbô-me!*" A record of jazzy Carnival music could be heard in the distance.

After blowing the bubbles off of a bottle of champagne in one of the rooms at the Hotel Noroeste, the two married in a very unconventional way.

Why did Hanaoka Ruriko marry?

If Ômura were asked, he would say that it was nothing more than the fulfillment of a casual desire using Ruriko's body, as one feels hungry for *terceiro*<sup>20</sup> tomatoes at times, cracks and all.

Even a monstrous love requires certain appurtenances. The tomato parvenu Ômura addressed his bride in the full light of day.

"We are leaving tonight on the express train to Rio for our honeymoon."

"Are you planning on selling me on Rio's bride *mercado*, Ohmura?"

"I am not such a brute as to sell my own bride."

To this, the woman—still disheveled from her wedding—continued.

"Ohmura, I have a request."

"Are you going to ask me to quit growing tomatoes?"

"No! I want you to buy me some jewels!"

A thrilling rain squall passed from *rua* to *rua*, pelting the pure white legs. Drops of water sparkled as they fell from the eaves of the *sorveteria*.

Hanaoka Ruriko and Ômura were strolling the sidewalk of Rua Direita, which was invigorated by the recent rain. Along the street wax *señoritas* were trailing *amarelo* afternoon dresses in the display windows. Weaving their way through the elegant crowds, the newly married couple visited the Jewish precious metal dealer at Casa Esplendor and browsed the collection of magnificent jewels. The collection enslaved the hearts of *señoritas* from throughout the world.

"My, how amazing. Diamonds. Rubies. Pyropes. Uvarovites. Carnelians. Turquoises. Moonstones. Cat's Eyes . . . etc., etc."

There was no doubt that he would buy one for her, but even for Ruriko, whose eyes were confronted with the radiance of every imaginable luster, the luminescence of the andalusite, the queen of noctilucous stones, possessed a rare austere brilliance. What was one to do under the thrall of such a prodigious intoxication?

"Oh, Ohmura, they're all just so beautiful!"

"Don't cry, now."

Ruriko swung her handbag around wildly.

"I am going to cry, I am. . . . Ohmura, I love you."

Ômura chewed on his cigar (*charuto*), smiling.

Meanwhile, in the heart of the city of São Paulo. . . .

A line of *caminhões* packed with tomatoes were being sucked into the red brick fortress, preparing to open the market for the day. After the five hundred crates of tomatoes were stacked up, the *caminhões* made their retreat outside of the red bricks. With that, the chaotic and uncontrolled clamor made by this band of crooks—*compradores*, tomato growers, and retailers—rose to an unparalleled din, as though a beehive had been struck. The foreman of the Ômura farm himself, his eyes darting around the room, had two hundred cases of his own. For a variety of complex reasons, today's market would necessarily foretell the fate of the tomato producers this season; yet because it was here in Brazil—which in all ways treaded the very tip of the world's tail—it lacked anything like brokers, overseers, bookkeepers, clerks, or traders. It was nothing more than buyers and sellers pushed into a pen, only to have each in his own way—man to man, hand to hand—battle out the sales.

There were many *compradores*—let's call them A, B, C, D, E—but this day something strange happened. The tomato producers, who are living under constant fear of malnutrition and for that reason tend to accede on matters of price, demanded the exorbitant sum of 25 *mil réis*. The buyers, however, shouted out from all over, as if an answering echo, a price of 10 *mil réis*. A did, as did B, C, D. . . . Normally the price would then settle, like the air bubble in a level, on a price of 14 or 15 *mil réis*. Today's air bubble, however, did not budge. Ten minutes . . . twenty . . . thirty . . . The buying price remained firm at 10 *mil réis*. This unexpected turn caused the air in the room to dye a peculiar tint.

"Why 10 *mil réis*?"

The cries of the already hungry producers raced through the room. In response, A, B, C, D, etc. forced smiles as they met the gazes of the farmers. Men who were in some cases too cowardly even to smell the raw tomatoes when on the farms in the mountains became drunk and aroused on the air of the *mercado*. The farmers had no idea what was going on, and instead just milled around blindly.

"Could the *compradores* be conspiring together?"

"No, Kurose bought them all off as a challenge to Ômura."

These thoughts were whispered by some, shouted by others. The farmers marched on, their sleep-deprived eyes remained fixed on that price of 10 *mil réis*, a price too shocking to even elicit tears. When the comprador Kurose determined that price as part of his strategy, he had been so caught up in idle excitement that he had lost even the ability to imagine how this would affect them, as they plunged into the hardship of a livelihood dependent on the tomato. . . . Ômura heard of this crash in the price of tomatoes on the São Paulo market moments after returning to the Hotel Noroeste with Hanaoka Ruriko.

When Ômura realized that this artificial drop had been due to disruptions in the market caused by the *comprador* Kurose, he was overwhelmed with fury. It was an unimaginable price. For Ômura, who had come through any number of fusillades in these tomato speculation wars, the fate of his own farm was all too clear.

"I have to do something . . . but can anything be done? Damn it! Damn it all!"

Ômura paced around the room like a tiger in a cage. No matter how he writhed about, all he could see was the scornful expression of the fertilizer salesman, the resentful glares of the laborers, and the storehouses filled with tomatoes despite the bad harvest, held in waiting for the perfect moment. The sound that filled his ears, coming back from his memory, was the strained roars of the *caminhões* rushing toward him, bearing mountains of artificial fertilizer!

Ômura groaned.

Hanaoka Ruriko, caressing the Burmese ruby she bought at the Jew's shop and eating a *manga*, smiled ironically and perversely mused, "My groom, I feel so wonderful. . . . Will I ever have another evening this fortunate?"

Ômura was dumbfounded.

"Ohmura, why aren't you saying anything?"

"Ohmura, you promised, you know. To take me to Rio. . . ."

Ômura suddenly struck the table and shouted, "Are you kidding, you slut!"

The fruit plate overturned and a *manga* fell lethargically from the table.

"Well, thank you very much (*muita obrigada*)! You're calling me a prostitute? I suppose that's true, Mr. Former-Tomato Bigshot. . . . I feel like I finally understand, now hearing your groaning. Idiot . . . idiot. For what reason are you the *japoneses'* boss man? You have no idea why the migrants are suffering these days. . . . They want a goal, like the one the *alemães* have. How hard are you working to establish such a goal? To make matters worse, you don't really do any work at all.

... All of you ... all of you. ... The world would be better off if people like you just died in the gutter. Perhaps then you could at least become fertilizer for *milho*. Listen, Ohmura. I am going home and then I am going to tell my stray dog that the time has come! The time to take up the *enxada* and cultivate a new world. ... Needless to say, today marks the beginning and end of our marriage. A curse on you! Goodbye."

That Japanese blood circulated in Hanaoka Ruriko's corrupted flesh was nothing short of a miracle. Rather, it was as if some invisible power had inhabited Ruriko's painted lips to say those words. In place of Ōmura's bride, who disappeared from his life after this spectacle, a waiter from the hotel stood firm in front of him, carrying a prodigious bill. ... Throughout the world there are places that are paralyzed, but this simply means that they lack an objective.

Regardless of this sort of airing of dirty laundry, the more exhausted the agricultural laborers became, the more the juice of the tomatoes permeated their flesh. With the drop in price resulting from the *compradores'* machinations, the rampancy of the macrosporum bacteria, and the indignation of the soil, there was only one way that this last page of the history of the fall of Ōmura farm could be written: with a boy picking diseased leaves from what tomato plants had grown. ...

Aah ... these precious pages of the history of migration had finally sunk into corruption, having been committed to Ōmura, Kurose, Hanaoka Ruriko, and the stray dog. ... The bodies of agricultural laborers, bent by exhaustion! Sunset. ... A solitary laborer stood tall atop the soil, impoverished from the immoderate application of artificial fertilizers, staring at the distant mountain range. ... In its shadow were plains, hills, and mountains, across this vast land called Brazil ...

Those who roam about, unable to recognize that objective, perpetually entranced by the intermittent glory of speculative farming were merely ants ... ants. ...

When would the day finally come that those desultory ants gather and erect a towering anthill?

Even now a new migrant ship approached from across the Atlantic—in order to establish a brilliant objective for the Japanese migrants.

Damn it!

The laborer drew in a deep breath and then screamed. ...

9 March 1932



## “The Death of a Certain Settler”

Nishioka Kunio

### 1. THE BLACK CAMARADA

“What? You want a job?”

Daisuke shouted in his deep voice, in an attempt to intimidate him. A man who seemed to be *baiano*, with a face that gleamed black, and a woman who was presumably his wife, with her belly hugely swollen, stood with their shoulders shrugged in front of his home. On the ground to their side was one *arroz sacco* jammed with all of their worldly possessions and a large child, with a thin, monkey-like face and wide eyes, who sat staring uneasily at Daisuke.

“If you’ll work hard for me I can give you something. Let’s start off with two or three days and see how it goes. Leave your sack over here and come with me.”

So saying, the diminutive Daisuke started walking briskly toward the back of the house. Just as the black family was about to reach the *milho* shed out back, Daisuke once again barked out in his gruff voice, “Hurry up. We are going to the *cafézal*.”

The black man, who was nearly six feet tall, trailed behind Daisuke as he climbed the mountain behind Daisuke’s home with his *enxada* over his shoulder. The afternoon sun in the cloudless sky hurt his eyes as it shone down on them.

The sun had already disappeared over the horizon. The small group of four *camaradas* came down from the plantation dragging their heavy, exhausted legs with each step. For these brave warriors who have spent the whole day battling the blazing heat, as it baked their bodies and souls, nighttime was paradise, from which they could hope for nothing more than full bellies and deep sleep. They, however, were happy enough with satisfying these two desires. Each of the four men had returned from the fields gulping down the saliva that filled his mouth every time he imagined the supper that would fill his empty stomach.

The four men, the three young Japanese and the black man who had come that day, shivered as they washed their faces at the well, wiping them with their sweat-stained *camisas*, and then one by one entered the dining room, which was dimly

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lit by the light of a lantern.<sup>21</sup> Their long-awaited supper was about to begin. Seven people sat at the table: the four *camaradas*, Daisuke, his small-framed wife who bore a striking resemblance to him, and a boy of around ten. The black woman who had come that day looked in from the window, with only her eyes showing any life. Suddenly Daisuke's gruff voice ripped through the silence.

"Get the hell out of here, you beggar! Is there any law that says that someone who doesn't work should eat?"

The light from the lantern started to swing wildly as the commotion in the dining room burst out. The black man, who had leapt up with a fierce expression on his face, glared at the diminutive Daisuke and emitted a growl that sounded as though it had been squeezed out from the depths of his gut. The other *camaradas*, tense in the face of what seemed about to happen, readied themselves. In this situation, however, it was the black *camarada* who was the weaker party. It was this weakness that caused him to slowly release his clenched fists, showing how even someone like him, with the growing rage that consumed him, apparently must lower his head before his master. His wife had fled back to the shed sobbing. Sadly, she would not eat at all today. Where would they go if they left here now? *Let me bring my wife, heavy with child, and ask, plead, for food*, the black man had thought; but now he collapsed back into his chair. Seeing this, the others present felt some relief, but there was no way they could go back to eating. They had known all along that the landowner was a strict man, but they had not realized he was this sort of devil. Thinking *surely no other person in the world is as evil as this*, the black man addressed the landowner with his face downturned, as though he had just been castigated.

"*Patrão*, she didn't eat anything today either, a-and she's in her last month of pregnancy so she can't work, she's in a tough spot. I-i-is there any way you could let her have *um plato*<sup>22</sup> of food? I will gratefully put in an extra hard day of work tomorrow in return."

"Absolutely not. In my home, we follow my rules: those who do not work are not fed."<sup>23</sup>

Saying this, Daisuke pinched a few silver coins out of his *bolso* and tossed them onto the *mesa*. The black man, who rose with a look of pained sadness on his face and did not even look at the coins, picked up the torn *chapéu* that he had been sitting upon and quietly went out of the home. For a time they could hear him returning to the shack out back, but before long the pathetic *baiano* family had disappeared into the darkness, with the *saco* over his shoulder and the child in her arms.

## 2. SELLING LARANJA

The following day—with beautiful weather both dry and sunny, wiping away the events of the previous evening as though they were but a dream of the distant past—after the *camaradas* had gone out *carpir*, Daisuke was stacking, one-by-one, the bricks from the *terreiro* extension near the main house.

"Idiot. . . Who can survive in this world with as womanly a sentiment as compassion. I despise people who tell sob stories. Who does that big ox think he is? Young people today really are cheeky. Then last night to leave without even eating after working that whole day. . . What a goddamn bore."

Clearly it was bothering him, because he went over and over the events of the previous evening in his mind.

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The home of this man, who with 150 *alqueires* was the largest landowner in this colony, was an extremely crude affair of red clay; behind it was a banana grove while the front of the home was surrounded by overgrown *laranja* trees. Overgrown with weeds, it was the kind of estate that children feared. A slender stream of smoke rose from the *cozinha*; likely his small wife was preparing *almôço*.

Three or four small, blue-eyed children—of the sort one can see in the *colônia* on the other side of the mountain—emerged from a path cut through the thicket.

"*Bom dia*."

The boys greeted Daisuke as they approached him.

"May we have this many *laranjas*?"

The tallest of the boys held out a one-*mil* coin.

Daisuke stood lethargically, handed the boys a pole, and had the children knock them down.

After a few minutes, Daisuke, who was watching the golden *laranjas* plunk down on the undergrowth one after another, stopped them.

"Ok, ok. That's enough."

They've knocked too many down. *Um, dois, três* . . . he counted loudly as he dropped them into the *saco* the children had brought.

### 3. WANDERING

Kaneko Daisuke—a man of such small stature that the other people in the colony would ridicule him behind his back, saying that while the name 'Kaneko' was fitting with its reference to gold, "It's funny that they named that little guy 'Daisuke,'" meaning 'Big man'—had settled in this K colony in the *noroeste* interior fourteen years earlier.

While working as a carpenter for around three years after arriving in the city of São Paulo, Daisuke had squirreled away his pennies until he had saved up the eight *contos* necessary to buy a 150-*alqueire* plot of the highest-quality land here in this colony before coming as one of its early settlers.

With a little bit of *pinga* in him, Daisuke was more than happy to speak of his struggles during those early years, which he remembered as a period of great

personal triumph, to anyone who would listen. As he did, his face would transform completely, taking on a handsome, relaxed expression.

One day after supper he began telling a number of young *camaradas* of his past.

"I am no one special. I was born in Hokkaidō. If anyone asked about his origins, my father would say that his family had been retainers of the Aizu domain; the reality, though, was that he was a cowardly samurai who had dashed off to southern Ezo just before Aizu castle fell in the Meiji Restoration. There he was forced to farm as a peasant, growing millet and barely getting by. . . . I was his third son. What? Why was I given the name Daisuke? Give me a break. Ha! Because my dad, like me, was made fun of for being a small guy. I guess he wanted me to become a "big man." In the autumn of 1884 I was apprenticed to a carpenter in Muroran but, how should I say it, I fell for his daughter . . . my "first love" . . . When my master found out, he was furious. I got out of there that very night. . . . Let's see, I was twenty when that happened, so it's been about twenty-eight years since I set foot in my hometown. I fooled around for two years in Tokyo, before I had the simple idea to see another country as I kept up my playing and went over to Manchuria. . . . I sure did have a good time there, too. . . ."

#### 4. WANDERING

"Next I decided to go someplace really far away and came to South America mixed in with a group of migrants headed to Peru. In Lima, I passed myself off as an apprentice to a barber, cutting the hair of a one hairy foreigner after another. . . . When I was young I was really useless, so I couldn't settle down in Lima, either. From there I went to Chile, where I made a living as a laborer in a nitratine mine. Because I was born this sort of small man, wherever I have gone people have taken a shine to me, calling me pipsqueak and the like; as a result, I have never had any trouble earning a livelihood. From Chile I went to Argentina, where I must have lived for something like two years on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. It was there where I heard that Brazil was good to Japanese and felt compelled to head to São Paulo. Now that I think about it, that was already seventeen years ago. By that time I was already over thirty and had begun to realize that I couldn't keep wandering forever. I decided it was time to call it quits with all the fooling around. That marked the end of the first half of my life . . . haha!"

Daisuke took a break from the story to have a drink of *pinga*.

The lantern swayed slightly from the cool breeze coming in the window.

The young men breathed deep sighs of relief at this break in the story, which they had been listening to as they leaned on the *mesa* and stared at Daisuke's small, red-black face.

Daisuke continued.

"Humans too, once enlightened, can do great things. Even a good-for-nothing like me, who had lived a life of dissipation right up until that moment, was able to become a serious man. Fortunately, there was decent work for carpenters in São Paulo, so I could really throw myself into my work. Here too my boss was fond of me, and I was able to put away a good amount of money. The other guys had the attitude of most artisans, who go through money as though it were water, thinking, 'No need to hold back at night what I can earn the next day.' One look at them convinced me to get my house in order. I wasn't completely lonely. . . . I even had enough of a *Look at me now!* attitude that I could have a laugh at their expense. . . . What? My wife? The old lady, you mean? Around that time she was on her allotted land with her first husband, who was sick. He went to the Santa Casa hospital, but he died while she was working as a maid in my boss's house. She sobbed herself to sleep every night, alone now as she was in the world. My boss acted as go-between and got the two of us together. Then one day a guy I know asks me whether I want to buy some land. Since I knew a lot of people who had made money buying land in Hokkaidō, I had been thinking that if nothing else, I had to own land someday. So I was interested in the idea right away. . . . The guy went on and on about places where the land was supposed to good, talking about the Pau-d'alho are like this and the Perobom are like that. When I asked, 'What about the title to the land?', the man assured me that it was land the government of Doutor Pedro had sold off, so it was legitimate. I was hooked. . . . When I think about it now, I should have been more nervous. . . . I mean, I was buying land knowing nothing about it; I had just glanced at a *mapa*. This is how I paid the full 8 *contos* or so that I had saved up and purchased those 150 *alqueires* of land."

As he said this, Daisuke's face grew increasingly radiant with pleasure. The lantern cast a flickering light as though its oil could run out at any moment.

Daisuke stood and blew it out—"wow, the moon sure is pretty tonight"—and gazed out the window as he beckoned the others over.

The pale blue moonlight of a foreign moon illuminated all of their bronzed faces.

One of the men was nodding off, his head bobbing up and down.

One enthusiastic young man asked a question, to once again spur the conversation.

"You sure had a good eye for the land you chose."

"No more than any other Tom, Dick, or Harry; it was completely chance."

Daisuke then smiled and continued.

"When that guy I knew spread out the *mapa* and asked me which parcel I wanted to buy, I said, 'Any is fine. I have no idea. I suppose the one closest to the seller's land would be good.' That's all I said and it was decided. It was just this and some good luck. Now that I think about it, that was fourteen years ago, when I finally decided to become a settler. At that time Masabō, who is now in

São Paulo, had just been born. . . . When the three of us, me, my old lady, and my son, were on the train heading out on the Sorocabana Line, I guess even I—who had bounced all over South America—was a little scared. All day the train passed through nothing but barren *campo*; it felt as though we were being carried off to some circle of hell. . . . Two days later, in the evening, we reached ○ ○ town. Now that area had been completely cleared, but at that time the train only went as far as ○ ○ town. The previous landowner's home was in ○ ○ town, so that night we stayed in his storage shed. We had the little money that was left, and what rice and beans we could carry on our backs; once we had purchased salt and matches, we decided to head to our settlement the next day. It was forty kilometers away from ○ ○ town, but because what little road there was overgrown from both sides by thicket, even a *carroça* could not pass easily. The forty kilometers of so-called road was all through forest so thick that it was like a dim tunnel. Through this tunnel I walked ahead, carrying a heavy load of provisions on my shoulders, and gripping a *foice*, a *machado*, and an *enxada* in my hand. Behind me followed my wife, with Masabô on her back and a bag filled with a pot, salt, and matches in her hands. I'm not proud of it, but I have to admit I wept with joy when, thirty kilometers in, I came across an Italian who was letting his pigs forage there and let us stay the night. I had never been so happy to see another human being as I was that day. I was as happy as one who had discovered a savior in hell.<sup>24</sup> He even gave us our fill in pork. It was truly as they say: deep in the mountains, any man you encounter is a brother. Anyway, so the route I walked in to my property is the valley that the train line runs through; that line was just a road then. I could not believe that I had become the owner of 150 *alqueires*; I kept saying to myself, "This really is a lot of land." At the same time, I was at a total loss, thinking, "What have I gotten myself into?" but it was too late for that sort of thing. I mean, there wasn't even a way to ship crops out once I grew them. With no other options, my old lady and I decided to forget about the outside world and just wait for the train line to come through, making do by slowly clearing land and raising pigs and chickens. We made a hut from split palm wood and the three of us began our lives as mountain hermits."

