



Joko IWASE

*2022 H.C.Andersen Author's Award
Nominee from Japan*

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illustration © Ueji, Naoko *A New Kid is Here*

BIOGRAPHY



Joko IWASE

Born in 1950 in Japan's Yamaguchi Prefecture, she was raised in Iwakuni City, home to a US military base. After high-school graduation, she went to work as a reporter for a local newspaper, while auditing the classes of children's author Imae Yoshitomo. She published her first book, *Asa wa dandan mieteru kuru* (Morning Gradually Appears), in 1977. This was the beginning of a long line of books written from the viewpoint of children and adolescents, portraying the absurdity of society and the unvarnished truth about problems facing modern families. She has written more than sixty books and won many major awards for Japanese children's literature. Her works were chosen for the IBBY Honour List in 1994 and 2016.

STATEMENT

The Allure of Joko Iwase and Her Works

By Akira NOGAMI, Editor/critic

As social and home environments become ever more complicated and tumultuous, Joko Iwase effortlessly opens the door to the hearts and minds of children trying to make sense of it all. She portrays the diversity and courage of young people who refuse to be defeated by difficulty, and rather resolve to think for themselves and move forward. Iwase has been a driving force in children's literature in Japan, greatly expanding its range. Iwase's works have received many major awards in this country and have been selected twice for the IBBY Honour List.

Iwase was born in 1950 in the suburbs of Iwakuni City in Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan, following defeat in World War II, was still under the rule of the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers, and Iwakuni was home to a US military installation. The base stayed following Japan's independence, and the town was flooded with GIs during the US war in Vietnam. Iwase grew up in close quarters to the base and it has had an important influence on her writing.

Soon after graduating from high school, she began attending church where she met an American soldier the same age. The two became friends. The young man told her that he didn't want to die, nor did he want to kill anyone. He was eventually sent to Vietnam, and he and Iwase began a correspondence. The last time she heard from him was in a postcard on which he wrote, "I'm on my way to the front lines. Please pray for me."

In 1970, after participating in International Anti-War Day (October 21) activities, Iwase joined a citizen's movement calling for peace in Vietnam, joining marches and throwing anti-war flyers into the Iwakuni base.

She also frequented an anti-war coffee shop called Hobbit (named after the character in J. R. R. Tolkien novels). The shop was searched in a police investigation that drove the establishment to the brink of bankruptcy, and a series of cultural lectures was begun to raise money to keep it in business. Iwase attended one such lecture, a talk on children's books by author Yoshitomo Imae. It inspired her to audit classes at Seibo Jogakuin in Kyoto, where Imae taught. Thus began her study of children's literature. She published her first book, ***Asa wa dandan miete kuru*** (Morning Gradually Appears) in 1977 ①.

The book begins with Nana, a 15-year-old girl riding on the back of a motorcycle, clinging for dear life to the back of the boy driving it. The scene symbolizes Nana's sense of floating, her unease with life, and the thrill of adventure.



Asa wa dandan miete kuru
(Morning Gradually Appears; Rironsha, 1977)

Nana smokes and drinks and spends time in anti-war coffee shops. She is opinionated and provokes the ire of her parents and teachers, constantly rubbing their sensibilities the wrong way. Her values, born of the rebellion of youth that swept through society in the late 1960s, are the antithesis of those of mainstream society, generally accepted morals and ideas about what children should be or do.

Nana meets Rei, a girl who dropped out of high school and spends her time painting. The two of them share a love of art, and Alice, an anti-war coffee shop which Nana's school forbids students to visit, holds an exhibit of the two girls' oil paintings. Nana is near the shop when police begin an onsite investigation on suspicion that Alice's owners have broken the law preventing ownership of lethal weapons. The police interrogate Nana and contact her parents. Her father harshly scolds her and Nana fiercely resists.

In the final chapter, Nana mumbles these words to herself, "Even in on the sea, black in the night, morning gradually appears." Iwase creates striking portraits of Rei and Nana defiantly and resolutely confronting the formidable wall between themselves and the freedom of spirit they seek. This book was revolutionary in the field of Japanese fiction for young adults, and Iwase won the Newcomer Award of the Japanese Association of Writers for Children.

Entering the 1980s, Iwase began questioning about what and how she should write. "Can I say that what I'm writing is 'a feeling or impression' experienced by a teenage girl? I think it's the vague and chaotic situation she finds herself in, but I'm wondering if I should be writing about a reality as reflected from another, separate reality." Iwase says that this "reflected reality" was what she was seeking to create in ***Gaku no naka no machi*** (The Town in the Frame (1984)) ❶, ***Atashi o sagashite*** (Looking for Me (1987)) ❷, and the books that followed.

