



TREASON
diary

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Treason Diary

excerpt: first 5 pages out of 25

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Yukinori Akimizu smelled the smoldering of explosives beneath the floor of the Ambassador's Residence and the sensation relived by his skin as he imagined his arms and lips and scorched shriveled hair fly apart in a matter of seconds was the smell of iron that had enfolded him in its spreading wings as it rose up out of Miss Michiko's body when he had stabbed and killed her with a knife at sixteen years and seven months old. Really, though, that iron smell had never actually left his right hand or cheek or anywhere else the blood had splashed, it was just that now, mere seconds before his death, it was as if his body had somehow become Miss Michiko's body as it had lain curled like a red, hook-speared worm, and it felt as if that rusted iron smell that seemed impossible to imagine circulating within a living thing was now wafting out of wounds in his thigh, his stomach, his left breast, out of all eight of the stab wounds he had left in her body. He had written all of this down, he had wanted everyone to understand: his lover Mermalada, Miss Michiko, his father, Kiyoto, Kisaragi, Abraham, and now he wanted them to know that he understood for the first time how Miss Michiko herself must have felt as she was overcome by this inescapable smell, and he choked up with regret. Of course, he could just be choking on smoke flooding the air. Had the explosion already happened? His eyes were filled with tears that flowed with no sign of stopping, and Yukinori found he could see nothing, hear nothing. He thought this was because he'd already been ripped apart, his arms and lips and scorched shriveled hair flying in all directions. There was no sound or smell left in the present for the dying. It was just: he still felt the brightness and warmth of lemon-colored light through his eyelids. He couldn't imagine where the light would be coming from, it probably meant the roof had been blown off. The first time he'd felt himself bathed in such clear, pure light was when he'd first walked the streets of Lima that summer five years ago. The flowers, five or six times the size of any in Japan, reflected the light as if they themselves were suns, and Yukinori had felt as if these flowers with unknown names, these white and red and yellow and purple flowers, were pasted directly onto his eyeballs like posters. As he'd continued to walk despite this feeling, his field of vision had swum not only with flower petals and light but with flashes of some other color, and he had teetered precariously and finally collapsed. Happily, this occurred not fifty meters away from the house of Father Cato, who was expecting him, and he was soon discovered by the Father's niece and admonished never to forget to wear a white hat in summer or he'd succumb to heat stroke again.

The man who had introduced him to Father Cato was a third generation Japanese Brazilian named Albert Morishima who had accompanied him on his journey to Lima. Had Morishima been a different sort of man, Yukinori would probably be tricking girls as a go-between for some prostitute trafficker by now, and, crying and gnashing his teeth,

he vowed never to forgive his father who had so blithely handed his son over with no thought to the outcome. After fleeing the thankfully empty hallway where Miss Michiko still lay moaning, after scrubbing the blood from his body in the pool locker room shower, wondering how blood could have possibly gotten into all the places he discovered it, after staring blankly at the cherry blossom pink water flowing over the blue tile and swirling down the drain in the floor, after changing into his gym clothes and stuffing his bloody school uniform and knife into a rucksack and showing up at his father's factory and telling him only that he had just stabbed a teacher at school and showing him the bloody contents of his bag, his father consulted briefly with his vaguely seedy Japanese-Peruvian underling Michael Hisomida and then ordered his son to do what this man said from then on and never showed his face again, not even after Yukinori was handed a fake passport by Hisomida, who seemed to run some sort of black market business on the side, not even on the night before he was scheduled to leave, when instead his father called him on the phone, saying that it seems as though the things I did to try and make you fly high may have instead triggered your attack, but you know that now our bond as father and son is severed, and with that, Yukinori was handed over for good. He was then handed over once more from Hisomida to Morishima and told that now he was Morishima's cousin and could hardly speak Japanese. From then on, as though he really had lost his Japanese, Yukinori barely uttered a word. He was occupied instead with suppressing the nervous tension rising up within him so that he didn't end up stabbing Morishima too, and he lost track of where he was or what was going on around him, and thus he no longer had to think. So he no longer had any need to speak.

It was a period of dying slowly, thought Yukinori to himself around the time he became able to speak Spanish. I was like a tube of fish cake, he thought, my body just so much salty, *dashi*-flavored white paste, inside and out, save for a big empty hole in my middle. There was nothing, no words or anything else to be found, just vacant space. Everything ended up sucked into this hollow void and crystallizing, embedding itself deep within him: the flowers fulgent and voluptuous enough to drive you crazy, the hot wind so dry it could shrivel a crocodile into a lizard, the cold morning fog, wet and heavy and eating into your chest to rot you alive, the sound of Spanish, like balsam berries popping. Yukinori Akimizu, this baby born in Los Angeles to his father's Japanese American mistress, then left with her when his father fled back to Japan, then brought and left with him after she tracked him down in Japan, he'd been slowly dying, his fish paste corpse carried to Lima, where he could be born once more. Now he spoke only Spanish, and he knew where he was, and he knew what was going on around him: he could give voice to it at last.

So he wrote in his diary in Spanish. He was keeping a diary as language practice.

He'd been keeping it since the day he arrived in Lima. He didn't actually start writing until after his Spanish had gotten good enough, but he went back and began his account from when his new self had been born.