It had gotten quite late, but Daisuke showed no sign whatsoever of finishing.

"When I think about it, the human body seems weak but is actually quite strong. The whole reason that I can work as hard as any young guy today is because of what I went through then. My old lady worked hard too. There were many nights she went to bed without even taking off her straw sandals. Our faces looked just like those of a Hokkaidô bear. Nowadays a person will *perde* a package of matches in a month; the pack we carried in with us lasted three years—until the train line opened. By lighting a *tôco* that I had stuck into the ground in the middle of the hut, I could keep it burning for six or seven days. That way we didn't need a drop of oil and could save our matches. Since we settled there in September, it wasn't until December that we could harvest any *milho*, beans, or *batata*; in the meantime, all we had to eat was rice, beans, salt, and vegetables. We were heartened to

see that chickens we had gotten from the Italian were increasing in number despite constantly losing some to *bichos*, and to know that in the new year the pigs we had gotten would give birth to a litter. It didn't particularly feel like we were waiting for the train line to arrive, but we also felt that if we didn't seed at least a few coffee plants we really couldn't be called pioneers, because it would make us no different from all of the people who would come in so easily later. The cries of the wild-cats were only bothersome at first; before too long I would miss them if I didn't hear them. I was fortunate to have made it this far without getting sick even once, but the other settlers all say I succeeded because of luck. It definitely wasn't luck. Men make themselves through work. If one just sticks to it, even a good-for-nothing like me can make quite a success of himself. Well, we've had a good, long talk, but it's time we get to sleep. Tomorrow I am going to have you weeding out at S."

Daisuke stood, stretched both arms out, and yawned deeply. Then he trotted off into the bedroom to his right.

#### 6 (SIC). NOSTALGIA

From time to time during the twenty-eight years since he had fled his hometown, Daisuke would count the years on his fingers, bending one after another. . . .

"Forty-eight? I too have become an old man. I wonder what has become of my father? I guess he would be over eighty now, and my mother seventy-eight. My older brother must be fifty-seven, and I bet as poor as ever. . . . My first love . . . she was seventeen, three years younger than me. She too must be gray-haired by now, someone's old lady, no, perhaps an old spinster somewhere. All of my primary school friends are all older now, but I bet none has made much of a success of himself. I suppose I am the *yokozuna* of the group. . . ."

Daisuke planned to return to his hometown soon, wearing the proverbial golden brocade,<sup>25</sup> and as such had lately found himself slipping deeply into this sort of reverie.

The *camaradas*, having already been out to the fields on this beautiful day, had retreated to the shade of a tree in the garden, where they were nodding off as they enjoyed the cool, morning breeze.

"I had them make the best clothes, shoes, and *chapéu* this town has ever seen by far, and am going to wear them back to Japan. I am just going to go third-class on the ship, but as for the train once there, I am going to ride in second-class like the *yokozuna* I am. Everyone back home will be so surprised. 'Kaneke's third son has come back home a big success—they say he owns 370 hectares of land in Brazil.' I can't wait. No matter how the people here in the colony vilify me and call me a brute, in the end money makes the world go around. What is it they say? 'What use is a cherry blossom if you don't have money?'<sup>26</sup> My ability to make my aged parents happy now, in the midst of this downturn, is a reward for my tenacity. . . . All of these idiots who go on and on about compassion this and compassion that—what use is compassion if one can't take proper care of one's parents? I have no memory

of having done even the smallest wrong thing; the path I have walked has been completely proper. . . . Sure, maybe I have pushed back a repayment or two, but have I ever not paid my debts? What about those guys in the colony? Who was it who drove Yamamoto's store in town out of business, all along wearing faces filled with compassion? Incompetent people are just resentful, backbiting whomever they please. They love to prattle on about luck this, luck that, shamelessly ignoring their own incompetence. Look at what we pioneers went through! Look at my house! Is this the mansion of a great landowner, with 150 *alquienes* and 160,000 coffee plants? If all I had were pretension and luck, I wouldn't have a penny to my name. Those guys in the colony will call me a violent and greedy demon behind my back, but to my face it is nothing but flattery, with their heads pressed to the ground. My chairmanship of the Japan Association is the same way. This is my fifth year in a row in that position, but not because I want to do it or anything. Every time the election comes around they push me into it and then say 'Kaneke monopolizes the chairmanship!' I am sick of the whole business."

He couldn't but grow discontented as he looked back on the hardships of his life thus far and the baseless rumors that were spread about him nowadays in the colony. As he remembered it, the path his life had taken was anything but a commonplace one; all along it had been a grueling climb bordered by precipitous cliffs. But he had reached the summit, achieved his goal: success. It is natural that this should be met with the roaring applause of the crowds. When in place of such applause he overheard the cold scorn that ran through the colony, it naturally left him agitated.

"What are you thinking over there?"

Daisuke addressed the question to his wife, who seemed uncharacteristically lost in thought, having returned from the hills out back with her empty lunch box clattering at her side.

"Nothing. I was just thinking about back home."

For a moment Daisuke smiled slightly before restoring his serious expression and continuing.

"You have really aged too, haven't you. It is because you have worked really hard as well. I owe as much to you for that success. People say that we resemble one another; I wonder if any couple resembles one another as much in both body and spirit as we do. Poor, dim-witted people would be going on and on about new clothes, fine food, a grand house . . . but you, you let me wear this patched *camisa*. You're something. That boy of ours, Masabô, now he's another story. At sixteen, when he should be hard at work, he runs off to São Paulo saying he needs to study. But what is a *vagabundo* like him going to do with that learning? He should learn something from his father. I told him I would happily hire him if he got a degree in agriculture or graduated from a vocational school. When I told him, though, that rather than becoming a person with learning who is used, he should become a person who himself does the using, he up and ran off. Eldest son or not, there is no



way I can make him my successor. Shinbō is only eleven, but we have to be careful not to let him grow up into a *vagabundo* too."

Daisuke grumbled as he stood.

## 7. CALAMITY

The day of his return home approached quickly. Today was his last tour of the coffee plantation. The arable land stretched over five kilometers long, and in the various intervening valleys were four *colônias*, with four-year contract laborers and *colonos* from twenty-four families. Straddling a packhorse, Daisuke rode up and down the hills, peaceful and content atop his mount. The thickly grown coffee trees shone in the afternoon sun, looking like distant, undulating waves. Daisuke gripped the reins with his chest pressed out proudly and his eyes sparkling with satisfaction. As he approached the third elevation, Daisuke remembered how half a year earlier an Italian *colono* had drawn a knife and chased after him at that very spot. He clicked his tongue in annoyance and thought to himself, "That was a close call. When I was just the slightest bit strict with him about the *carpi* and yelled at him, the next thing I knew my eyes opened wide and I began to scream when I saw something metal flash. He had already drawn his *faca* and was coming at me. I rounded my back and then ran, if I remember correctly. Fortunately there was a horse nearby, so I leapt on to it and took off at full speed. That's the only reason I escaped. That's why I can't stand hairy foreigners. You say the slightest thing and suddenly they pull a knife. With Japanese you don't have that worry, but they drive you crazy with all of their quibbling. I suppose *baianos* are the best; they can be dangerous, but they are the easiest to trick into doing what you want. When I get back, I am only going to have *baianos* for *colonos*." As the slight breeze that slipped between the coffee trees cooled his sweat-soaked body, Daisuke visited the homes of the *colonos*, which were scatted here and there. He let them know that he was going back to Japan temporarily, and asked the four-year contract worker Harada if he would kindly look after things while he was gone. Having finished his rounds, Daisuke returned home.

The day of his departure had finally arrived. Because it was the chairman of the Japan Association returning home, around ten members of the leadership of the Association and then the *colonos* each made an appearance and gave him a rousing send-off.

For Daisuke it was a day full of a sort of anticipation he had never experienced before. In his newly made suit he served everyone *pinga* and spent the day smiling heartily.

His plan was to spend the night in town and then leave for São Paulo on the first train in the morning, so around dusk he mounted his horse and set off from home alone.

To Daisuke, riding alone down paths by himself like this, lost in thought, felt far more pleasurable than exchanging boorish small talk, so he quite strenuously refused the people who offered to ride in with him.

As the light breeze brushed his cheeks, which were flushed from the bit of drink he had had, he finally took a moment to dwell on the sense of well-being that swelled up in his chest, threatening to burst out.

As he approached the town, he saw some rustling in the dark undergrowth that pressed in on the road from the side. At the moment he turned to look, he saw the eyes of a man who was staring directly at him.

Something flashed like lightning amid Daisuke's crowded memories.

"Ah! That *ku*. . ."<sup>27</sup>

The pistol the man held erased the remainder of that scream as it rang out in the twilight, *bang, bang, bang*.

"Uhhh. . ."

Daisuke groaned faintly as he rolled off the horse and fell to the ground.

The returnee, dressed in gold brocade covered with flesh and blood, lay on the ground, his feet twitching slightly until the darkness slipped over him and the curtain of night fell.

It was some days later.

Not far from the town, in the communal graveyard, a single new cross was discovered standing, upon which was written in clear Japanese characters, "Here lies Kaneko Daisuke, Pioneer of K Colony."

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NISHIOKA KUNIO is the penname of Tanabe Shigeyuki (1908–?).<sup>28</sup> Nishioka was born in Hokkaidō in 1908 and studied agriculture at a vocational upper school there (despite claiming to have only finished primary school) before migrating to Brazil in 1928. He originally lived in Santo Anastácio in São Paulo State, but in 1930 moved to the Cocuera Colony in Mogi das Cruzes.<sup>29</sup> As with most all Japanese-language writers active in Brazil, Nishioka was engaged in non-literary activities as well. In April 1938, for example, he helped form the KTK Association in the Caxingui neighborhood of São Paulo City, which distributed newly hatched chicks that had been born using a new ten-thousand-egg incubator that had been imported from Japan.<sup>30</sup> As of 1975, he was still participating in literary activities in Brazil as a member of the Koronia Bungakukai.<sup>31</sup>

## “Natsuyo”

Katayama Yōko

Natsuyo, a truly good-natured and clever woman whom we never referred to as anything but Natsu, was our maid for a full ten years. I have never again met such a good maid, and it is unlikely that I ever will. No, I take that back: it is a mistake to refer to her as just a maid; Natsu is someone who would have made a splendid wife and mother, regardless of the station of the household she entered. As a result of these qualities, her reputation was excellent throughout the neighborhood as well, and marriage proposals came on a regular basis from all quarters. Natsu never displayed any inclination to accept any, however, during her decade with us. In the end, she had no choice but to return to her parents after they expressed their displeasure with the situation.

Natsu, who is originally from Hokkaidō, came to our household when she was just a child of fifteen.<sup>32</sup> My husband arranged to have her come through the good offices of the inn where he stayed during his frequent travels there for work. Having been born to a poor family with many siblings, Natsu had been apprenticed at a young age; despite this, however, she remained an innocent who worked with great care, whether supervised or not, and as such quickly became indispensable and trusted by my husband and his first wife.

The event that made her truly essential to this family, however, was when my husband's wife, who was by all accounts normally quite hale, passed away suddenly from pneumonia at the young age of twenty-five, leaving behind children of only two and three. The pneumonia had been a byproduct of the highly contagious influenza that was so prevalent at that time, now many years past. How distraught my husband must have been, having suddenly lost someone he loved, leaving two small children motherless. Even now when he thinks back to those events, he is overcome with countless emotions; at the time, he must found himself utterly at a loss. To make matters worse, apparently the love that the two had held for each other for many years had only borne fruit in marriage three or four years prior; one can presume that my husband's anguish must have been profound.

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<sup>32</sup>“Natsuyo” appeared in 1933, in the June 29, July 6, and July 13 issues of the *Burajiru jihō*.

One can hardly imagine, given all this, Natsu's shock and bewilderment. Despite this, she rallied bravely, supporting my grieving and suffering husband and the motherless children; for two long years she bore this heavy responsibility. It was at that point that I met him.

Out of sheer coincidence, I learned that my husband's family home neighbored that of my elder brother's wife, and on the grounds of that connection he came to visit us with some frequency.

I was raised in a family of military men, with my deceased father and uncle having served and my two elder brothers serving currently serving. As one might imagine, then, I tended to come in contact with individuals almost entirely drawn from that world. When the man who became my husband began visiting this sort of household on a regular basis, my interest in him—given his different background—began as curiosity but at some point became a deep affection. My mother was taken by his charm and appearance, which belied his youth, while my brothers, for their part, at least displayed respect for the intelligence and experience he possessed in a wide variety of areas, compared to their own, which was limited to military matters. Needless to say, my sister-in-law approved of the match. An environment as conducive as this greatly facilitated our coming together. I should add that around this time my husband was operating a concern dealing in woolen goods, based in Yokohama.

I have veered far from my story of Natsu. I too had heard constantly about her, and how grateful he was to her. "I owe Natsu my life. Whatever else may happen, I must repay my debt to her somehow. . . ."

All of the family had heard these words of my husband's countless times. One day, as our wedding date was approaching, my husband once again raised the issue with me. "Keiko, I have you to thank for the happiness which this marriage will bring me. Please consider Natsu's circumstances. Once you have joined my household and settled in, I would very much like to give Natsu some leave to rest. I hope that you will understand my feelings on this matter." Why would I have had any objection? I was happy to give my approval.

Eventually Natsu and I came to live under the same roof. Once the initial days of morning-to-night work finally ended and a measure of calm had been restored to the home in Ushigome, Natsu welcomed me there with great joy.

"Madam, welcome to the household. Since you have arrived, the master has been in the highest of spirits, and I too share his great joy," Natsu said, with tears running down her cheeks. I imagined that she must have been overwhelmed by a sudden rush of emotions that she had born for so long. For my part, I was at a loss at how to express the feelings that filled my breast.

With the passage of time, Natsu and I became truly close. As a result, I never did carry through on the plan to give Natsu a holiday soon after I arrived, nor did Natsu seem to have the slightest interest in it either. The matter was simply forgotten. Of course, I helped Natsu with many of the tasks around the house, and as a result, despite the fact that my mother had expressed her concern multiple

times to me when I left to join the new household that Natsu, having been there longer than I, would be difficult to control, I did not share that fear in the slightest, and instead grew as close to her as a sister or close friend. Natsu was also around my age, which allowed me to talk with her about things I otherwise might not have. Despite our similar ages, though, Natsu had not been raised as casually as I had, so even though she was twenty, one year younger than I, she also took the role of the senior in our conversations, providing me advice and counsel. I may have enjoyed far more of an education, but that learning did me no good at all. She was particularly good in dealing with the children. For example, when the children were getting a little carried away with their mischief, while I would not be able to scold them firmly no matter how hard I tried, Natsu would put a quick end to it, saying, “Young master, that simply will not do.” That is not to say that Natsu was cold with the children. Being boys, they are prone to being quite rough and making trouble, but Natsu never once displayed a cross expression. Rather, she always maintained an air one would expect of a loving mother toward her beloved children.

It only occurred to me later, but it seemed as though Natsu might have been in love with my husband.

While there is nothing specific that I can put my finger on, Natsu was fond of always saying “The master this, the master that” and telling stories about him from before we met, and she always carried out any job that was for him with great care. Things like this just made me suspect. Another time, after she had just taken the children out to play, they remained out for an unusually long time; come evening, I was quite worried until I heard the sounds of my husband walking up to the front gate, mixed with the sounds of the children. When I hurried to the front door, I found them holding his hands and smiling, with Natsu right behind them, unable to conceal her pleasure. Then, presumably feeling guilty upon seeing me, Natsu’s face reddened and she said, “The young masters said they wished to go to meet their father, and would not hear a word to the contrary. . . .” The encounter left me with an unpleasant feeling, that had I just not come to this household, Natsu would be living this sort of blissful life.

Moreover, it seemed clear that despite everything I did for her, Natsu preferred my husband to me. Things that she was not willing to reveal to me, she would freely speak to my husband about. Once, when my husband was in the bath, I happened to pass by the bathroom. I could hear the voices of my husband and Natsu, who would always go to check the temperature of the water. I was unable to make out Natsu’s voice clearly due to the closed door and the sound of the water, but I did hear my husband say, “Don’t worry. Leave everything to me.” For a time I trembled with insecurity over what this might mean, but it gave me some comfort when I decided it must have been over the matter of the multiple requests Natsu had received recently from her parents asking for money. Still, this sort of attitude of Natsu’s left me feeling vaguely discomfited and betrayed.

Despite that, there was no reason for me to lash out at Natsu, or to chastise her for secretly loving my husband. No, to the contrary, it was precisely because she loved him that she had been willing to do so much for him. If anything, it even caused me to feel pity toward her.

Though we wished she would stay with us indefinitely, of course that could not be, and it was at the end of March, when the cherry blossoms had finally begun to swell, that her time with us came to an end. She announced that she would leave this house in which she had lived for a full decade and the children that she had raised from their infancy. She returned home in tears. We too all cried as we saw her off, as though we were saying goodbye to a close relative.

We all went to the station with her. I will never forget her face, swollen and red from all of the tears, as she receded into the distance, her head bowing all the while.

The wall calendar had been replaced three times since that day. Not a single letter had arrived with news from Natsu. I hoped that no news was good news. In my case, much had changed, starting with that earthquake.<sup>33</sup> Because both the business and our home were severely damaged, I had developed a distaste for heading into the city.<sup>34</sup> I had also miscarried twice, which had taken a profound toll on my health. For these reasons, I had remained here, at our new home, since. It was located close to Kamakura, so my husband was able to go into Tokyo in only two hours, which allowed him to commute daily. I, however, became a complete provincial. I rarely went to Tokyo, and instead had most of my daily necessities provided by my husband. It was only in the most special of circumstances that I would need to go into the city, and even then my husband would come to Tokyo Station to meet me when I arrived. As a result, it had been three years since I had walked the streets of Tokyo. It seemed that my husband had deep misgivings about letting me head out on my own, given that my health had not yet been fully restored.

The day before yesterday, though, my cousin came to visit for the first time in quite a while. Succumbing to her encouragement, I decided to accompany her to Tokyo. I was not very inclined to do so, and I had never before gone out without telling my husband, so I agonized over the decision for some time, but I had not seen my cousin since my brothers were transferred away and I was loathe to say goodbye. In the end, I chose to go with her.

It being so long since I had been jostled by the thronging crowds, I soon grew tired of swimming against the current of people. We had gone into M department store and had finally finished the shopping my cousin had hoped to do when, upon entering the third-floor toy department, we found ourselves amid the countless parents with their children one would expect to encounter given the season. As I was thinking that I might try to find some Christmas presents for the children, ahead of me I caught sight of a man's profile that I thought I recognized, even though four or five people stood between us. Thinking, *could it be?*, I took a closer look, upon which I discovered that it was indeed my husband, whom I had seen

off to work that very morning. His gaze was cast downward, and he was saying something to the three- or four-year-old boy who was with him. On the verge of being trampled, the boy clung to my husband, who quickly scooped him up into his arms and then fixed the boy's cap, which was about to fall off.

But wait, what's this? That boy's face was the spitting image of my husband's when he was still a child, in that photograph in which his nursemaid was holding him. Nor was that all. As I approached, I noticed that my husband had a young woman with him. As the two were about to pass me, walking side-by-side, something caused them both to look in my direction, even as I was realizing with a start what was happening. By chance, their eyes met mine. Without thinking, I blurted out, "Natsu!" She responded, "Mistress. . . ." but I have no recollection not only of what she said after that, or even of how I returned home after the encounter. All I remember is the blanched face of my cousin, saying over and over again, "Be strong, Keiko, be strong."

My husband visited my bedside again today, seemingly wanting to tell me something, but it was too painful for me even to look at him. All I wanted was to be done with it all.

These events are starting to seem to me to be a tale of the distant past. I now pass my days happily here, in the colony, surrounded by my adorable students.

Mine is a quiet, if monotonous, existence. From time to time, despite my best efforts not to, I experience deep homesickness. My elder brothers are always telling me to come back whenever I wish.

These events, however, forced me to abandon the notion of living a normal life. I am now searching for a new way, looking at things differently in the hopes of finding something true.

Until such time as I find that, however, I intend to maintain this happy life that I enjoy here.

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KATAYAMA YŌKO is the penname for Hayashi Ise (1899–1994), the younger sister of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō.<sup>35</sup> Born in Tokyo, Katayama had migrated to Brazil in 1926 alone after divorcing her husband.<sup>36</sup> Presumably she paid her own fare when she came, which would have provided her more flexibility upon her arrival as she would not have been contracted to work on a farm.<sup>37</sup> Instead, she supported herself working at a hotel and at a newspaper, and continued writing until her death in 1994. According to Arata Sumu, Katayama's relation to Tanizaki was a secret when she began first writing in Brazil.<sup>38</sup> In addition to a 1978 work about her family, *Ani Jun'ichirō to Tanizaki-ke no hitobito* (兄潤一郎と谷崎家の人々), she also wrote the story "Senchū yobanashi" (船中夜話) about her voyage from Japan to Brazil.<sup>39</sup>

## “Placement”

Furuno Kikuo

The ocean had grown gradually more muddied. The whine of the engine dropped suddenly and before them the opening of the Mekong Delta traced a wide arc in the direction the ship was headed.

As the speed of the ship dropped, the warm air in the sealed infirmary on the aft upper deck became unbearable.

Time and again Shinkichi, who was sick to his stomach from the smells of new paint and carbolic acid mixing with the musk of the patients' feverish bodies, fled the room with the urge to vomit.

When he jammed his finger down his throat in an attempt to throw up as he clung to the rail, however, all that came up from his retching stomach was sticky bile. Staring at the incredible tumult of white froth caused by the screw, Shinkichi's exhausted mind began to reel.

Over the last two or three days, Shinkichi's almost-two-year-old son had grown emaciated, like some sort of dried persimmon, from his stubborn fever that refused to drop even a degree below 104. The doctor had said there was a likelihood he would develop diarrhea, but so far there had been no sign of it; the only symptom was this lingering fever.

The bell signaling lunch rang. The migrants, weakened by the heat of the South China Sea, however, had no appetites whatsoever. They wearily left their bunks,<sup>40</sup> and then plodded over to the mess tables, where they gathered. Atop the insufficiently salted potatoes had been quietly placed two strangely pungent dried fish. For a moment, a look of disgust seized the migrants' faces—"not again!"—but soon they returned to their state of utter resignation and cast down their eyes as they picked up the chopsticks covered with peeling red paint.

"Food, food, no matter how many times I say that, it always makes me feel better. Let's eat!" One of the boys, with his hands cupped around his mouth to make a megaphone, went around shouting into each bunk to get everyone going.

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"Haikō" appeared in 1934 in the 17 January, 24 January, 7 February, and 21 February issues of the *Burajiru jihō*. The title, *Haikō* (配耕), refers to the process by which migrants would be placed as contract laborers in settlements by migration companies. See Hosokawa, *Nikkei Burajiru imin bungaku*, II:309–13.



Whenever he was met by some complaint or other, the boy would give the person a scolding in a cold, sharp voice as he played with the acne on his chin.

"If you have some gripe, take it up with the purser. Do you want to go to Mogiana or not?"

Shinkichi's wife was balled up in the corner of her bunk, gritting her teeth and trying to endure her nausea and headache, which felt like a rake being dragged across the surface of her brain. *If the boy, with his pale, oily face, finds me, I am sure he will curse at me again.* The woman pulled the blanket, marked with the symbol of the shipping line, up over her face. Things swirled into a blur as they raced through her throbbing head, which felt as though it would split: Her son, who lacked even the energy to speak, with his inexplicable fever and his gauntness, which resulted from the heat of the sealed cabin; the constant pulsing of the ship's engines; the small, drenched body of her aged mother, who had come to the Kobe processing facility<sup>41</sup> to meet her; the expressionless Chinamen in Hong Kong who had lacked eyebrows; the chilly Shinshū train station; bells, bells, and potatoes; these. She sobbed as she thought of her husband, Shinkichi, with his visibly emaciated neck, who had forced himself to go to the infirmary this morning to look after their son despite being sick himself, and was now confined there.

The whole ship shuddered, the bass whistle blew long, and commotion burst out suddenly on deck.

The port of Saigon. . . .

Night fell early, perhaps because of the rain.

Water oxen gathered in the paddies, which seemed to blur into the muddy river, and white cranes flew about in the twilight like slips of paper.

Light escaped from the natives' huts near the shore, and glowed dully as it reflected on the river.

On order of the ship's doctor, all portals on the ship were sealed in order to avoid the malaria-carrying insects.

Hot air, filled with humidity from the rain, enveloped the ship. The cabins reeked like a garbage can, as they grew increasingly steamy.

The migrants passed the sleepless night in the depths of the ship, feeling the lapping of the jaundiced, murky flow of the Mekong river lap though their sweaty and oily skin.

The next day. . . .

*This ship will depart for Singapore today at noon. Ship's captain.*

Despite this posted announcement, the greedy immigrant ship's tentacle-like cranes continued moving freight long after the designated time. After all, the shipping company would not reap its great profits on the transport of migrants alone.

It was slightly after the ship had set sail that Shinkichi and his wife staggered out from the medical room—little more than a doghouse at the stern of the ship—with dazed, haunted expressions.

Even as they wiped sweat from his gaunt, shrunken face, their son had breathed his last.

Late at night on the South China Sea, the stars glowed red and the wind sounded on the mast and the antenna. With a single blast of the whistle, which rang out like a howl, their son's little casket, wrapped in a burlap sack, fell straight down into the white ripples on the surface and was swallowed up by the sea.

Shinkichi's wife collapsed into a heap, feeling as though her heart had been seized by a giant black hand and smashed down onto the deck.

The various migrants who had gathered into a semi-circle around them—more out of curiosity about their first burial at sea than out of sympathy—felt a chill race down their backs and then all together withdrew to their bunks.

Now Shinkichi's wife was bedridden in the same room where her son had laid.

Singapore, Colombo, and the Indian Ocean—"England's Lake"—the immigration ship continued sailing south, moving away from Japan at the rate of 13 knots.<sup>42</sup> Shinkichi's wife, however, was moving at an even faster rate away from her aging mother back amid the mountains of Shinshū, from Shinkichi, and from everything else in this world in her race toward death.

Once their placement was determined, the migrants' feelings changed; the "familial" feelings that had pervaded right up until the previous day were now gone. At the very least, they were not the same feelings that had lashed them one to the other atop the summer rollers of the South Pacific a few days earlier.

Brazil was a vast, elusive expanse of a new world, against which they themselves were miniscule, pathetically indistinct beings on the far edge of that wilderness. What good will come from all their struggles? This mood—despair mixed with a self-defensive posture that bordered on the primal, a feeling like sand being rubbed against sand—wafted from the immigrant ship like methane gas.

Shinkichi's placement was on a parcel behind C Station on the Noroeste line.

The next day, after the trachoma exam, they were scheduled to leave for their allotted parcel.

Shinkichi's wife's condition had grown serious; she had been bordering on unconsciousness since the day before they reached Rio de Janeiro.

Rain came and went. They emerged on deck to find a day as depressing as any late-autumn day in Japan. The range of mountains along the coast lay silent, like a sprawled-out farm animal, beyond the low-hanging evening sky.

The young men and women of the bible study group gathered in a circle near the infirmary and sang "Till We Meet Again" in saccharine voices.<sup>43</sup>

The head of the study group, who was despised by both young women and all those who had children because he had purchased all of the starch at the ship's store and had washed his undergarments in the women's sink, spoke in a strained voice like that of a squawking crow, saying, "The kingdom of heaven approaches."

With this he concluded his tedious sermon. A youth on his second crossing, who was sitting in one of the chairs at the ship's store, smiled ironically and muttered, "I don't know if it is heaven or hell, but you sure will find out when you reach your plot tomorrow. By that time it won't help to say, *"Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani* (My God, why have You forsaken me?)"

Shinkichi had to walk between the infirmary and the cabin many times, each time passing by these "puritans."<sup>44</sup>

The ship's doctor and nurses were busy preparing for the next day's eye exams, and paid little attention to either Shinkichi's wife or the other patients in the infirmary.

Shinkichi's wife had to be hospitalized at Santa Casa, but Shinkichi had to depart with everyone else for his parcel the next day.<sup>45</sup>

According to the people who had been to Brazil before, the parcel to which he was headed was known as "a Japanese farm—more like a prison cell—that was famous for sucking all of the marrow out of immigrants' bones by means of the most devious of mechanisms."

The thing these old, crafty Japanese were referring to when they spoke of this "mechanism" was a tightly run system. One old Kumamoto man who was returning to Brazil added a strangely abstract explanation to this: "While there may be any number of vines stretching out in different directions, they all lead back to one great tree. It's an old tree with really thick bark; quite a *garganta*." If you want to see this great tree, the man said, you should go tonight to the first-class dining hall, where he will be having a drink; just be prepared for his thundering voice.

For Shinkichi at this moment, however, it did not matter what sort of parcel he was headed for in the *noroeste*, or what sort of "system" was exploiting the immigrants. He did not have the luxury of worrying about it. He had to confer with the cabin representative and try to arrange *something*.

His wife would enter Santa Casa, while he would go to the *noroeste* interior, hundreds of kilometers away. He felt as though he were being frantically chased by some sort of ball of flame; as though immediately in front of him a pitch-black abyss was stretching open its rapacious maw.

The rain, now falling in earnest, frantically pummeled the starboard side of the ship, which was turned toward the open sea. Onto the deck, surrounded by darkness, dashed a group of men, moving as a single mass. They seemed just like prisoners mid-escape.

Agitated and hurling epithets, the men raced away noisily to the migrant quarters. The group, which included Shinkichi, was made up of the quarters' representative and various officers.

The men were returning from the first-class dining hall, where they had been split right down the middle by the thundering voice of the "great tree," just as the old returnee from Kumamoto had predicted.

However, the touchiness and sense of camaraderie among the immigrants in the cabin, with their departure for their designated farms set for the very next day, were now completely gone; amid that environment, the excitement of the men cooled and oxidized like sensitive litmus paper. Even if there was a modicum of pleasant sentimentality on this last night of communal life in this dark, unpleasant, unsanitary hole in the ground they called the migrants' cabin, the pervading sense was of a vacuum, in which people would not even try to muster sympathy for the tragedy of their neighbor. Look, Shōda-san, it's all fate. You might as well resign yourself to it. It's unlikely that Akio will be able to change your land assignment. It's sad about your wife, but. . . .

The room representative avoided Shinkichi's face and said,

"It's not that it's impossible. The boss will go on and on about how he can't do anything about it, but don't listen to that. If you tell him you will find him a lively girl for the night, and then slip some of this in his pocket. . . ."

The man from Kumamoto rubbed his thumb and pointer finger right in front of Shinkichi's nose, making it clear that a bribe would do the trick. Shinkichi, for his part, sat on the edge of his bunk as if stunned, clutching his hair, which was still wet from the rain, with both hands.

Cold, lifeless eyes—as though belonging to mere spectators—encircled him, gazing from every bunk.

Dear K: That poor young couple whom I mentioned in a postscript to my last letter—that's right, Shōda Shinkichi from Wakayama—as I expected, they were eventually processed as migrants. As migrants, that is, and definitely not as people. The next morning his wife was sent in the rain to Santa Casa in Santos and Shōda went with the other migrants to the *noroeste*.

I suspect his kind wife probably died alone among those foreigners at Santa Casa. In that serious a condition, alone like that—I don't believe in god's miracles.

I have no doubt that you will think that there must have been some other way. Even I, who have just arrived at my assigned land, think that to some extent. But when I look at myself objectively—as a person, no, as a single migrant who was taken from the processing facility in Kobe and placed on my assigned land—Shōda's situation does not seem the least unusual; to the contrary, it even seems like the usual way for the emigration company to treat someone. I am not being facetious.

I have heard of countless cases like Shōda's even just here in this area; in fact, some were more brutal and inhumane.

I believe that the source of all of this tragedy lies not merely in the corruption of a single person in charge of the emigrants, but in the fundamental irrationality of the migration companies.

These for-profit emigration companies remain in business because of the commercial and postal shipping companies that are their primary shareholders. In

their frantic desire to produce profits, the resulting pressure is applied at the point least capable of resisting it: the migrants. It is a completely natural phenomenon.

Shōda's case was no more than a tiny sliver of that natural phenomenon.

The ultimate failure, the most fundamental part of our tragedy as migrants, however, is of course in the indifference and inattention of the Japanese government to those migrants (shall I refrain from saying migrants to South America?). In Brazil, we have a word for it: *kimin* (棄民), or “discarded people.” It hits the nail right on the head.

If I were to tell you that all of the people who fled Japan because they had grown sick of it were already filled with resentment and anger, despite having only recently arrived in South America, I think that you would probably be unable to keep that characteristic sarcastic grin of yours from slipping.

With that in mind, I add my brief apologies for having been out of touch for so long. Tomorrow I will finally put these skinny arms to work weeding in the coffee fields. With that, I bid you goodbye.

The writer has been unable to learn anything more about what became of the Shōda couple after that, though I suspect I could hazard a reasonable guess. By chance, a close friend of the author added his thoughts on this matter to a letter he was writing to someone in Japan; I have borrowed that text for use here.

The End

## “Tumbleweeds”

Furuno Kikuo

Peeking out the door that he had half-opened, João exclaimed, “*Neve* (snow)! The ocean and the deck are both covered! Snow! Come quickly, Akita-san!”

“Akita-san, *sorvete* (ice cream), eh?” João’s eight-year-old sister Luísa, with her white-rabbit-fur collar, came up and hung from Akita’s arm.

“I’ll lift you up, Lui!”

Clumped together, the three of them went out on the aft deck. It was just as João had described it. Everything was covered with snow. The twilight, which seemed not quite dawn nor dusk, was eerily silent, as the white nights at the poles must be.

The gentle snow falling in the twilight made it hard to believe that they were at sea. *This afternoon it might snow; the barometric pressure is dropping. Snow—that’s another thing I haven’t seen in a while.* When the second mate he met in the wireless operator’s office had said this in the morning, Akita had felt a slight ache in his chest.

When he was a student and was boarding near Uguisudani in Shitaya, he would often stand on the bridge over the railroad tracks there and watch the trains that passed beneath him on their way into Tokyo from the Northeast, with their roofs covered with snow that had not yet reached the city.

How many years had it been since he had stopped experiencing the anticipation that came with the change of seasons?

... *Oh, neve, como a saudade,*

*Caes leve, caes leve,...*

(The snow falls, like a memory  
so lightly, so lightly ...) <sup>46</sup>

“Do you know the poem, João?” muttered Akita, staring intently into the snow with his head tilted horizontally.

“*Eu não sei* (I don’t know it).”

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Maeyama states that the first appearance of “Tenpō” was in the July 1940 issue of the journal *Shin Bura-jiru*. Unable to find that journal, I have based this translation on the version that appeared in *Bungei shuto* 27, no. 6 (June 1958): 31–40.

With this, Luísa, silent and being held by Akita, pulled on his hair.

"What is *saudade* (nostalgia)?"

"That's a pretty hard one. João, explain it to your sister."

"*Saudade* is, let's see, ok. . . . When we were in Brazil, every evening we would give *milho* (corn) to the pigs in the *chiqueiro* (pig pen), right? So now every evening I think of the pig pen. *Aquele mesmo, não* (It's like that, isn't it), Akita-san?"

Without intending to, Akita let out a sardonic smile. "Close enough. Do you get it, Luísa?"

Luísa shrugged her shoulders, raised her eyebrows as foreigners do, and answered *não*.

"*Que boba!* (What a dummy!)" João said, smiling.

The tips of the siblings' fingers grew red with the cold, as they ran around on the deck, kicked the snow as they went, pressed snowballs to their cheeks, and even tried taking bites of them; all the while they joked with each other in some sort of eccentric Portuguese.

Luísa, this small, precocious "Brazilian girl," had once been told by her father that snow is a little like ice cream, so she must have been disillusioned when she first tasted it and discovered that it was merely cold, and not the least bit sweet. Perhaps seventeen-year-old João felt the same way.

"*Que fria! Merda!*" João went to throw the snowball he had in his hand down on the deck.

Luísa snatched it away, saying, "I am going to show it to *mamãe*," and then ran off in the direction of the passengers' quarters.

It was only quiet for a brief time. Apparently the ship had entered deep into a low pressure zone. The ship ran against the Japan Current, just south of the Aleutian Islands, shuddering incessantly and emitting creaking sounds that sounded just like screams as it steamed at full speed into the blizzard.

That night Akita had fragmentary dreams. All were of Brazil. One seemed to be of a country road along the Sorocabana. The blue of the sky, so deep that it seemed to overwhelm his optic nerve, was above him like a great, round lid. There were large *pinholas* (silk cotton trees) whose flowers were beginning to open, and beneath them Akita sat with his mother. It resembled the day he left the farm and went to Rio de Janeiro.

Akita looked up at the sky and thought of the verse from the bible: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters." His mother had her shoes off and her legs extended on the grass. Buttercups were mixed in among the grasses. Let me look for chiggers (*bicho*), he said in a Kyūshū dialect, as Akita reached out his hand toward his mother's legs. As he did, the area suddenly grew red, as though it were sunrise. The *pinhola* (silk cotton tree) flowers had opened and the petals begun to fall. When Akita looked up, mixed-blood girls from the farm were high in the treetops like bunches of unripe fruit, calling something down toward Akita.

This is where the dream broke off and Akita awoke. He got up from his bed and staggered over to the porthole. Opening the two steel covers, he peered out through the glass. Waves were striking the window and the snow was still falling. The cry of a petrel could be heard amid the creaking of the hull of the ship, which sounded as though it could break apart at any moment.

Akita returned to bed and, pulling the blanket redolent of seawater and mold over his face, uttered the words, Brazil! Brazil!

Twice there was a loud sound as though someone had struck the surface of the water with a plank or something of that sort. *There's no need for that—I will just apologize . . .* a thick Osaka accent followed the resonant strikes, swirling around the kiosk near the third-class dining hall.

Despite the fact that many people skip lunch due to seasickness, there were still fifteen or sixteen passengers in the hall. They turned in unison, casting their questioning gazes in the direction of the sound. Before them appeared Akita, who was being calmed by another man of similar age named Wakabayashi. Visible following along behind him, as though trying to hide in his shadow, was Luísa, who wore a deep red coat and reeled with the swaying of the ship.

The young men who always sat with Akita during meals asked him, "What happened?" They were unable even to wait for him, with his ashen face, to sit down.