The diary always revolved around Miss Michiko's murder and his father. At first the newly reborn Yukinori thought that reflecting on incidents and people from his "former life" was unhealthy and he tried to avoid it, but as his Spanish improved he felt his ability to think deepen, and he came to feel that this ability to put his past into words itself was a sign of rebirth. He described the incident again and again, attempting to recreate its most minute details. As he wrote and rewrote, he remembered more and more. Or maybe it wasn't that he remembered more, but rather that he was only now finding out the things he had been thinking during those fateful moments.

At first blush, it seemed a simple incident. Miss Michiko was standing in his way, he had a knife in his hand, so he removed the obstacle with the knife. But that no longer seemed to be the truth, he thought. He wanted to write the truth. He wanted to describe precisely the quiet feel of Miss Michiko's body accepting the knife as easily as it would a man. The knife had encountered no resistance whatsoever. As it was sliding in, it was as if every orifice on Yukinori's body had been sealed completely, and everything, Miss Michiko's screams, the smell of flowering daphne that had always emanated from her body, the iron smell that came from either the knife or the blood itself, he couldn't tell, the rustling sound his clothing made as he moved his arm, his own voice as he said something, all of it seemed so far away and jumbled. Where there once had been air was now water. Miss Michiko's eyes, her mouth, her ears, her arms, her very cells, they all opened wide to Yukinori. Thinking it over again, he realized that in Miss Michiko's very lack of resistance, he had felt his own mother. It was not his knife but rather he himself he'd wanted accepted so smoothly into her warm, soft flesh, he thought, and wrote. He felt that perhaps after stabbing her eight times, what he'd really wanted was to nestle his own body into the curve of hers as she'd lain curled like an invertebrate at his feet, moaning in a low voice, and be caressed beneath the right hand she had pressed against the wound on her left breast. He realized that he'd been filled with the intense desire to take off his clothes and become a newborn baby again, put that bleeding left breast in his mouth and suckle the milk and blood and make it into a part of his own body. The truth was that he'd noticed himself starting to unbutton his white shirt and had quickly run to the pool locker room and undressed, stroking the part of himself that was just now entering adulthood with his blood-covered hand until he found himself staring vacantly at the cherry blossom pink water swirling into the drain as he rinsed away semen and blood. And if Miss Michiko truly had been a stand-in for his mother, he had made a mistake choosing into whom he would slide his knife.

He should have slid it into his father. It was his father who'd stifled him, who'd been the muddy water isolating him from the world. His body grew and seemed to develop just like everyone else's, but this was just an effect of it absorbing this dirty water and swelling. It was this father extruding filth whom truly wished to stab. Not just him, but the parents who had nourished his filthy seed into fruition, and their parents as well, he needed to kill them all with his own hands or he'd never be clean. And if that was impossible, he no choice but to stab himself. But instead his knife had stabbed Miss Michiko. It had all been a big mistake, he thought. But now that he was living somewhere far from his father, it was the same as if he were dead. My father is dead. Writing these words, his father's existence seemed truly to lose its reality, and he felt as if he had coalesced instead from the dew on the grass or out of particles of light.

As he wrote, he came to feel that writing itself was reflection, was redemption, was rebirth, was revenge, was oblivion. Transcribing the complex things inside him as precisely as possible in his still-clumsy Spanish was exhausting, like writing with an invisible third hand. It wasn't unusual for him to begin and end a whole day just writing in his diary, but Yukinori accepted this exhaustion, seeing it as justly arduous labor and punishment, and during the two and a half years it took for the relation between his word-spinning brain and his mouth and hands to become transparent, writing and living seemed one and the same.

But he was still assaulted with a discomfort bordering on nausea when he tried to read what he wrote. No matter how much time passed he could never get over it. He could find the newly reborn Yukinori Akimizu nowhere on the notebook's pages. He'd told himself as he wrote that he was just practicing his Spanish, but this awful feeling like the floor dropping out from beneath him refused to go away, and sometimes it swelled to an unbearable intensity. With the nausea would come the feeling that his stomach, his lungs, all of his internal organs were about to explode from his throat until he turned completely inside out. And if it really happened, he thought, I'd be relieved. Like taking a knife into your hand, like kissing someone deeply, he imagined that if he could just feel again the sensation of skin rolling under itself, of sharp metal piercing mucus-slick, barely resistant flesh just one more time, things would feel real again, and what was on the surface would remain on the surface and what lay within would remain within. When he felt like this, Yukinori would wander into Chinatown and set off firecrackers with the Chinese Peruvians. Watching the firecrackers explode with dazzling brightness, he'd feel himself becoming cleansed, and he supposed that if he were to throw his notebooks into the fray and blast them into the sky, some of his feelings of guilt would disappear too. But he could never lay a hand on them. He knew if he did he'd be right back where he started. So he grew irritated, gripped with the desire to blast away the whole rest of the world, and rather

than his notebooks he'd wrap hair from his head or skin peeled from the heels of his feet and hands around the firecrackers and watch these things fly apart instead.

He stopped writing when he started thinking mostly in Spanish, when he found a job with Father Cato's help working at a warehouse selling meat, when he took a mestiza Peruvian lover: when he began thinking of himself as just another Peruvian hyphenate. And it was then, during an eighteenth birthday party for Father Cato's niece, that Kiyoto Kamihara showed up, uninvited.