"The first-class cabin boy—I hit him." Akita had sat at the table and slowly poured some tea into a cup, but his hand as he lifted it still shook from excitement.

"Why didn't you tell *me, mister* Akita? I haven't had any exercise in ten days! Ha ha ha. . . ." Tani, the college student from California who was sitting next to him, interrupted in his awkward combination of Japanese and English.

"Luísa came back down from upstairs crying. When I asked her why, she said that the boy had taken her to a group of first-class passengers in the lounge upstairs."

"The guy's a jerk. His complexion is always the color of asparagus. *Mucho bien!*" A young man who had worked as a laundryman in Buenos Aires added, in a supportive tone, as he sat with his arms crossed.

"He may not have intended to do it at first, but when Luísa brought the snowball in apparently he told her *This is a cold ball, but if you take good care of it you can take it with you to Japan, so you should keep it in your pocket. . . .*"

All any of them could do was smile wryly.

" . . . then he said, come over here and stand near the stove. Apparently she was happy at first. At some point, though, water started dripping down out of her pocket. The ball was gone. According to her, the foreigners and Japanese who were there found it so funny that they burst out laughing, seeing the girl who had been so happy up until now start crying."

"So the brown-noser probably figured that he had really scored some points. *Che! Puta merda!*"<sup>47</sup>



At the other side of the table, glaring at Akita with wide, blood-shot eyes as though Akita himself were that cabin boy, was a man who had been the gardener on a wealthy estate in Rio de Janeiro. This was a man who every night played cards by himself, guzzled *pinga* (a hard liquor), and on top of that would force his way into Akita's cabin, regardless of the time and for as long as he cared to stay, to ask him ridiculous questions such as, "Akita-kun, how do you interpret the true intentions of American Minister Valkenburgh's advocacy for neutrality in 1868?"<sup>48</sup>

Akita, wiping his thick glasses, spoke to Wakabayashi, who had been sitting silently. "If you think about it, there was no reason for me to go so far as to hit him. It's just that I was out of my mind with anger. To be honest, perhaps it was because I myself have some sort of inferiority complex as a migrant or something, but I felt as though all of us immigrants to Brazil were being ridiculed."

Having heard about this from Luísa, Akita had called the first-class cabin boy down to the lower decks and slapped both cheeks of his face with an open hand, as they do in the army. He hit him hard enough to leave palm imprints on the cabin boy's fine, feminine cheeks. For his part, the cabin boy did not even try to fight back, and instead just maintained a smile despite his tears. This enflamed Akita all the more. The third-class cabin boys had had to calm him down.

"Akita, why don't you come by my cabin later?" Wakabayashi said, as he stood, patted Akita lightly on the shoulder, and left. Akita had fallen silent and was sipping his tea.

"Anyway, it wasn't adult behavior," Akita muttered, having finally regained his composure. Glancing to his side, he noticed that João, who was sitting three or four people over, was handling his chopsticks with difficulty and concealing his cutlery with his right hand as though afraid of what others would think. The voyage on this Japanese ship was the first time in his life that he had ever held chopsticks.

The bridge to his life in Brazil had crumbled when he boarded the Japanese ship. Around him was in all ways Japan. To the individuals whose eyes pored over this dual-citizenship-holding youth of seventeen, he bore not the slightest handicap. Little did they know that the ceaseless, severe training that this child of nature, of that vast continent, would receive in Japan had already begun during this sea crossing, which otherwise should have been fun. *He cannot use chopsticks. He doesn't even know conversational Japanese. Halfwit!* The cold glares that poured over João made him feel frightened of the table, as though he were some sort of thief, and led him to speak the language of his parents' homeland timidly and with a lisp, further muddying his thick accent. Luísa was in the very same situation.

"Thrust your chests out with pride, João and Luísa! Throw away those chopsticks and eat proudly with your forks. Speak to any you encounter loudly in the language of your birthplace, Brazil. If you shrink before them like that, once in Japan you will have people convincing you to put snowballs in your pockets every day!"

Drinking old tea from the kettle with the shipping company's logo on it, Akita stared through the ship's portal, steamed up by the perspiration of all the passen-

gers, at the undulating horizon of the North Pacific in winter as it rose and fell in the distance.

*Congratulations on your safe return home. Koyama Hotel.*

Telegrams had already begun to arrive from random hotels in Yokohama for various passengers aboard ship.

"It's unforgiving, Japan. I feel as though I can't let down my guard somehow, even though I am returning to the country of my birth," Wakabayashi's wife Makiko muttered, as she peeked at the telegram that Akita was reading.

"Makiko, don't be so grumpy. Why don't you get us some Sunkist oranges or something?" Throwing the guitar he had been playing down on the bed, Wakabayashi sat down alongside Akita.

When Makiko deftly sank a knife into the Sunkist orange she had taken from the crate, a sweet scent filled the small cabin as though a bouquet of flowers had been scattered about. The color and scent of the fruit, raised on that fertile continent, had the exuberance of youth.

Tasting the slice of fruit, it had a sweet but mild flavor, with a freshness that pierced the tongue. It was similar to the flavor of a Brazilian *laranja*, though the sweetness of the *laranja* was less reliable. Akita recalled reading an article on economics that said that when introduced to the French consumer market, it had not been well received, having been deemed to lack sufficient citrus flavor. Is it only the fruit in Brazil that is lacking in flavor?

"I suppose that even on Californian orchards Japanese are encountering all sorts of difficulties," Wakabayashi said, to no one in particular, as he held one Sunkist up at eye level, resting on the palm of his hand. Just then there was a knock at the door and Tani came in, bending his tall frame as he entered. He was wearing a loud green jacket.

Akita looked up and said, "Look at that, it's gotten to the point where he is dressed as though he were performing the role of the madman in the Life of Christ."

"Sure! Green is the color of hope. Dream a green dream! That's what they say."<sup>49</sup>

"Have a seat, Tani-san."

"Sit down, young man of California, enjoy a nostalgic Sunkist and tell us tales of your romances." Wakabayashi had a little fun at Tani's expense, even as he made room for him on the chair.

With exaggerated gestures, Tani responded, "Romances? Me?"

"Sure!" Maiko mimicked Tani's way of speaking, which made everyone, including Tani, burst out laughing.

Soon Tani calmed down again, relaxing his expression and falling silent for a moment before suddenly erupting once again, apparently having remembered something suddenly. "Goddamn! I forgot to pass on some important information. I am supposed to tell you that there will be a movie tonight in the special third-class cafeteria. It will begin at seven on the dot. Anyway, I'll be back. The work of a messenger boy is never done! Bye-bye!" Having said all that in one burst, Tani threw a kiss as though he were some sort of acrobat and then ran off down the corridor.

"Kids raised among Yankees sure are loud," Wakabayashi said while looking at Akita and Makiko. The three of them smiled wryly.

"Every time I look at that Tani-san, I think to myself how very gloomy Brazilian kids are. Do you think it is because they have to grow up so quickly, Akita-san?"

"I read this in a book once. According to it, a world traveler once said he had traveled all the world and found that nowhere were children more melancholic than in Brazil. The book's author, who was Brazilian, wrote that he agreed with the traveler's impression and added that the main reason for the melancholia was because Brazilian children were mobilized to the front lines of life earlier than those in any other country in the world. Once they turned twelve, they already carried the responsibility of providing important 'supplementary income' for their family; by the time they were eighteen, they played an essential role in the economic life of the family."

"The interior is harsh, isn't it. Even at such an early age they are made to play such an important role."

"The first thing that surprised me when I arrived at the Japanese colony was how early the children matured when it came to daily life. Sometimes I even caught myself wondering why an adult was speaking in a child's voice."

"It's true. Even more so for girls. Parents are more exacting on them than they are for kids from the outskirts of Tokyo."

The ship pitched slowly from side to side, and the steam whistle blew. Before the sound that slipped through the narrow gap between the low-hanging snow clouds and the hide-colored surface of the ocean had reached the horizon, the whistle that followed it flew off in fast pursuit.

Makiko got up, went to the portal, and gazed through it at the ocean.

"A ship?" Wakabayashi, still sitting, asked of Makiko, who had her back to him.

"No."

"Birds?"

"Today as yesterday, just waves and clouds? It is just like the log from the voyage of the Santa Maria."

Wakabayashi reached out, grabbed his guitar, and plucked a few notes before saying, "There are times when crossing this sort of interminable ocean just makes me want scream out with all my might. Akita-kun, didn't you ever feel that sort of impulse in Brazil?"

"I did."

Akita thought of evenings on the coffee plantation near the state border with Paraná. The phrase "sea of trees" would be an apt description for the grand undulations of the coffee plantation, which stretched as far as one could see and then beyond the horizon for dozens of kilometers. Leaning his tired body against the fence surrounding the ranch on his walk home from the plantation and taking in the view of that sea of trees had been one of the best parts of Akita's

daily routine. The angled rays of the setting sun cast Akita's shadow long over the fragrant *grossura* grasses. Wild tomatoes, resembling *hōzuki* groundcherries, ripened amid the grasses. As far as he could see, his was the only shadow. Frequently, amid this sea of trees into which he himself was vanishing, Akita would be seized with the desire to scream so loudly that his throat would split open. Likely even that scream, though, would be swallowed up by the infinite silence, and not even one blade of grass would waver in response to the single human's pathos and outcry.

Akita recalled this sea of trees as the ship passed through the tropics. The ocean never stops forming perfect ellipses. With the various forms it created around the ship, the waves' colors sometimes perfectly resembled those of the coffee plantations just before the flowers bloomed. The squalls that came at the ship from the distant horizon were just like those that crossed the plantation from the Paraná border. The clouds would begin to visibly darken around the border and then, in half an hour, the showers would form a number of silver screens that enveloped the plantation where Akita and the others were working.

The half-blacks<sup>50</sup> and the women of Iberian blood, with burlap bags over their heads, were on the verge of racing the rain down the wet, clay street, leaping forward on their doe-like chestnut- and barley-colored legs. At that moment, from the stand of coffee bushes right behind him, he heard a low, suppressed laughing voice quietly slip out. It was the women teasing him, saying "*Venha cá, Akita!*" (Come here, Akita!)."

"I think it was Irving who said something to the effect that a sea crossing is a blank in one's life; these words strike me as being completely apposite. In Akita-kun's case, for example, it is a powerful hyphen that connects his life in Brazil to that in Japan,"<sup>51</sup> Wakabayashi said, as he wiped his glasses, which he had taken off, with his handkerchief.

"In something I read by Anatole France recently there was a passage to the following effect: All change, even that which we have every reason to consider a blessing, also possesses an element of melancholy. This is because that which we are attempting to leave behind is a part of ourselves. In order to enter into one life, man must die to another.<sup>52</sup> It might be rude of me, but I wonder if you do have some sense of defeat after having to leave Brazil, Wakabayashi-kun. I wonder if that might be nothing more than the melancholy of having to die to another life, as France said. Be that as it may, you and Makiko gave it your best. Think of this as a home leave."<sup>53</sup>

"This is certainly a poor state in which to be heading for home," Makiko said, stopping her knitting. All three chuckled lightly.

Wakabayashi and his wife had spent five and a half years in Brazil, living in a *colônia* in the interior. Wakabayashi's health, however, did not allow him even to pick up a hoe. Makiko had given birth to a child while he was sick with malaria.

Brazil was in the midst of one of the many revolutions it had experienced in its history.<sup>54</sup> Soldiers from the neighboring state had crossed the river that comprised the border, and were attacking with the newest and most powerful machine guns. . . . This sort of gossip spread, leading strong young men to cast aside their hoes and flee into the primordial forests<sup>55</sup> despite the rattlesnakes that inhabited them. It was amid this tumult that their infant son died of acute pneumonia.

It was nighttime. In the darkness, a fire that was set to clear a mountain traced a crimson arc at one point on the distant horizon. Both Wakabayashi and Makiko felt that they would never forget this scene as long as they lived.

They buried their dead child in a communal graveyard on a hillside where lush green alfalfa flourished. They placed a Japanese-style grave marker that they had carved from Paraná pine alongside the many crosses. Black, white, and half-black<sup>56</sup> children of the *colônia* brought flowers, leaving the small marker covered in *copo-de-leite* and other wild blossoms.

On their way down the hillside, Wakabayashi spoke to Makiko as though making an oath both to her and to himself: "We will be buried in Brazil."<sup>57</sup>

For three successive years they grew cotton, but they were beset by hardships, from insects to plummeting prices. Wakabayashi's body, which had not fully recovered from the malaria, was put through one difficulty after another until his health was damaged to an extreme.

Around that time, a letter arrived from Wakabayashi's older brother in Hokkaidō saying that it would be a great help if he could come and help with the store. He read this letter while confined to bed in his house with a thatched roof that leaked in the rain.

That night the frogs that lived in the swamp behind the house croaked louder than they normally did. He thought well into the night, until nearly dawn, about returning to Japan. His thoughts swung like a pendulum between the small grave on the hillside and that bow-shaped archipelago to the east of the Asian continent.

"Let's return to Japan and try to start life over again."

Wakabayashi blew out the flame in the lantern with a deep breath drawn from the depths of his lungs. For a moment, the scent of the smoking wick was strong in the darkness.

The rolling of the ship continued unabated into the night. The film in the third-class cafeteria began. There is little doubt that seasickness had left many unable to leave their beds, yet the cafeteria was full.

There were two sorts of films. The first of these was a typical film of fourteen or fifteen years earlier. It was an exceedingly banal comedy, but after a previous break in the film a few hundred of its frames had been reversed or inverted or just rearranged with no concern for the development of the plot, perhaps because it was so nonsensical to begin with. The outcome was a reel that seemed like some bizarre nightmare and left everyone confusing the strange resulting sensation with seasickness.

"Ah, you made it, Akita-san!"

Turning in the direction of the *pinga* liquor breath near his collar, Akita saw the face of João's father. Despite his skin the color of *terra roxa* (purplish-brown soil) that was also flushed from alcohol and a torso like a camouflaged tank, he appeared to be in high spirits.

"Good evening. Is your wife here?"

"She's out of commission because she can't take boats well. I left her to watch over our things."

João and Luísa's mother, despite being more than ten years younger than her husband, had the appearance of a woman old enough to be his mother. There are housewives who work from dawn until late into the night with their dry, matted hair up, their bare feet caked in mud, and their toothless mouths hidden by their sealed lips; these women have worked continuously for decades, like draft animals, having lost any trace of sentiment, knowing only the world of primordial forests, cotton fields, and thatched huts. She was one of these women.

As for the men, every harvest they come out of the primordial forest, cross the cotton fields, and race their trucks to town, where alcohol, prostitutes, and dice await. The towns, which pop up near the Japanese collectives, are filled with cheap restaurants catering to Japanese. They resemble suppurations on filthy flesh.

The men join their voices with those of the barmaids, with their large, bony hands burned by insecticides, and sing songs that were popular in Japan more than a decade earlier. João and Luísa's father was one of these men.

When night falls, after Luísa's mother lights the wick of the lantern and puts the children to sleep in their handmade beds, she goes to the kitchen and makes beans for the next day. Many large fireflies with their bodies glowing come in through the open window. It has been a very long time since seeing them made her recollect those of her village in Japan. She has neither memories nor hopes. She has only a mountain of work that must be done, which looms over her. A woman who does not even look up at the sky, let alone think back to her hometown—that is their mother.

Japanese women in farming villages in Brazil do not experience middle age. The men, however, remain forever youthful and vibrant.

If one could call returning to Japan with some money in hand, even if only a small amount, "fortunate," then João's mother was "fortunate." However, nowhere in João's mother's facial expression—as she lay in her third-class "silkworm shelf" wracked with seasickness already even as the lights of the port of Santos were still visible like a string of pearls on the horizon—could one see even a hint of the happiness or satisfaction of a person on their way home after having survived more than a decade of struggle overseas. It was just as if she were lying in her thatched hut with her feet—which she was only able to wash on the rarest occasion—bare.

For João and perhaps for Luísa as well, the ship was just confined, constricting, and inconvenient. Japan, to which they were returning, was an unknown country. Luísa even threw tantrums in the middle of the Pacific Ocean about wanting to

return to Brazil in the morning after having dreamt of it the previous night. How much more fun had it seemed the first time they had taken her by truck to the station to see the train. . . . Only their father was excited. His genteel hometown of the first years of Taishō (1912–26), when he had left Japan, was waiting for him. His vow to return with money in his pocket had been, at least to some extent, achieved. Sure, his children might be a bit "easy going" when compared with children in Japan, but he had money. Money! And if things didn't go well in Japan, he could always return to Brazil. He swigged his *pinga* and carried himself in the third-class quarters as though he were a great success.

That money, though only a pittance, was being guarded by the children's mother, who watched over the sack with the greatest care. Rumors even started that the seasickness was only a pretense, and that her husband had in fact ordered her not to leave her bed so that she could guard their treasure.

Whatever the case may be, their father was the only one of the four who was enjoying himself.

The second film began. This too was a typical film over a decade old. It was the story of an American Indian youth from a farming community who is inspired to go to the big city and through hard work graduates from college and becomes a writer. He falls in love with a young white woman, but he is ridiculed by society for being an Indian and returns to his Indian community in despair after having written one novel. Akita found it not only dull, but also filmed in an excessive, old-fashioned style, and did not have the wherewithal to watch it through to the end.

Coming out of the stuffy viewing room, he realized that the rolling of the ship had calmed completely. He casually opened the door to the afterdeck, which allowed the light of the moon to cascade in like a waterfall. The deck was covered with white snow. As he was about to walk around to the side of the ship, he stopped in his tracks. Just to the side of one of the nearby ventilator ducts an old man, one of the third-class passengers, was frozen in place, staring at the moonlit snow in the palm of his hand as if it were gold dust.

"Hello, Mister Akita! Wake up, wake up! You can see cherry blossoms and Japanese girls on the horizon." The Californian university student came around knocking energetically on the door and calling out his announcement.

Morning clouds stretched the width of the sea's horizon. The clouds were the light purple color of wisteria flowers. Behind those wisteria blossoms, the nearest reaches of the Japanese islands may already be outstretching their hands to us.

He remembered having heard that people returning from Europe are often overcome by homesickness and throw themselves to their deaths in the ocean when they finally come in sight of the Japanese islands. But what was this dispassionate sensation he is experiencing? Is it because he had already decided in his heart to die in Brazil? Or is it from the dulling of emotions that results from even a few years of living on the South American continent?



Akita looked absentmindedly at the round sky visible through the portal. It was the pale blue of early spring, which he thought would have the feel of a ceramic vessel if he were to touch it. It was the sky of Japan, which he had grown accustomed to from birth but which he had been unable to gaze up at once during these past years. This country has four seasons, but the place he had decided in his heart to live out his remaining years was a country that had no seasons. It was a land just like that which Su Shi (蘇軾, 1037–1101) wrote about when he composed the verse, “The four seasons are all like summer, but when it rains it suddenly becomes autumn” after having been exiled to Hainan Island.

He opened the portal. The sound of the waves crashed into the cabin. Sticking out his head, Akita caught the strong scent of seawater. The breeze and the spray felt pleasant on his skin. A flock of gulls reminded him how close they were to land.

“Good morning,” said Wakabayashi in his usual calm manner. He too was sticking his head out of the portal of the neighboring room. He was smiling at Akita.

“I have decided to settled down in Brazil after all. It will take a month to finish my business in Japan and then I will return to Brazil, Wakabayashi-kun.” Akita spoke loudly and with an artificially cheerful tone.

“So you have decided.” Wakabayashi nodded a number of times as he looked at Akita. The morning exercise broadcast began on the radio.

“I went back and forth about it in my head during the weeks we have spent onboard ship, but I was unable to decide. It’s strange, but now that I have finally gotten close enough to catch the scent of Japanese soil, I suddenly want to settle in Brazil permanently. . . .”

“So you will go into the interior, along the Sorocabana?”

“Yes, along the Paraná River. On the other side is Mato Grosso. It brings me great relief to have decided to become a cowherd,” Akita said, wiping the spray off his cheeks with his right hand. “At the same time, it may be that I am just unwilling to admit defeat.”

“I am envious of you, Akita-kun. For the two of us, it really is a case of *vae victis* (Woe to the vanquished!) It is hard to imagine that we will actually find happiness by going to Hokkaidō.”

“But you know, Wakabayashi-kun, my decision to live in Brazil permanently—no, not just me, sometimes I think every *issei*’s decision to live in Brazil permanently—represents the sad final stop on the journey of an individual who has tired of the search for a meaningful life. I think that it is impossible to choose permanent residence abroad without some tragic resignation. . . .”

The two continued looking down at the waterline of the ship without raising their faces. The ship slowed. It had entered Japanese territorial waters.

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FURUNO KIKUO (1907–1989?), the author of both “Placement” and “Tumbleweeds,” was born in 1907 in Fukuoka Prefecture and graduated from Waseda University, where he studied French literature.<sup>58</sup> He arrived in Brazil in 1932, returned to Japan in 1935, and



then returned to Brazil once again in 1936.<sup>59</sup> After his arrival, he worked at the *Burajiru jihō* (where he was in charge of the literary arts column) and at the Burajiru Takushoku Kumiai.<sup>60</sup> He participated as one of the judges for the *Burajiru jihō*'s fiction award, beginning from the second competition in 1933.<sup>61</sup> In 1970 or 1971, he returned to Japan and worked as a lecturer of Portuguese at Kyoto Gaikokugo Daigaku until 1988.<sup>62</sup> During his time in Brazil, Furuno was a central figure in the Japanese-language literary world there; unlike many of the other authors, he produced a number of both fiction and non-fiction writings.<sup>63</sup>

## “After We Had Settled”

Sakurada Takeo

[1]

For Shunsaku, who had such difficulty with ships that he felt sick just from looking at one, the forty-nine-day sea crossing had left him as haggard as a young girl experiencing all of the physiological changes that lead to womanhood. It had seemed as though a mere phantasm or dream. With the hurried change of circumstances and his planning for the future, his mind seemed to be absorbing things with an unprecedented voraciousness; the night before arriving in Santos, however, when he realized that his field of vision was absent of waves, that his cabin lacked the sound of the engines, and that his bed no longer rocked, he could not but feel as though he had been granted a new life, as though he had been returned to his earliest years in a cradle. That too, though, lasted for only a day; the next morning he had to board the train on the Santos-Juquiá Line.

He had a strange disposition: it was often the case that the view of things around him and his emotions could suddenly create an effect similar to that of the two poles of an electrical current; conversely, he also often became so dazed that he would seem to have lost track of the world before his eyes—or even his very own existence.

Perhaps it was because the ride aboard the steam train on the Juquiá Line coincided with one of those frigid states, so the half-day-long trip was an attenuated passage that left little more than fragments in his memory.

He had to ride on a riverboat the next day as well. It was a new grueling undertaking, causing him to feel like a long-distance swimmer encountering a sudden tidal surge during the last two hundred meters of a race. The night before the ship was to set off, when he had looked at his own face reflected in the mirror, illuminated by the reddish-black light from a *cantera* that he had turned on its side, he felt the large, piercing eyes filled with resentment, wretchedness, and sorrow. It was as if he were gazing upon a scorned woman. When he pulled his hair up he

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“Nyūshoku kara” first appeared in 1934 in the 7 February, 14 February, 21 February, 28 February, 7 March, and 14 March issues of the *Burajiru jihō*.

thought he noticed a strange glint come off some shiny object; when he touched the ring on his finger in an attempt to look at it, it slid smoothly off his finger.

The water wheel at the stern of the river steamer, which hardly seemed a product of the twentieth century, made his head throb with its din; mixed with the other sounds—the pistons, the conversations of the passengers, and the loud footfalls—it all seemed to him to be a greater cacophony than he would have experienced had he stuck his head inside a ringing bell. It caused his mood to grow ever darker. Somewhere amid this clamor he overheard that the river's name was Ribeira.

The rain that fell steadily from the morning showed no signs of abating even at noon, and the sky in the distance was a leaden color that seemed just like the snow clouds he knew from Japan. With the bushes on both shores, covered with parasitic plants in a way so distinctive of the tropics, the jungle behind them, the occasional native's home, and the vast ranches in the background, the streaks of rain seemed like grey lines drawn vertically, side by side. On the river, which was not only the color of drainage water but also gave off a stench as a result of the long rainy season, the patterned rain seemed to form a mist as the drops bounced off the surface.

When the wind, which one could hardly imagine was a gas and not a liquid, came, the rain whipped up the surface as though marine plants were engaged in some sort of commotion, causing the sound of the water wheel at the stern to be obscured at times, to blend into the background at others.

From far away, over 12,000 nautical miles,  
To the end of the earth,  
By ship—by river steamer I travel,  
No, I *must* travel,  
Is the river steamer traveling upstream?  
Or down?  
The leaden rain—skies boding snowfall,  
Tropical trees, the horse neighing in the rain,  
Nothing more than the smoke of harsh tobacco.

He, who had never composed one before, recited the poem aloud.

As he thrust his arm into his coat, countless drops of rain streaked his face, from his eyebrows down his cheeks.

At his feet, four or five skeletal chickens that had been put in a box were clucking.  
"The boat will soon arrive in the Sete Barras colony."

[2]

In fact, this river steamer was not just transporting them; it was ferrying them all to their fates. Here in Brazil, on the opposite side of the world from Japan—

and not just Brazil, but well up the Ribeira river—their futures would be determined.

*We will soon reach our destination, the Sete Barras colony*, said the guide from Kaikō, as he stood facing into the wind at the bow and pointed, expressionlessly, into the distance upstream. At the same moment, the whistle blew for a duration that seemed appropriately long for the ridiculously tall smoke stack; it was as though the ship were mooing like a cow as it glided over the surface of the river. The eight families of settlers all jumped up, as if operated by springs, and looked toward the bow.

Their new fates were gradually appearing before their eyes. The settlers stared, unintentionally, at the very spot toward which the guide was pointing, their gazes both silent and searing. They were like cats fixed on their prey, but at the same time they were brimming with anxiety. They had grown hushed at the guide's hortatory explanation, and without realizing it were rising up on the balls of their feet. The reeds whistled and bent in the wind, while the waves divided in two at the bow, leaving smaller wakes to stretch out to either side. It was as if the current were flowing perpetually against them. River birds that resembled herons skimmed the surface of the river again and again, catching their prey.

All of the settlers had been expecting that the port they would enter in Brazil would at the very least be comparable to that of Saigon. As such, they felt like sparring swordsmen who had been struck by unexpected blows when they caught sight of the row of small houses lining the coast, which itself was being borne down upon by heavy skies barely withholding their rain. All enthusiasm drained from them as they gathered their belongings.

Despite the guide's reference to this place as a "town," besides the small, solitary, white-walled church that loomed over everything else from a slightly elevated vantage, nearly all of the homes' walls were crumbling, with their skeletal frames exposed, and only a few had tiled roofs. The sight could not but cause them to feel the sort of demoralization they would have experienced facing a completely failed crop. Some thirty or so of these houses lined the coast, terraced along it like steps.

When the boat docked, the native children of the town, their skin a mixture of black and white, flocked to the ship emitting strange squeals of the sort that often signal terror, but with their muddled eyes, the color of the river, brimming with curiosity. As though it had been prearranged, they all wore crumpled adult hats and pants held up by suspenders so twisted they could have been mistaken for twine. While some had dirty bandages covering abscesses below their knees, others had exposed wounds that resembled pomegranates. Gathering on these were swarms of flies so dense that it appeared the wounds had been coated with charcoal. Their toes were bent like sickles, and the feet themselves were just like those of hairless monkeys. First thinking in shock, *these are Brazilian children?*, Shunsaku then reconsidered, realizing how suitable these creatures were for living among poisonous snakes. Among the fourteen or fifteen children, four or five of them were apparently Japanese, though their movement and behavior were so

assimilated as to make this nigh-impossible to discern. This, and the fact that they spoke Portuguese fluently, only reinforced his initial impression.

These were Japanese settlers who had arrived four or five years earlier, so even though a large number of foreigners from the "town" had gathered as well, they all merely looked like grown versions of those children.

The adults of the full complement of eight families were fully occupied in getting their women and children off the ship and transporting their bags despite each being consumed with his various thoughts as they reconsidered Sete Barras, where they were now to settle. A clash of relief and despondency filled their hearts.

This scene of Japanese engaged in bustling activity was surely one that this wharf had not seen for five years.

"The goal was just to get away from Japan, so. . ."

Shunsaku had undoubtedly achieved that goal, but as he exposed his body to the wind that blew from the far reaches of the vast plains, over the surface of the river, carrying along with it the moisture that follows the rain, there was nothing he could do about the pain he always bore in his sentimental breast.

[3]

Five or six horse-drawn wagons were waiting to meet them in the square overgrown with *colchão* next to the school. The wagon wheels were caked with red soil, and large, black horseflies gathered on the ears and bellies of the horses.

Pale afternoon shadows began to spill out of the low skies, and the white sand under the soles of the settlers' shoes was unusually rough beneath them.

"Yukimori-san, which carriage is mine? Should I ask the horses?" called out blue gaiters, a jocular man from Osaka, to the guide. "I hear that not only are Brazilian cars fast, with their four legs and all, but they throw in long ears for good measure!"

The man from Osaka's family burst out laughing.

Kichibei, Shunsaku's uncle, was up in the carriage, gathering the baggage that his eldest son Kichitarō, Kichitarō's wife Misao, Haruko, Kichiji, and Kichisaburō had brought with them, when he suddenly, as if recalling something, called out to Haruko.

"Where is Shunsaku? Off somewhere when we are so busy . . ."

Haruko, who was Shunsaku's wife for the purposes of the family registry, responded nonchalantly to these indirect but barbed words about Shunsaku, her on-paper husband.

"Masuda-san is passed out drunk on the boat; Shunsaku is looking after him."

Blue veins stood out on Kichibei's face, and he appeared on the verge of kicking the carriage.

"Kichiji! Bring him here now, whether he wants to come or not. Tell him his father is calling him. It is not like he is Masuda's servant or anything."

Running to the wharf, Kichiji came across Shunsaku, carrying Masuda Gengo over his shoulder. Miyo, Takuji, and two others walked beside them. A large group of children from the town followed behind, curious. Shunsaku cared for and looked after the drunk Gengo, being careful not to hurt anyone, just as one would treat one's own parent. Shunsaku got involved with this drunk for precisely this reason, because he reminded him of his parent. As he felt the weight of Gengo, reeking of alcohol, on his boney shoulder, he began to recall his failed father—his father who spent his later years bankrupt and melancholic. Here was just the same sort of fifty-year-old man, drunk and all. . . .

Despite having angrily called for him, when Kichibei saw the beauty of Shunsaku carrying the drunk Gengo his face contorted as though he had bitten down on some sand.

"Hey! Everyone, Kichiji, Haruko are already on the carriage. We have to get going. The facility is a long way off." Fidgeting nervously in the carriage, Kichibei yelled as he pulled his wife Yone up by the hand.

"Yukimori-san, which is Masuda's carriage?" Shunsaku asked.

"Yeah, let's see . . . everyone has already filled up all the other carriages, so those are out. Why don't you go with Yoshikawa-san." Then, turning his face up to Kichibei in the carriage, Yukimori asked, "How about it, Yoshikawa-san?"

"No, I'm sorry, but we can't take him drunk like that. Anyway, we already have all of our family and our things."

In response not only to the coldness, but also to this hostility of Yoshikawa's rejection of Masuda, Yukimori thought that there was something between them that was a little strange; as a man who had seen his fair share of this world, though, he realized this without letting on.

"Uncle, the other carriages are full, so we can't just turn him away. Please let him ride in the carriage. In order to make space, I can walk."

"I didn't say that in order to get you to walk."

Shunsaku was driven mad by his uncle's constant spiteful remarks.

[4]

Even now, as he looked back on his life, a life that had certainly had its share of problems, and wondered what it all had meant, as he stood on this wharf, which bridged from this old life in Japan to the settlement that would mark the start of his new life, even now the fight with his uncle cast a pall of depression over him. Having disobeyed him like that, or rather, having stuck up for Masuda Gengo like that, Shunsaku had to go with Masuda. Still, for someone as timid as Shunsaku, it was a difficult position to be in with a blood relative.

Yukimori arranged for them to go in a carriage that happened to pass by just then, from a Japanese-owned lumber mill.

Shunsaku, who returned to his senses when the whip cracked and the rig began to move, looked at the driver. Though a large Japanese man of around thirty, with sunken cheeks and dark skin, he was distant and unapproachable in a way that one would not expect from a countryman. Shunsaku's carriage, which had gotten started well after the others had already left, clattered down the narrow road through the expansive *campo*. The horses were already fatigued from having brought lumber to the wharf, pulling the cart down a road studded here and there with large rocks, projecting like boulders from the surface, into which the wheels would collide and over which they would have to be pulled, falling with heavy thuds each time. Though the horses would occasionally stop lethargically, with each crack of the whip they would cringe and then break into a fast trot. As they ran, lather formed on their legs, like oil bubbling up from a well. Gengo leaned innocently against the edge of the cart and snored.

Miyo, downcast with her chin drawn in, stared at a single spot, her eyes moist and seemingly ready to drop full tears. Again and again her younger brother Takuji and her thirteen-year-old sister would look at their father and then look fondly at Shunsaku. Though he had only met them aboard the ship, Shunsaku already felt a familial warmth in their eyes, and it was when he was with them that he finally thought of himself.

As the white road went on, as they distanced themselves from the wharf, the color of the road grew increasingly reddish and the jostling of the carriage grew increasingly rough. At the seven-kilometer marker, the road forked and entered into the old-growth forest.

Red- and blue-colored birds flitted deftly and vigorously through the fragrant gloom, making the primordial forest such a peaceful place, making one feel as though one was hearing the amicable, nostalgic, still, silent words calling out to the present from centuries past. This was characteristic of these woods, which were imbued with the fragrance of the canopy, the bark, and the fallen leaves below. Thinking that they themselves would have to fell these trees, which battle one another in their race to the heavens and whose trunks not even two men could wrap their arms about, with their own hands, made them feel as weak as flowing water down there upon the narrow road where the sky is only visible as a thin band above and the trees seemed to grow rapidly before their eyes.

The road increasingly worsened, and the horses' stomachs were coated with mud and looked like earthen walls. Each time they pulled their hooves from the deep mud with an off-putting *thunk*, the spray would fly up to the carriage.

Some time later, where the road forked again, the carriages were unable to ascend the slope, and everyone but Gengo was forced to get down and push.

When at long last they reached the top of the slope, the horses breathed long and deeply, as though they had just escaped the slaughterhouse. With each breath, the carriage rocked forward and back as though floating.

As the darkness pressed in upon them, the deep night came as if a settling fog. When he asked how much longer it would take, the driver, scratching his head, answered that once they had come around this mountain the schoolhouse would come into sight, and that the facility would be down the hill from there. The reddish-yellow light of the lamp projected a point into the dark, occasionally flashing in reflection off something metallic. The camp was floating in the darkness somewhere close by.

## [5]

This “camp” was merely a mud-plaster shanty with no proper foundation. Toadstools grew on the columns, and weeds like dyed strings grew out of the earthen floor. Every part of the building, which apparently had been a night school with some fifteen pupils, suggested that people had just wanted to find some use for it. At the same time, though, there was something nostalgic about this ten-meter-long building here in the depths of the mountains, from which poured the writhing light of lanterns and voices of people. It was like encountering another ship far out at sea.

A six-mat room was allocated to Gengo’s family, though getting to it was a bit confusing as it was already nighttime. From the entrance at the center of the building, they went to the rear, then turned left, then returned back in the direction of the entrance. The room was located at the end of that hall.

The others, who had arrived earlier, were already building simple stoves from bricks, preparing dinner, and unpacking their things. Realizing how hungry he was when he smelled the food, Shunsaku brought from the carriage the rice, *bacalhau*, dried meat (*carne seca*), salt, sugar, and other provisions they had been given by the company. Gathering up bricks he found lying about, he dug out a rudimentary stove in the embankment in front of the room’s window. Once this was complete, he and Miyo went together to the small river out back to get water. The river ran along the boundary between the forest, which towered behind them like a folding screen, and the *campo*. The water emerged in the shadow of this screen, cut through the grasses of the plain, and then turned into the forest, as though being sucked in by the trees. The sounds of owls whooting and frogs croaking *oi, oi*—as though calling out to people—seemed to well up from the ground and then rise to the tops of the trees, even as the darkness itself seemed to moan deeply. Shunsaku suddenly felt depressed and exhausted.

As he went around to the right side of the building to get firewood, he could hear the mingled sounds of water and laughing voices; when he finally could see what was happening, he realized that there were people in a large metal half-cylinder. The shadows cast by the lantern, the color of flesh, and the glow on the water made it all seem somehow supernatural.



"Even a Kaikō company old-timer wouldn't have thought to use this truck as a bath, . . ."64 Two or three of the laughing ghouls seemed to have senses of humor.

As Shunsaku returned carrying firewood in his arms, Miyo was lighting newspaper in the makeshift stove. The smoke that rose when they added the wood blew sideways, crawling out into the darkness like fog. Just as the fire started to ignite in earnest, Shunsaku's uncle Kichibei came and dragged him off.

Though Miyo felt terrible about the position she had put Shunsaku in, it was absolutely impossible for her, a woman—moreover, a young woman—to handle the settling of her whole family herself, given that her mother had died at sea and her father was in the state he was in. She had no choice but to enlist the aid of Shunsaku and his male strength, though it was all she could do to withhold her tears when she wondered what could possibly be done about the rift this had created between Shunsaku and his uncle.

"What shall I make for dinner? What was it again, *baca, baca* . . . oh, I have forgotten the name of that fish."

"It's called *carne sêca*, it's the one that smells like soap."

Fifteen-year-old Takuji, who had spoken, and Ruriko seemed like orphans abandoned in the woods.

"Miyo, are you crying?" Ruriko, whose head Miyo was stroking, looked up at Miyo with her big eyes and her cheeks glowing red like an apple from the flames. All was silent for a moment.

"It was a long way from the wharf, wasn't it. If I remember correctly, we left at three, so three, four, five, six, seven, . . ." Miyo counted on her fingers, starting with her thumb. As she bent her middle finger, Shunsaku came in with some sort of document, like a letter, in his right hand.

Everyone stared silently at him.

Miyo felt a swirling pain in her forehead.

"It was nothing."

The three of them could not miss the contrast between his words and his demeanor. Shunsaku squatted down between Miyo and Ruriko and spoke to Ruriko.

"Open wide. I am going to give you some chocolate from Santos."

Ruriko stared hard at the silver paper, shining with the light from the fire, and innocently opened her mouth.

The mountain range running parallel to the coast in southern São Paulo stopped the dense, moist air of the Atlantic that blows in from the south, causing it to rain nearly non-stop throughout the year. Even as the interior entered into its dry season, this area was still threatened with floods. The second buds sprouted

even as the first crops still stood, the harvest not yet complete. With the exception of the banks of the river, the rice yield in this colony was half that of colonies in the interior. The bean and potato crops were lost, including seeds that had only just been planted. There was no way to plant a second crop.

After their second year of planting, there was nothing for them to do but to look for other land to use as a *capoeira*. As the area of the *capoeira* increased, they all deflated at their ill-fortune with nature, and began to lose what fight they had had, as though they had been knocked to the ground.

Some even began to forget the dawn. And night as well. Those who live without being conscious of, and aware of the significance of, their lives are prisoners of and addicts to those lives. These prisoners, these addicts, inevitably work as slaves to the basest of human principles: that if one does not work—if one does not work even a little—one does not eat. As a reaction, they sought after carnal stimuli when night fell, warming their chests with strong spirits (*pinga*) until they were intoxicated and then sleeping on the earthen floor like stones.

These were lives of neither healthy joys nor healthy sorrows. Then there were pioneers, living corpses who were now so divorced from the hopes and passions that had filled them when they first settled. It was natural that the exuberant spirits of the new settlers, whose breasts burned with ambition, would collide emotionally with the decadent and desperate attitudes of the older settlers.

The new young settlers, however, handled it deftly. While it was emotionally galling to be obsequious to the elders, they enjoyed a good laugh when it suited them. On the other hand, if there was ever a risk of disadvantage, they would stand and fight without the slightest hesitancy. “10 *mil réis* for a dozen daikon? You have to be kidding. That’s two and a half yen!<sup>65</sup> We might be new settlers, but we know about the *palmito* growing in the forest.”

The new settlers looked upon the old settlers with scorn, thinking to themselves, “How could someone fail even to secure their livelihoods after living in the same place for five years?” Thinking that they would not make the same blunders, they began selecting their plots as if in a dream, dressed in their new, khaki-colored clothing. They settled on an area centered on a blue-black, pyramid-shaped mountain named “Laranjeira.” They began building our homes here, surrounded by small rivers and with the mountain at their backs.

——For many years after that, there was not even enough time to look at the situation coolly and to wonder whether those homes would succeed or fail. Whether good or bad, the camp sent out increasing numbers of families. Shun-saku could not but be irritated by this. Because he was young and had been raised in the city, each time he thought about settlement as an ideal, he would make himself return to the concrete reality. *At this moment, can I build a house with my own hands? Can I wield a machado as well as someone who came here after first clearing land in Hokkaidō?*

Time and time again, he could not but get carried away with these unnecessary thoughts as he looked upon the all-too-obvious impossibilities that lay before him.

Hope. Inevitabilities. Impossibilities. Outcomes. These things that are composed organically of cellular structures must be left to the fates of the world of impermanence.

Masuda began spitting up blood the day after they arrived at the camp. The doctor who saw him was a veterinarian who had just finished castrating a horse.

(End of first part.)

From the author: Though I am concluding “After We Had Settled” at a point better described as being “up until settlement,” this is only the first part of the work; I intend to publish the second half in the near future.<sup>66</sup>

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SAKURADA TAKEO, the author of “After We Had Settled,” was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture and migrated to Brazil in 1927.<sup>67</sup> He worked as an editor for *Nōgyō no Burajiru* and the *Burajiru jihō*, but returned to Japan prior to the war after having fallen ill.<sup>68</sup> Although I have been unable to discover the nature and extent of his schooling, the fact that he worked as an editor suggests that he had completed a substantial education prior to coming to Brazil. Furuno Kikuo suggests that “After We Had Settled” is an autobiographical depiction of Sakurada’s experience in Registro.<sup>69</sup>

## “Revenge”

Sugi Takeo

At the end of September, farming families get a bit of rest and so are able to do things like go fishing on Sundays. Because the river is small, there are no real fish to be caught. If you are lucky you might be able to catch a five-centimeter or at most ten-centimeter *taraíra*; still, it seems to be enough for those who like fishing. On Sundays one sees lots of people out by the river.

Maekawa is one of those who likes fishing; on Sundays he cannot wait to grab his pole and head out.

That day was a rare clear one. The September sun sparkled in the bright, cloudless blue sky, and a gentle breeze rustled the leaves in the trees. It was an absolutely perfect day for fishing.

As always, when Maekawa passed in front of Sachiko's house he whistled to her. Sachiko, with her round, white face, quickly emerged.

“You are already off to go fish?” Sachiko feigned surprise and looked up at the sky. “What a nice day it is turning into. *Papai* and everyone are still sleeping.” Sachiko's black eyes smiled at Maekawa, and then she turned her head to peek into the house. Maekawa felt aroused by Sachiko's slender neck and, without realizing, gripped the pole tighter.

“It being Sunday, please let them sleep. Instead, won't you walk with me for a bit?”

“All right.”

Sachiko looked to see if anyone was around before walking beside Maekawa.

“I am going into town next Sunday. Do you want to go with me, Sachi-chan? It's been three months since I last went in.”

“Hmmm . . . Maybe I can. I have to buy books for my little brother, and I have some other errands to do. . . .” Sachiko's eyes, which seemed lost in a dream, encouraged Maekawa and drew him, too, into pleasant reveries.

At some point the two had stopped. They were enveloped in the strong scent of the pure white coffee flowers that surrounded them.

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“Fukushū” first appeared in 1938 in the eighth issue of *Chiheisen*.

"Oh, Sachiko!" It was her *mamai's* voice.

"So you are going with me next Sunday?"

"All right." After Sachiko disappeared, Maekawa walked down toward the river alone, whistling as he went.

"Where have you been wandering off to? Really. Aida has been waiting for some time." Her mother stared at her while Sachiko put up her hair, which she had yet to comb.

For some reason Sachiko was not pleased to hear her mother talking about "Aida, Aida." When Sachiko thought about how her mother had her eye on him because he was rich, she felt a distaste at the mere sound of his name.

"Where have you been, Sachiko? I am going into town by *caminhão* today, if you have something you need, I would be happy to do it for you. Please don't hesitate to ask." Aida was wearing a black *casimira*, was cleanly shaven, and seemed ready for some assignation; his affectations made Sachiko feeling nothing but dislike for him.

"Sachiko, why don't you ask him for that comb you said you wanted the other day? Aida-san, we have spoiled her, as our only daughter, and as a result she is quite stubborn. So, Sachiko, was the comb the only thing you wanted?" Her mother realized that Sachiko was simply standing there and had not yet greeted him, so she quickly scrutinized Aida's expression.

"I am going into town next *domingo*, and will buy it then, so I am fine." Sachiko could not take any more of her mother's transparent obsequiousness.

"Sachiko, Aida-san has been kind enough to offer, so why don't you take him up on it?"

"Aida-san, I will buy it myself next Sunday, so please don't bother. I can wait." With that, Sachiko dashed off into the house.

The two of them just stood there for a moment, at a loss.

"Auntie, Sachiko is in a really bad mood today, isn't she?"

Sachiko's mother continued to look toward the door for a bit longer and then turned to face Aida, sighing slightly. "I'm so sorry. She didn't use to be this way, but lately Maekawa and his son just won't leave her alone. I bet they said something to her. I am sure that's what it is."

"Maekawa's son? Seriously? But wasn't he born here and can only barely read any Japanese?" In so saying, Aida both flaunted his own social status and casually dismissed Maekawa's son; nonetheless, he was unable to conceal his agitation. His red-black face was tense. "Well, I'll be going. I will bring you something." He tried to cover his shock by smiling casually, but it seemed forced and thus made his feelings all that much more obvious.

During the *semana* every household was busy with work. There had been good weather for some time, but on Thursday and Friday it rained and the rural streets were quickly washed out. What was left was pathetic, pitted everywhere and with large pools of water here and there.

They decided to do the annual roadwork a little on the early side.

Normally the Japanese Association did the work, but this year the Young Men's Association took it on, sending all the money set aside for it to Japan as a donation for national defense.

That decision was arrived at as a result of Aida's encouragement, in his position as group leader in the association. All the newspapers carried articles about the donations for national defense. In addition, the constant articles about the war stirred up the blood of all fellow countrymen in Brazil. It goes without saying that the unsolicited offer by the Young Men's Association was met with great praise.

Maekawa had gone into town on the *jardineira* at half-past six, and returned at six that evening. It was at that point that he first heard that the youth group had done road repairs that day. He thought to himself that the roads had been better on his return, but he had not given it much more attention than that because he had assumed that the heads of household that made up the Japanese Association had done the work as they did every year. Apparently his neighbor Yamada had come by right after he left to let him know there had been an *aviso* about the road repair project. As a member of the Young Men's Association, Maekawa naturally felt guilty for not fulfilling his responsibility despite realizing that there was nothing he could have done, since he had not known. Moreover, the fact that he had gone into town with Sachiko, despite being irrelevant to the matter, nonetheless added to his feelings of guilt.

That night there was a plenary session of the youth group.

Maekawa had really rushed to get there, but by the time he reached the school the anthem had already begun. When he heard this, his legs slowed down of their own accord, now dragging along heavily. One after the other, the black face of Aida, the group leader, and then that of Sachiko rose up in his mind. Despite not having known about it, the fact that he had gone into town today and not participated in the work on behalf of national security made it seem as though he had done something wrong; this, in turn, caused Maekawa's feet to grow even heavier with each step.

He once again began to rush when he realized that he might be able to sneak in without drawing any attention to himself if he made it before the anthem ended.

The door of the poorly built classroom squeaked loudly, despite Maekawa's attempts to open it quietly. It seemed as though none of the members noticed, but he could see a sparkle in the eyes of Aida, who was facing the door.

Maekawa nodded his head slightly, stood behind the last desks to hide himself, and began singing. Despite all this, he could not but feel agitated.

"Gentlemen! Our homeland is in a state of emergency. Since war broke out with China, our nation's citizens in Japan have been working tirelessly, as one, to collect donations for national defense, to send off and welcome back troops dispatched to the front lines, and to console bereaved families. Gentlemen, what is it that allows

those of us here in Brazil to live in safety and security? Needless to say, it is the existence of our homeland of Japan. The tragic circumstances of a people without a state are obvious when one looks at the persecution of the Jews. And what of the misery of the Chinese people, constantly engaged in civil war because while they might possess a state, they lack a polity like that of Japan, enjoying an imperial line, unbroken since time immemorial, such as the world has never seen? Gentlemen, when we ponder this, we realize how great our homeland is and how fortunate we are to have been born a member of that nation. However, this homeland of ours now faces an unprecedented crisis. This autumn, what shall we do to help? The people of our homeland, one and all, have rallied to its defense. We youths residing in Brazil, is it really a time for us to remain silent, consumed by our own individual pleasure, profit, and good fortune?”

Aida paused momentarily, leaned back triumphantly, and looked around the room. Maekawa shifted his gaze away from the group leader’s face, bathed in lamplight.

“Japan is in a state of crisis . . . crisis.”

That voice grew entangled with the image of Sachiko hidden deep in his heart until the group leader’s words ceased affecting him.

All Japanese are anxious about this. Was I this morning? I did cast aside my work and meet with Sachiko, after all. No, that was not how it was. I didn’t know anything about it. The *aviso* came late. That was how Maekawa reassured himself in his mind. Before he knew it, though, Maekawa found himself standing up when he heard what Aida said next.

“Gentlemen, I was truly dismayed to learn that while all of the members of our group, deeply concerned about this situation as we are, were engaged in the road-work project so that we might contribute to the designated funds to the national defense, one of our number had casually gone into town for his amusement. To make matters worse, he had gone with a woman. At a time like this, when all members of our nation are working as one, in the greatest awareness of the current state of crisis, there is no greater dishonor for our group than to have such a member among us.”

“Who are you talking about, group leader?” Maekawa’s loud voice rang out suddenly and everyone turned around to face him. At that moment, they were certain whom the group leader had been speaking of.

When group leader Aida’s face, utterly calm and displaying a cold smile, and the combined gazes of all the members turned to Maekawa, he sat down onto the desk behind him in spite of himself.

“If that person says he wants to know, I will go ahead and say. That person is none other than *you*. You alone were absent from the work detail today.”

“But I did not receive an *aviso*. And to say that I took a woman. It was mere coincidence that she was with me. For you to say such a thing. . . .” Maekawa could take no more and so he stood and fled out the door.

Going out into the pitch black, the tears he had been suppressing with all his might now streamed down his face.

“That bastard. Making a fool of me. I will give him a beating he won’t soon forget.” He was so riled up that he could feel nothing but hatred for his antagonist and could think of nothing to do to help his own situation.

“Hey, Maekawa! I know what really happened. Don’t be mad. That bastard is up to something. He is mistaken. Don’t get so worked up.” Upon hearing these words of consolation from his closest friend, Gondō, Maekawa gradually calmed down. “He puts on a good show, but do you think he is a real patriot? He is a good self-promoter. Let’s go home and sleep this off. You will forget this whole thing by tomorrow.”

Maekawa nodded silently, though Gondō’s words had not entirely satisfied him.

Revenge—Maekawa remembered what he had heard about Aida from Sachiko today, and realized that this was Aida’s revenge for Sachiko having rejected him. The coward. But there was nothing he could do. More than anything, he felt sad that even Gondō, who knew him so well, could not figure out what was happening.

“Am I unpatriotic?” Maekawa had intended to say that Aida had behaved the way he did in retaliation for being rejected by Sachiko, but in the end these were the words that came out.

“Are you kidding? How could missing road work because you didn’t know about it make you unpatriotic?” Gondō said, laughing loudly.

The night was pitch black, without a star in the sky.

As the men walked, insects cried incessantly from both sides of the road.

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SUGI TAKEO is the penname of Takei Makoto (1909–2011). Sugi was born in Hokkaidō. In 1931, he graduated from the Hosei University Special Division (法政大学専門部), where he studied to be a teacher. The following year he migrated under the auspices of the Rikkōkai to Brazil, where he worked as a teacher in Japanese-language schools.<sup>70</sup> In 1937, a fellow writer, Ikeda Shigeji, described him as already being an established writer of fiction and a sound thinker on issues related to “the education of our countrymen [in Brazil].”<sup>71</sup> Sugi, like Furuno, was a central voice both as an author and critic in prewar Brazil, leaving a number of published writings, some of which will be addressed in the conclusion to this volume.<sup>72</sup>



## “Vortices”

Takemoto Yoshio

(1)

After the morning glories in the small beds framing the entrance began to open, heavy with dew, and the white morning sun illuminated the stains on the curtain, bringing them into relief, the early autumn skies at long last cleared.

“Fall has come early this year. These last two or three days my neuralgia has begun acting up, just as I have been starting to think that the mornings were cold.” Her mother, Tatsuyo, winced in pain as she clung to the kitchen door with one hand and rubbed her knee with the other. Michiyo, who was cleaning the room, peacefully gazed out the window to the *grama* that spread out behind the houses with steam rising from their roofs.

The *grama* only continued briefly before reaching a red dirt road; beyond that was the neighbor’s coffee orchard. Following the perfect rows of coffee trees, the ground sloped up slowly until one’s field of vision opened suddenly and, in the distance, one could make out a hazy swath of virgin forest.

One *paineira* standing alongside the road with its broad branches had lost its leaves early, and blossoms on the lower branches on the north side of the tree had begun to open and tint the tree. Two or three small birds with colorful plumage alighted on its branches.

Without fail, every Sunday children carrying slingshots came early in the morning to shoot at the birds.

Today as well mischievous kids were here, with their glowing cheeks, shooting incessantly at them, but the birds merely flitted casually from one branch to another. This scene, framed by the window, caused Michiyo to smile.

“Mom, the kids are here again.”

“They’re early. Poor birds. As soon as the kids have any free time, they are straight to their slingshots.”

“It’s true. Oh, by the way, Matsuda-san said he would leave the school at the end of March.”

“Really? But he was so committed to it.”

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“Uzu” first appeared in 1935 in the 3 July, 10 July, 17 July, and 24 July issues of the *Burajiru jihō*.

"That school is always suffering some sort of *fecha*; with him leaving I feel even more sorry for the children."

"It's strange. I wonder what happened."

"A change of heart, he said."

"A change of heart? With the parents' association such a mess and the educational laws so strict, I imagine one gets tired of it. He's young, so it's not hard to understand."

Her mother headed toward the kitchen with an expression that seemed to say, *it stands to reason*.<sup>73</sup>

"I submitted my resignation."

"But why?"

"I am going to continue my studies in São Paulo."

"But we will all miss you."

She was truly shocked when Matsuda, who always said that he would spend his life as a simple teacher to these children in the colony, suddenly out of the blue said he was going to São Paulo. When Michiyo raised a few possible superficial reasons for his decision, Matsuda's pale face clouded over and then grew pained, as he struggled with words that he could not say directly.

Her chest constricted as she watched his expression and she recalled the previous day, when she had felt a dull pain arising in a place she could not pinpoint, caused by something that she could not clearly identify.

From the other side of the newspaper he had spread on the *mesa*, Shinshuke said, "Matsuda is leaving?"

"Yes, that's what he said. I suppose you're going to lose your conversation partner."

"More than me, you will."

"Yes." When she casually gave this reply and turned to look at Shinsuke, his staring eyes and cold smile communicated more to Michiyo than his words. She startled, at a loss.

Tatsuyo scraped a pot on the edge of the well to remove charring from it, resulting in a noise that almost seemed intended to disrupt the strange silence between them.

Worrying that she had to say something, but also that if she did whatever she said might come out sounding unnatural, Michiyo grew more and more uncomfortable. She felt the probing gaze of her husband on her cheek so she extended her gaze, which had settled on the window frame, out into the garden.

(2)

Michiyo, whose condition had taken a dramatic turn for the worse, was passing a Sunday with nothing in particular to do.

The evening sun, which until only a short time ago had been reflecting off an *enxada* left lying on the *grama*, had begun to set, like a flower wilting behind the jagged, light-indigo forest in the distance. The green hills that formed a series of arcs stretching out into the distance gradually grew indistinct as visibility fell. Eventually only a few bands of golden rays stretched into a radial pattern against the dark-blue sky, and three or four thin, amber-trimmed clouds strode off pompously in the same direction. While this was the view she was used to seeing, it nonetheless remained invigorating, filled with happiness and charm.

While drinking tea after dinner, her mother stopped picking her teeth and glanced at Shinsuke's face. "So, Kimura-san came this morning?"

"Oh, that. It was the debts as usual." Ending any chance of conversation, Shinsuke fell silent again.

This was the standard atmosphere in the household of late. Although it seemed normal to her that sadness filled the household, given the recent loss of her father, Michiyo still wondered at what point this friction between them had started.

Suddenly it felt as though shards of glass began racing around in her head.

"Cut it for me. I can't take it. Cut off my leg with the *machado*."

Having received the urgent message, Tatsuyo and Michiyo raced in horror to where her husband was, only to find him screaming, his body drenched in sweat and exhausted from struggling, and his face contorted in agony.

The people who had gone logging with Shinsuke, their faces hard like Noh masks, sawed away the tree that had fallen on her husband's leg.

Nonetheless, by now Shinsuke had gotten to the point where he could get around by dragging his incapacitated leg. However, the depression that developed even as the wound healed was warping Shinsuke into an increasingly intolerant man.

Clear to her that Shinsuke's despairing demeanor was what was tearing the three of them apart, Michiyo was frightened for herself, given her tendency to be pulled into her husband's emotional states.

Be that as it may, no one could really be blamed. Even as Shinsuke, who had been a happy, vigorous man, endured this serious blow to his spirit, which little by little ate away like a writhing *bicheira* at that inherent will to fight against society that every man possesses, his practical nature prevented him from entering into the particular state of self-reflection that emerges from grief and resignation in the face of a grave personal setback. Knowing Shinsuke as well as she did, Michiyo could say nothing to him.

Her mother, despite commonplace gestures of affection that she would show Shinsuke even as a dark, painful shadow crept over him, could not keep from expressing her womanly complaints, filled with disappointment over his attitude. Time and time again she would say to Michiyo, "I've given up. If you just resign yourself, it's actually easier, you know?" Still, Michiyo was saddened every time she saw the desolate envy that appeared in her mother's face each time she heard of a

celebratory occasion, or even simple good fortune, befalling the household of one of the people with whom she had come from Japan, migrating to the *ten-alquiere* *lotes* each had acquired.

“Debts?”

“We settle debts in April, so he asked me to try to get the money by then.”

“What did you say?”

“To let me settle it with him another way.”

“With the *lote*? He didn’t need to make you say it; he is fully aware of the situation. People really can be unbelievable.”

My mother could not forget our favorable circumstances when we first settled here. Director Maeda of the Shinano Overseas Association showed us the land, saying things like, “Look at this. These huge trees are proof that that this area doesn’t get frost,” or he would look up at some large trees and say, “They are this dense because the soil is good.” He built up our fathers, who had no background knowledge on the subject, convincing them to clear the mountain and invest all they had in growing coffee. As it turns out, the soil was good and crops grew well. The market was strong and the settlers waited for the four years to pass until they could harvest their coffee, all the while indulging their outrageous fantasies.

But the future they had waited for arrived in a miserable state. The market had dropped precipitously and then came the frost, which they had not even considered a possibility.

In Michiyo’s household, that was not all: her father also died suddenly and unexpectedly.

In the face of these unavoidable events, these people who had invested all they had were torn up like sheets left out hanging in a storm. By contrast, the people who had lacked the capital to buy land and had been making do under them, have today, ten years later, ended up in the exact opposite position.

Her mother, who watched these developments of the colony over the past decade, cried bitter tears every time a reminder comes to pay their debt from Ômura, whom she had looked after when he was a contract worker.

She could not bear seeing her mother’s lips, on that frail face of hers, begin to quiver as she lost her composure, so Michiyo changed the topic.

“Did I hear that Tami came today?”

“That’s right. She wondered if we had any purple embroidery thread.”

“It’s too bad we didn’t have any for her. Ah, embroidery. It has been so long since I have been able to even think about embroidering anything.”

“She was wearing a new pink outfit. With her modest figure and pale skin, it really suited her.” Her mother stared straight at Michiyo, as though she wanted to tell her that she naturally deserved even greater fortune than Tami, but that

circumstances had allowed that to be stolen away from her. Instead, she merely blinked.

Each time Michiyo felt this sort of pure affection so directly from her mother, who knew no other way than to confront everything in her life directly, she felt joy well up in her chest.

(3)

We must *colhêr* the berries, because they will fall from the trees. Today Michiyo, like the others, did not get a sense of reality from those words. They just worked in the fields as though chasing desultory shadows until the whistle sounded and they returned home.

"Tami said that they will be showing a moving picture in the central area and asked me if we wanted to come."

"They've been coming a lot lately, haven't they?"

When Michiyo came in the rear door with the setting sun at her back, her mother, who was frying *bacalhau* on a screen grill, passed on what Tamiko had said, squinting her eyes as the smoke from the fish poured past them.

When they finished their unexceptional dinner, Michiyo decided to invite her husband to go see the movie. The thought occurred to her that perhaps by doing something as simple (for women) as going to see a movie, they might be able to untangle themselves from their emotions as easily as unraveling a knot by pulling gently on the end of the string. Her hope was that they could escape the awkward sensation that had come to dominate their daily lives, which felt something like reading a mistake-laden letter, or the unpleasant chill of fear that seizes one's body as one tries to peek at something through a tiny crack.

"Shall the two of us go tonight?"

"Hmm. . ."

"I want to see it. Take me? It's been such a long time."

She tried inviting him in a sweet voice she had long left unused, her eyes sparkling seductively. As she leaned her whole body toward him, grasping his arm, she felt as though her words, which had passed her lips more easily than she had feared they might, had drawn closer to his heart than she had been in some time, piercing the mysterious web-like fog that her husband usually wrapped himself in; while that fog normally caused her to heart to lose its way, this time she felt it had reached through to his.

At that moment, however, she glanced at her husband's profile and saw his expression, which resembled nothing more than that of a patient at the moment he swallows bitter medicine: his brow furrowed, as though drawn together by the minute twitches of his lips.

Her profound disappointment triggered a hatred that she had unconsciously suppressed until that moment.

Recently the traveling sections of such film companies as Baieisha and X Cinema had begun showing films from the old country once every three or four months even here in the northwest interior.

Left behind by entertainment media that use modern technology and instead focusing exclusively on growing accustomed to this new land, the settlers, both young and old, packed themselves in before the movie screen, despite the exorbitant price, as though they were possessed, as though they were rice plants wilted from a long drought that were preparing to drink in a passing shower.

The village, which lacked an auditorium despite ten years having passed already since they settled there, instead held it in the primary school. Michiyo walked the more than two kilometers to the school, still dressed in her everyday clothes.

Broad-shouldered young men, women who exchanged excessively chatty and Japanese-y greetings with insincere smiles on their faces, and young girls raised in Brazil with their chests pushed out, their flat faces covered in cheap powder, and their skirts fluttering every time they laughed; groups of these people would form and then disappear like moths at the flickering light of the entrance, which this night only was illuminated using power produced by car engines.

With the film apparently not yet having begun, the clamor inside melted into one, until it sounded like a single deep roar.

Michiyo hid herself behind Tamiko and Tamiko's brother, Ken'ichi, as they moved their bodies, chilled from the winter winds, into the auditorium, which in turn was stuffy and rank and filled with a cacophony of sounds from which there was no avenue for escape.

Before them, near the white screen at the front of the room, the *benshi* carefully wound the insufficiently oiled phonograph and put on the record; the only ones listening, however, were the dozen or so persons near him. In this corner a man whistled impatiently, while in that corner a squinting woman gabbed on and on, her back to the screen. In the rear, precocious youths grabbed at the young girls, making lewd gestures unthinkable for unmarried people; everyone was shocked at their impudence.

Michiyo thought of herself, sitting there silently under the vast ceiling, tobacco smoke and dust swirling in the air, and wondered why in the world she was there.

As she thought about how cowardly she must appear, having fled all the way here out of fear that she might lash out, she grew increasingly unhappy.

What if she had taken the next step, as she had looked upon her husband's heartless face. . . . What if she had actually entered into this emotional battle between the two sexes. . . . But such a decision represents the ultimate challenge for any woman. She had to consider her self, unable to deny the existence in her of feelings for Matsuda and yet all-too-lacking in sophistication to admit them either.

At some point the lights had been extinguished and the story had begun unfolding on the surface of the screen in front.

As people passed in front of Michiyo and Tamiko and poured out the exit, their faces filled with unconcealed and organic excitement, a deep bass voice said, "Oh, so you were here?" Turning in the direction of the speaker, Michiyo saw Matsuda standing there. Taller than most, his gentlemanly face was illuminated by the light.

"What timing. With it being just me, Tami, and her brother, we were feeling a bit lonely and wondering if anyone else we knew had come."

The moment Tamiko turned around she showed the shyness one would expect from a proper young woman, instinctively lowering her face to the point that she almost did a full bow. Using that as a pretext, Michiyo stepped closer to Matsuda.

When they left the empty hall, now scattered with discarded paper, it was colder than they expected. The nighttime winds whistled through the tops of the Paraná pines that had been planted around the primary school.

A moon hung in the clear night sky, looking for all the world like a piece of fresh fruit that had been washed and then cast into the air. The women's shadows were cast starkly onto the parched road.

Michiyo thought of how she had recently had many occasions to speak with Matsuda.

Nothing is nicer than when two strangers come together by chance, but then come across some shared ideas or interests as they explore topics to discuss. Nothing makes one feel a deeper sense of friendship. As they continue having conversations, they draw increasingly close to one another, until eventually they are even revealing problems they are experiencing both at home and in the community.

It would be impossible to describe how much consolation Matsuda's wise, humble words, filled with friendship, had brought to Michiyo when they discussed her troubles with her husband. However, the way he had been looking at her recently had been filled with a different sort of intensity, and, when she took a closer look, she noticed that his fine cheekbones possessed an intensity that made them seem aflame, crackling like a conflagration. Even before her husband made that comment, she had felt a dangerous premonition about her relationship with Matsuda.

Against her better judgment, she allowed the conversations to grow even more intense, beginning to speak about topics that they shared in common. It was as though her will were constrained, silencing the voice that said she must not.

"Well then, goodnight," Tamiko said mechanically as they reached her house, and then turned on her heel sadly as she pulled her brother along by the hand.

"Matsuda-san, what do you think of Tami-chan?"

"She seems like a nice girl, if that is what you mean."

"That's all? She is in love with you, you know."

" . . . "

Michiyo, suddenly feeling guilty as she realized that they were now walking alone on the road, consciously began to tease Matsuda as a way to deflect that sensation. She stared down at their shadows, cast side-by-side on the road that wound through the empty coffee fields. The caws of the crows, sounding like babies' cries, interrupted their now-awkward conversation time and again. Suddenly Matsuda's strong shoulders and arms, visible amid the ominous silence, began to frighten her.

"Before I go to São Paulo, I . . ."

"No, you mustn't say it!"

Matsuda, who had been silently clutching his hair in his hands, seized her shoulder like a fierce beast that lives deep in the recesses of the forest. Because of her sudden fear and dismay, she was not able to catch the words he quickly whispered to her as if in a delirium. Directly confronted with this danger, however, Michiyo merely shook her head no, as though pleading with him, and instinctively evaded him by continuing to walk on, not even glancing at him for a moment.

As soon as the light was turned off, her husband rolled over slowly in bed, until he faced the wall. His scent and his body heat, which she had grown accustomed to over the years, permeated the bedding, gently enveloping Michiyo's body, which was still faintly quivering from the excitement, and gradually helped calm her breathing.

In her heart, where the concentric ripples were fading from the outside in until all that was left was quiet, still water, an animalistic fear that resides hidden somewhere in the hearts of all people, overrun as they are by chance encounters, could be deeply felt.

The emotions that Matsuda, who was so cerebral, had developed over time as he closely observed her suffering shifted from warm feelings of friendship to idolization and then finally had become an intense, single-minded love.

As one would upon discovering a single stain on an otherwise pristine sheet of white paper, she both fixated on and despised the momentary sense of stark and rough male desire pressing in on her, overwhelming her. It did not leave her even a moment to resist it. The powerful and vigorous touch of his hand, even through her layers of clothes, drove her toward her own instinctive feelings of ecstasy, filled with sensual secrets. In an attempt to rid herself of the self-hatred that was increasingly bearing down on her as she scrutinized herself, she fervently tried repeating the words, "I am right." However, no matter how many times these words raced around in her mind, and no matter how she tried to tell herself that she had no reason to feel guilty about anything, right there beside her was her husband, whose suspicious gaze kept her so anxious that she felt as though she were being pierced by needles. Regardless of how well she might compose herself now, come morning, the moment their eyes meet there in bed, he will give her a look that says, "You did something last night that you are keeping from me, didn't you? I know because



I can see last night’s quivers lingering in your face.” At these thoughts, disconsolate tears poured down Michiyo’s cheeks.

I am not bad. It is all my husband’s fault. There is no way for a woman to live when her husband has taken such an attitude. Particularly when I am a young, healthy woman.

Michiyo felt physical pain from the loss of naturalness in their relationship as husband and wife, resulting from the towering wall that had begun to arise between them. She began to fear that she might explode from within, just as the fruit of a pomegranate bursts open. She grew forlorn whenever she thought of how she had to hate the vitality in her breast, and the primitive desire that burned within her, a woman in her prime. She came to find that whenever she suppressed her feelings in one spot, tears seemed on the verge of pouring out of another, as with a sponge saturated with water.

## “Ashes”

Takemoto Yoshio

The *caminhão* Haruta was riding in gradually disappeared into the distance.

It was about a decade ago. All too easily he receded, wearing high on his waist the snugly fitting, light brown pants with thin, black stripes that Ushichi had bought for him when the immigration ship called into port in Hong Kong. His blank face was flushed red from the *pinga* and his pores were wide open, the skin of his neck resting lightly on his tight, soiled collar. He was holding his sweat-stained straw boater in one hand. He didn't say anything, not even “Well then” or “Where am I headed?” After Haruta disappeared from sight, the sun, looking like a rotten *mamão*, lingered eerily at the point at which the main road, bleached white and baked dry after days of clear weather, reached the horizon.

Ushichi headed back, stepping firmly on his own doddering, emaciated shadow, which had been following him around now for four decades. A mean-spirited relief tickled the back of his throat. Aboard the truck, which had been only two or three feet away from him, Haruta's face had distorted and blurred for an extended moment, as a drop or two of affection for his kin dampened Ushichi's desiccated eyelids, and a sense of distress like an unexpected backflow of blood struck him, undercutting his willpower and making him avert his eyes guiltily. As the truck started off, its engine revving and its chassis shuddering, a profound brazenness raced up Ushichi's spine, quickly allowing him to restore the expression on his face, which seemed to say, “It's ok. This will make everything better.”

The plot that he had resolved to see through was quite a strange one, and seemed an increasingly dim-witted strategy the more definitive, the more concrete, it became. Ushichi had planned time and again over the past two or three years to toss Haruta out, but no matter how reasonable the plan, as it came time to implement it he began to be tormented by a fear that it would not come to fruition.

Now, when the clear realization that he had so easily been able to send Haruta off was sinking in, an anti-climactic feeling, as when the rush of adrenaline recedes, caused him to shake his head again and again in disbelief.

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“Shihai” first appeared in 1937 in the third issue of *Chiheisen*.

What rose up so clearly in this empty space in his mind—and then solidified there, like a lump of lead—was the image of the unsalvageable, corrupted, filthy friction among himself, Oshin, and Haruta.

The petroleum lamp sputtered and snapped. Stains speckled the rough earthen walls where cockroaches have been smashed; in the darkness, the room stifling with the stench of garlic, Oshin rustled through some old rags. Ushichi lay sprawled out on his *cama*, a futon left out year-round whose cotton has been almost entirely pressed out, rolling handmade cigarettes with his palm. He wrapped the tobacco in newspaper and spit on the floor as he smoked one after another. In the ravine out back, a frog fell again and again with an irritating thud on the bottom of a *lata*. Ushichi was discussing with Oshin the fact the plantation manager had slipped a comment about next year's wages into a conversation during *almoça* that day. The manager had smiled even as he feigned regret at the indiscretion, as though to say, *oops, did I let that slip?*

"Ôno-san said that he would pay 35 *mil* more than this year."

"Really? Does this mean you promised to stay put next year?"

"Wh-what do you mean? It's too early for that. Why would I be in such a rush to decide?"

With Oshin's growing indignation at his evasions, Ushichi grew flustered.

In truth, after having been called into the plantation manager's home for a drink on his way home from the fields that evening, Ushichi had given him the responses he had wanted to hear. The very same manager who had exploited everything he could from the *colonos* up until this point was now suddenly all smiles, telling them everything they wanted to hear: "I will be paying 275 *mil* per thousand coffee *covas*" and "I will throw in 5 or 6 piglets as well." It was clear to Ushichi that this was just a strategy to persuade the *colonos*, who had clearly become restless hearing the call of the cotton market, to stay, given the labor shortage bound to result from the passage of the two percent rule. Yet Ushichi gave him the servile response he did—"In that case, I guess I may be imposing on you next year as well. . . ."—partially because he thought that with those conditions he might be able to relax a bit, but more so because of the self-defeating thoughts that carried his mind to a place of peace and a filled belly. At this point those things were all he could think of, having for such a long time suffered from and struggled against unavoidable events amid inopportune circumstances. At some point his ambition and connection with society had eroded completely away and he was left unable to confront his life seriously or imagine any bright prospects for the future.

"That's right. You were taken in by a fast talker, all the while chuckling like a fool. And then you lied about what happened. . . ."

"..."

"You are useless! Who was it who said he would buy land in Nova Aliança next year and grow cotton. . . ."

“ . . . ”

The way the blue veins at Oshin's temples throbbed intimidated Ushichi, leaving him speechless.

Ever since February, when their only child was torn away from them, Oshin had been unable to find even a day of peace. The child had suffered from trachoma that left his eyes swollen and itchy, but still the cause of the fever that took him was something even the best doctor in the colony could not wrap his bald head around. Oshin had long been asking Ushichi to buy some virgin land where they could live in their own home—it didn't matter where. She had come to think that the reason their son had died and they had no place to call home was because of her husband's uselessness. This was why she would lash out at him, regardless of how trivial the issue. When he handled these conversations poorly they soon became fights. In the end, Ushichi would quickly change the subject, realizing that the only possible outcome would be for him to be crushed pathetically beneath Oshin's frenzy of thunderous insults.

“Haruta's late again.”

“I'm sure he's at the *boteço* again.”

“I'm not worried about him drinking, but lately he's really been hitting it hard, hasn't he?”

“He's earning his own money, and choosing to drink his pay, so no one says anything about it.”

“That's why I don't mention it. I don't say anything, but. . . .”

“You still think you can count on Haruta?”

“That's not . . . let me worry about that. . . .”

“If that's how you feel.”

“ . . . ”

Ushichi threw his cigarette on the earthen floor, crawled straight into his bed, and closed his eyes.

Ushichi thought about Haruta. The one who had made Haruta crazy—Haruta, who was so gentle when they arrived in Brazil—was Oshin. Oshin is really the one to blame. That woman is evil. Ushichi superimposed Oshin's face over Haruta's in his mind.

Oshin was the one who set her mind on using the exceptionally strong and totally idiotic Haruta.

Oshin would coddle and coax him, and even on occasion manipulate him through a provocative fawning that she would flaunt before Ushichi, and which he despised. In the course of being manipulated by Oshin's persistent devices, Haruta had grown increasingly stubborn, avaricious, and inclined to drink. As a result, over the last year or two, Oshin had been forced time and again to grit her teeth, thinking that her plan had been foiled. Since the time he got wildly drunk and violent at their son's funeral, Oshin would jump at any pretense at all. She would scream at Ushichi in a voice simultaneously suspicious and hysterical, “Get rid of Haruta!”; Ushichi would respond reflexively, “Yeah, I'll get rid of him all right. I'll

throw the bastard out.” Each time, though, a feeling of resistance to Oshin’s vile nature would quickly rise up, and the anger Ushichi felt toward Haruta would fail to materialize as words, but instead remain a mere withered emotion. Inevitably Ushichi would then fall into a fierce sense of self-hatred.

Whenever he closed his eyes, an intense loathing would begin to torment Ushichi’s body.

*Ah, everything I have done has been a mistake.*

He had come to Brazil filled with empty bravado, muttering to himself—as though talking nonsense in his sleep—about *freedom, truth, love*, all the while forgetting his own uncontrollable foolishness. On top of that, he had brought along his utterly idiotic brother with him. When he thought of these decisions that led to his life today, he realized that the flames that currently torment him had been smoldering for quite some time.

“That’s it. I give up.”

Ushichi tossed and turned under the heaviness of these thoughts, mumbling to himself.

The sound of Oshin rinsing the following day’s rice could be heard from the kitchen. *I have an early start tomorrow. I have to get to sleep.* Impending reality forced slumber upon Ushichi.

“Ishida-san, wake up!”

Just as he realized that the calls were coming from outside the house, a fist began pounding on the front door. Ushichi grabbed hold of the hem of his bed-shirt and jumped toward the door. When he quickly opened it, a voice crashed in upon him. Startled, Ushichi looked into the eyes of the man there, who was clearly alarmed.

“Booze—Haruta—Foreigner—*faca*—pistol!” The words made no sense; merely holding this string of fragmentary information in his ears, Ushichi grabbed a jacket and ran toward the *botequim*.

“I-Idiot. Did someone finally do you in, Haruta!?”

Not even waiting for the lamps of his neighbors, who were coming out behind him in an uproar, Ushichi ran the two kilometers down the pitch-black road, choking with tears as he screamed, “Goddamn it, Haruta!”

*A purplish straight line split the air above his head and then dug deep into Haruta’s torso. His final moments were brutish and cruel. As a dark spray of blood flew from his body, he collapsed with a thud onto the ground.*

Ushichi was driven on by this image, which had burst into his mind the instant that the man’s trembling voice bore into his chest. The actual scene at the store that greeted Ushichi, filling his bloodshot eyes as he leapt in and let out a deep sigh, however, was a completely ordinary one: cans, bottles, soaps, and household utensils packed the shelves in the gloomy room. He cast his eyes downward in confusion, feeling just like a rubber band that, having been stretched too far, had finally snapped. Shards from *copinhos* that had been smashed were scattered everywhere,

and a cold, eerie *faca* lay on the floor with its blade facing upwards. From the moment his gaze, turned upside down, landed directly upon that blade, the feeling that he had been walking on some sort of unbalanced chain, a feeling he had had up until this point, mixed with the bloody gore that covered the blade, dragged Ushichi down into a natural terror.

Sensing that someone was in the back, Ushichi called out. From behind the various goods for sale, a squat, round-faced, older man emerged and smiled, exposing his white teeth. When the man saw Ushichi's troubled expression, his own grew somewhat bewildered.

"Oh, you've come. For Haru? Sorry to put you out like this."

"I figured as much. . . . Is he. . . ."

"What? No, he's just drunk."

As Ushichi was being led out back, he compared the vast gap between the older man's attitude with the conclusion that his imagination had raced to and marveled at the difference.

Haruta, who was nearly blacked-out drunk, was lying in the back of the yard with his head stuck in a *capoeira*. In a hoarse voice that sounded on the verge of tears, he was moaning and thrashing his legs.

"He-y! Kill me! You can't kill me? Goddammit. You, my brother, can't kill me either?"

When Ushichi heard Haruta's voice, which sounded more as though his throat was squeezing out sounds of its own accord, he experienced a simple and honest relief: "Oh, thank goodness." Ushichi lifted Haruta onto his back as one would a child. Slumped over Ushichi's shoulder, Haruta's warm, acrid breath stood out from the bitter cold of the night wind as it passed over Ushichi's neck.

Later, by the time the people from the village had crowded in noisily around him with *enxadas* and hunting rifles over their shoulders, Ushichi had calmed down completely. He conveyed to them everything the old man from the *botequim* had told him, going around and apologizing to each and every one for his brother's extreme indiscretion while offering them *copinhos* of the *pinga* he had bought for that purpose.

The incident had been a foolish one. Haruta, who had drunk himself into such a stupor that he could not tell one person from another, had gotten mixed up with a *kuronbo* who had just stopped in for a drink. The argument eventually got ugly enough that knives were drawn, but Haruta was too drunk for it to get really serious.

It was the threats and the shouting, however, that upset the onlookers sufficiently to alert Ushichi.

After his morning coffee, Ushichi dragged a reluctant Haruta around the neighborhood to apologize once again to everyone for the previous night.

Haruta, bandaging the arm that he himself had apparently cut while brandishing his *faca*, suddenly muttered something, as if to himself, in a serious tone that Ushichi had never seen in him before.

"Brother, I . . . want to go. I want to try living someplace else."

"Where? Where do you want to go?"

"No where particular. . . ."

"Are you kidding? Where can you go with no money? Heck, you can't even get *agua* to drink if you don't have any money."

"I might not have any money, but I'm strong. . . ."

"*I'm strong?*"

Repeating Haruta's last words, Ushichi cast his eyes down at his own arms. His skin, its elasticity lost under a layer of fur singed by the blazing sun, was rough and old. His lower body, every part of it, moaned of the hardship of a wanderer who had suffered over many long years under the cruel power of this world. Ushichi let out a deep sigh. He could not care less for fame or for character, neither of which could even replace a *tamanco*, but he wanted money and power to his core. Day and night he deceived himself, saying "luck is hard to come by," as if chanting some sort of mantra; at this point he had completely lost hope of getting his hands on any money. He could not even rely on his body: touching his arms, which unlike Haruta's had completely lost any significant strength of any kind, he sank into a deep despair.

Suddenly the whistle signaling *almoço* sounded at the lumber mill, surprisingly loud as it emanated out across the clear sky. Haruta, who had been staring obliviously into the distance after having at some point finished bandaging his arm, turned his head at the sounding of the whistle. It was as if he had remembered something.

"When is it that that bus comes by here?"

"So, you're going to Araçatuba? That's not a bad idea."

"Yeah. . . ."

"Since it's *almoço* now, the next time the bus comes by should be at four."

Twelve o'clock, one, two. . . . Haruta walked out unsteadily, bending his fingers as he counted. Just as Ushichi was stifling a yawn and squeezing his eyes shut, Oshin came rushing out of the *cozinha*. Hearing Oshin's shrill, high-pitched voice and thinking that it was time to eat, the events of the previous evening jumbled in Ushichi's mind. No matter how he tried, he could not get up.

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TAKEMOTO YOSHIO (1911–83), who wrote both "Vortices" and "Ashes," was born in 1911 in Okayama Prefecture, and then migrated alone to Brazil in 1930 after having graduated from Shizutani Middle School (閑谷中学校). After farming on the (Dai-ichi) Aliança Colony for six years, Takemoto moved to the city of São Paulo where he worked as a Japanese-language teacher and a newspaper reporter.<sup>74</sup> He was a founding coterie member of the literary journals *Chiheisen* (地平線), *Yashiju* (椰子樹), *Koronia bungaku* (コロニア文学), and *Koronia shibungaku* (コロニア詩文学).<sup>75</sup> Takemoto, who died in 1983, became a central figure in the Japanese-language literary world; today, perhaps the most prestigious Japanese-language literary award in Brazil is named after him, the Concurso Literário Yoshio Takemoto (Takemoto Yoshio Literary Prize).<sup>76</sup>

## “A Certain Ghetto”

Akino Shū

Paulo Senda truly could not bear it. Now, when it was too late, he regretted having visited the woman.

Not only had she excused herself the moment he arrived, leaving the room and then not returning, but also he had grown even more edgy as a result of the groaning—it sounded as though someone were ill—coming from the next room.

The room was unbearable, both from the stifling air and from the oppressive feeling produced by the eerie silence.

As though an afterthought, the strangely chilled breeze carried in a slight odor, making him feel as though his brain itself might be affected.

He felt it was because of his own negligence that he did not know that one of her family members was sick.

It must have been her younger sister who was indisposed.

He left, spat out the saliva that he had been accumulating in his mouth, and began walking up the hill in front of him.

Sickly weeds bearing some white berries had pressed unsteadily up from between the cobblestones. Climbing the steep hill as far as the N newspaper offices, he looked toward Rua Tomas de Lima. Spotting Okamoto, who was walking quickly in his direction, his mood brightened. When he whistled and waved, stretching his hand high, Okamoto waved back.

At this corner of Conde and Tomas de Lima the residence of the Count of Sarzedas towered, surrounded by an imposing wall of red brick.

That centuries-old structure enjoyed the protection of a sturdy iron fence and thick flagstones. Across the street from it, in the direction from which he had just come, stretched out the ghetto where his countrymen lived.

Senda, with his pale, nervous face, cast his gaze at a third-floor window of this home, which resembled an old castle. The windows were never open.

Beneath the windows a single thin vine of over two feet in length stretched parasitically on its host, this Elizabethan building.

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“Aru uramachi” first appeared in 1937 in the second issue of *Chiheisen*.



Senda's eyes then travelled from the windows of the Count's home to the old trees that filled its garden.

Ancient secrets were hidden in the moss-covered branches of the trees. The rust-covered, eerie building, its old trees, and the gate that seemed unlikely to ever be opened again—these things thrust themselves into his field of vision.

Despite this, for some reason there seemed to be no need for a second-generation Japanese like Senda to investigate the matter any further. It was enough merely to observe, gathering what he could from just looking.

Whenever he thought, "What is that for?" the answer "It's not *for* anything; it just *is*" popped quickly into his head. Just this caused him to grow listless and weary. This was not because he felt he must not think too hard about this or anything else, but rather because he just did not really *want* to think about it.

He knew all too well that even if he were to investigate further, the results would not be worth even *um tostão*.

Instead, what occurred to him first was how he ought to go bet on some *bicho*. People like him, people who were raised in an environment and by parents that considered the material to be all that mattered, had a frightening paucity of both the spirit of inquiry and powers of deduction.

Senda, fortunately, did not try to understand this, nor was there any need for him to do so. These momentary feelings, conjured to kill time, had been nothing more than a half-conscious attempt to find a diversion.

"Paulo, are you going home already?"

Miho approached with her eyes filled with resentment, but Senda merely pretended to listen quietly to the sound of the wind blowing through the treetops around the old-fashioned home. For his part, he was angry just to have been kept waiting despite having gone out of his way to visit.

"Paulo, why don't you stay longer this time."

"No, I have things to do."

Miho looked away despite being on pins and needles, while Senda lit a cigarette.

Miho had wrapped her pale torso, with her narrow shoulders and supple limbs, in deep red clothes, into which the *cinta* she wore around her slim waist seemed to bite. Nearly every night she had to go out to the shop done up in this pitiful way in order to please the customers.

The place she worked was T restaurant, a quite popular place. Even aware of that issue, some sort of fragile, pale, morbid charm aroused Senda's emotions and drew him to her. Senda and Miho did not hate one another.

Miho had only just turned nineteen, but with her malnourished and fatigued face, she looked two or three years older.

Senda remembered clearly her expression when she had smiled sadly as she told him that none of the customers ever took her for younger than twenty.

For his part, Senda too had matured quite early, with a stature that made it hard to believe that he was only twenty. A handsome youth, he had been taken for an adult from a young age.

"Let's forget about today. You have work anyway, right?" He said this kindly, without unpleasantness, and then saw her off as she walked down the hill.

"Hey!" At some point, Okamoto had come up behind him and now was standing there beaming, filled with vigor.

"Of course, . . ." Miho responded to Senda. "You're right."

Okamoto patted Senda on the back and started walking.

"What?" Senda more or less understood, but asked anyway. Okamoto mimed taking a drink.

Senda forced a smile in response to Okamoto, who was as easygoing as always, and went into the nearby Japanese people's restaurant, K.

Okamoto ordered *cerveja* and sausage without consulting Senda, then sat down next to him before looking around the place.

The *cerveja* took a long time to arrive. The shop was quiet at this hour, right before *janta*.

In the seats next to them, two men were making a ruckus, their voices echoing through the empty restaurant.

One, a red-faced man of around fifty, was wearing unbecoming gold-framed glasses. The other had a wrinkled face and was yammering on with his large mouth opened wide.

The bottles of *cerveja* were lined up before the two men, who were completely absorbed in a conversation about the *loteria*.

The red-faced man, whose mouth was ringed with foam, listened to the wrinkled-face man bluster vigorously, but was lamenting having missed winning by only one number. It appeared that he was drinking as a form of consolation.

When their agitation about the *loteria* subsided, the two men left the restaurant. Once they had left, the place grew quiet, with only the hum of the *sorvete* maker audible.

Senda and Okamoto drank, their expressions dull, fully absorbed in their own thoughts.

Watching the waitress named Shizuko pass in front of them four or five times, the two men were struck with different, but equally unexpected, feelings.

When Senda, who had awoken to sexuality early, gazed upon Shizuko's sensuous figure, he experienced an instinctive aversion.

By contrast, that voluptuousness aroused Okamoto's passions. Assisted by the alcohol, he stared at Shizuko, unconcerned with Senda's displeasure. Senda, being Senda, thought less of Okamoto for being taken with such a woman.

It was eight o'clock by the time the two of them left the K restaurant, but the pleasures of the city at night were already being arrayed before them, darting around like a bouncing rubber ball.

"A walk." Senda's eyes were bloodshot from the alcohol. When the foreign women around them heard his raised voice, they turned around to look.

Okamoto followed behind him, smiling nonchalantly.

When they arrived in front of the Cinema Santa Helena, having passed in front of the oppressive edifice that housed the court, Senda entered the adjacent building as though he had been sucked into it.

The white structure had become a gambling house that was filled with the stuffy smell of tobacco and the displeasing odor of its inhabitants.

This basement room was the pleasure center for the morbid amusements of the city.

It was a place where, when one's bets went well, they returned twenty or thirty times over; when they did not, fifty or one hundred *mil* would vanish before one knew it.

The betting men (and here there were only men) watched intently a ball being hit by something resembling a racquet. One woman struck the number ten, and then it was the next woman's turn.<sup>77</sup> She hit the number twenty-five.

This continued until there were only two numbers left. When the number thirty-five came up as the winning number, the winner ran off to claim his money.

The losers gazed ruefully upon the posted total winnings, their expressions sour. The payout was forty *mil*. The man with bloodshot eyes in front of Okamoto tore his tickets into bits and then threw them down onto the floor.

All Okamoto could do was stare at the man, smiling all the while.

"Look who's here."

The man whose shoulder Okamoto had tapped turned around and grinned broadly. As Senda was thinking that this man with sharp eyes was named Murai, if he remembered correctly, Okamoto glanced at Senda and then took the tickets that Murai had been holding.

Murai, who was not at all happy about this, quietly clicked his tongue.

"This guy never picks 'em," Okamoto said, and then returned the tickets.

After the ringing bell stopped and the whistle blew, one woman on roller skates came racing over to them.

For a while now, Okamoto had been paying closer attention to Senda's movements than to the competition. Thinking to himself, "He placed a bet," Okamoto focused on Senda's pained expression, and did not take his eyes off of him.

As the competition progressed, Senda leaned his body farther and farther forward.

Okamoto overheard the four or five Brazilians in front of him calling out, "Lola! Lola!" They must have their money on that woman.

Okamoto was not concerned with the suspicious-looking man with the fidgety hands who was behind those men either.

Just as Okamoto started thinking something was strange about him, though, he realized the man was no longer there.

Senda, lost in the competition, just stared forward. Okamoto found Senda comical looking this way. He remained silent, having decided to come up behind Senda and surprise him.

Senda had never been the sort to give any credence to Okamoto's cautions, so Okamoto had quit offering them, concluding that Senda was quite the inveterate gambler. Okamoto thought to himself, though, *keep at it like this, and you will always lose.*

At that moment Senda was panicking.

Having won 20 *mil* right off the bat, his calculations had all been thrown off. He went so far as to buy a fiver, but lost it.

He thought that he was hot that night, so there was no way he was going to stop before he had at least won back the money he had lost.

Whenever Senda thought about how helpless he was to change himself, and not become so perversely stubborn, he would begin to feel an oppressiveness that he could not contain. He thought that the fact that he could not even overcome as meager an opponent as himself was linked to his pathological nerves.

"Damn it."

His last hopes dashed, he tore his tickets into shreds and threw them down in front of him.

The floor, upon which the tracked-in mud and scraps of paper resembled a decorative pattern, exposed the chaotic, grubby undersides of lives on the verge of tears.

"Damn it," he muttered once again, scratching his head. Senda steeled the expression on his pale face and tried to smile for Okamoto, who had approached him, but the despair in his face was only revealed that much more clearly.

Okamoto recalled the name "Lola" from a moment earlier, and in his mind tried to see that woman and the dark-skinned Iracema as one.<sup>78</sup> He then whispered in Senda's ear, *this one will win.*

"I'm going to bet on sixteen."

Senda lifted his pale face and looked into Okamoto's eyes, which were filled with confidence, and then left to place his bet, but not before cracking a wan smile that twitched sickly into place. As Senda went, Okamoto purchased forty-six, the least-bet number. Even if it misses, it is still worth two *mil*. His mood brightened when he thought to himself, *if it hits, I will give it all to Senda.*

Amid the cacophony of voices and the cigarette smoke, the man standing on the dais was blowing a whistle.

The surrounding clamor went completely silent almost instantly. The first woman came racing up along with the sound of her wheels; there within the steel cage the expression on her face, with its high cheekbones, was anxious.

The ball fell into number twenty-two with a thud.

The room, which had been silent to that moment, suddenly emitted a sound like that of the wind blowing through trees.

Soon the next woman appeared, strangely composed given the uproar. She was quite beautiful, particularly for a woman of her sort, with fine features.

If this did not go in, then the ticket Senda was holding would be bust.

“It’s Lola,” Senda said, as though groaning.

His eyes were bloodshot.

Okamoto was not smiling anymore, either. He darkened his serious expression slightly and tightened his right hand into a fist.

The woman, who had gone around once, let out a high-pitched squeal as she did, but no one laughed even when she hit the enclosure.

When she came around again to take another shot, what gave off the thudding noise was the number five.

The woman spun around once, ducking her head, and then spun again, ending up facing backwards.

The man who had been next to them clicked his tongue, threw his tickets onto the floor, and stormed out.

When Okamoto looked back at Senda, he noticed that Senda’s eyes had a strange sparkle to them despite his pale expression. They were the particular sort of passionate eyes that the people who come to this sort of place have.

A lot of people around here have larger-than-average eyes and protruding foreheads.

Senda was standing next to Okamoto with a face that suggested a degree of despair.

At that moment, the final result was determined: the number forty-six remained.

“I won.”

Okamoto pressed his ticket into Senda’s hand and quickly walked out by himself.

After Senda, who was in shocked disbelief, got his forty-five *mil*, he went outside, and walked over to Okamoto, who was standing in front of the cinema next door.

“Haha. . . Consider it my way of saying thank you.” Having said this, he smiled and added, “If you take that money and head back in there, you will lose it as well. Just take it and go home.”

With that, Okamoto took his leave from Senda. By the time he reached the Y. pension, where he lived, it would surely be midnight already.

“You have a guest,” said the maid at the pension, who looked as though she had been waiting to say that.

“Thanks.”

“*Não*.” The woman smiled and looked up at Okamoto’s eyes as though seeking something, but Okamoto got stuck on the word *guest*. Moreover, he felt that for someone to come to his place at this late an hour, it must be some important matter.

He walked past the maid and pushed open his door. At the desk beside where his fellow lodgers were sleeping, Senda sat looking despondent.

Cigarette butts were piled high on his desk. Words written in some Western language squirmed in horizontal lines on the paper before him.

“What is it, this late at night?”

Staring at the deep wrinkles carved into Senda’s face, Okamoto thought, *he sure has aged, given how young he is*.

“Come out with me.”

Senda stood, silently, and then said, “I came by because there was something I definitely want to talk with you about today. The minute I saw your face, though, I changed my mind. I had wanted to get your advice about something I was planning, but it’s not necessary. At any rate, I want to thank you. From now on, if there is something wrong with me, I want you to tell me. I realize that I have made a lot of mistakes in the past, and I feel bad about that.

“I was going to meet Mihoko tonight, but I have decided not to. I have invested too much in her. I am sorry for worrying you.”

“I am serious about this. I will not cause you any more concern in the future. Even now, if I were to give up this desperate, crazy way of living it would help a lot of people. My father, my mother, it would help everyone. It would allow my illness to heal. I am ashamed to say it, but I had thought to take the money you gave me and go drink. But when I remembered what you said when you gave it to me—if you take that money and head back in there, you will lose it as well—I went home with it after all. I can’t tell you how happy my dad and mom were about that forty-five *mil*. You know, filial piety is a good thing. I feel like going to Japan, entering normal school, and starting again from the beginning. Tonight really is a good night.”

While listening to Senda, Okamoto felt a feeling spreading throughout his chest. Partly he was angry because he felt as though his good deed had been snatched away from him, and partly he felt a blandness as though he were chewing on sand.

He was seized by a sense of regret, thinking, “I shouldn’t have given him that money.”

On the other hand, mixed in was a sense of relief, a satisfaction with how things turned out.

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AKINO SHŪ is the penname of Sumiyoshi Mitsuo (1916–?). Akino was born in Tokushima Prefecture. He migrated to Brazil in 1932, after having graduated from the Tokyo Imperial College of Sericulture (蚕糸学校). Once in Brazil, he studied writing under the guidance of Furuno Kikuo; in the mid-1970s, he was still living in São Paulo and working at a bank.<sup>79</sup>

An author of both prose and verse, in addition to “Ghetto” he published at least two other stories in *Chiheisen*, including “Kagami” (鏡) in issue 4 and “Shin’en” (深淵) in issue 9. It might be worth noting that while Maeyama chose “A Certain Ghetto” to appear in the short story anthology, Furuno seems to have thought “Shin’en” to be the superior work, commenting on its “extremely masterful technique.”<sup>80</sup>