After a decade of sporadic publications, Iwase became much more prolific in the 1990s. In ***Uso ja naiyo to Tanikawa-kun wa itta*** (Tanikawa said, "It's Not a Lie" (1991)) ❸, the main character is a girl with selective mutism, and the story brings into sharp focus the intrinsic kindness of children that transcends the egotism of adults. This book won the Shogakukan Children's Publication Culture Award and was selected for the IBBY Honour List in 1994. ***Mo chotto dake kodomo de iyo*** (I'm Going to Stay a Child for a Little Longer (1992)) ❹ is a painfully honest depiction of the distress and pressure children face. Iwase further advocates for the fragile sensibilities of children in ***Sutegozaurusu*** (Stegosaurus (1994)) ❺, using an extinct creature as a symbol of the exquisite sensitivities of children, and how they are dulled and lost when faced with adult society.



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❶ *Gaku no naka no machi* (The Town in the Frame; Shogakukan, 1984) ❷ *Atashi o sagashite* (Looking for Me; Rironsha, 1987) ❸ *Uso ja naiyo to Tanikawa-kun wa itta* (Tanikawa Said, "It's Not a Lie"; PHP, 1991) ❹ *Mo chotto dake kodomo de iyo* (I'm Going to Stay a Child for a Little Longer; Rironsha, 1992) ❺ *Sutegozaurusu* (Stegosaurus; Magazine House, 1994)



The twenty-first century has seen Iwase in her prime. ***Kin-iro no zo*** (The Golden Elephant (2001)) ① is a book of six short stories, day-to-day episodes in the life of twelve-year-old Hana, in which we see the emotional state of the people around her. In the title story, Hana tries to hide her single-fold Asian eyelids, using tiny pieces of tape to make it look like she has the double-folds she yearns for. Unfortunately, no one notices the change. Even worse, the adults in her life are oblivious to her needs and come at her with their own. Disconsolate, Hana escapes to go see her grandmother in the hospital. On her visit, she climbs the stairs to the hospital roof and catches the sun setting behind the mountain she sees each day at school. Through the drooping bits of tape still clinging to Hana's eyelids, the sun sparkles around the familiar elephant-shaped mountain, turning it into a shining gold image. Hana describes the scene to her grandmother, saying "the sky looks so strange." Her grandmother rebukes her, saying, "If the sunset is beautiful, just say it's beautiful—that's what a good child should do." Hana never mentions the elephant again. All of the stories in the collection brilliantly portray the sensitivities and inner workings of children's feelings, their cool attitude towards and irritation with oblivious adults, and the subtle disconnect between generations. ***Tonari no kodomo*** (The Child Next Door (2004)) ② is also a book of seven connected stories about the lives of children one might find anywhere, their acuity contrasting starkly with the adult society around them. Iwase's work clearly expresses her unconditional trust in modern-day children. ***Kakurenbo*** (Hide and Seek: Through the Photographs (2005)) ③ is a completely different sort of book. Photographs by international photographer Shoji Ueda, winner of France's L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters), are accompanied by Iwase's poetic descriptions. Iwase's lines describing the mindscapes of children resonate with the objects placed in a natural background and photographed in black and white. ***Sono nukumori wa kienai*** (The Warmth is Still There (2007)) ④ was translated into Chinese and sold 150,000 copies. Nami, a ten-year-old girl living with her divorced mother, is the main character. Nami's mother ignores her daughter's feelings, projecting her own onto her and meddling in her life. Fed up with her mother's gratuitous assumptions and pushiness, Nami forms an odd friendship with a boy and an elderly woman living in her neighborhood, a friendship that begins a gradual change in Nami's feelings. The subtle shift reflects the feelings of readers Nami's age, and for this work Iwase received the Japanese Association of Writers for Children Prize.

① *Kin-iro no zo* (The Golden Elephant; Kaiseisha, 2001) ② *Tonari no kodomo* (The Child Next Door; Rironsha, 2004) ③ *Kakurenbo* (Hide and Seek: Through the Photographs, Fukuinkan Shoten, 2005) ④ *Sono nukumori wa kienai* (The Warmth is Still There; Kaiseisha, 2007)



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① *Pisu birejji* (Peace Village; Kaiseisha, 2011) ② *Kimi wa shiranai ho ga ii* (Better You Not Know; Bunken Shuppan, 2014) ③ *Atarashii ko ga kite* (A New Kid is Here; Iwasaki Shoten, 2014)

Pisu birejji (Peace Village (2011) ①) is a work inspired by the author's fervent desire for world peace, one that could have only been written by Iwase, raised and living today in a town dominated by a US military base. Kaede's father runs a pub that caters to US servicemen. Kaede's best friend is Kiri, whose father passes out flyers objecting to the military presence. Set in a town with a base sending men off to war, Peace Village, a hall of a small cross on its roof, is a place where servicemen, their families and locals come to mingle and relax. Through the eyes of Kaede, we learn about her fellowship with people who come to Peace Village and the complicated feelings of people in a town with a military base. This book confronts its readers with the reality of war. ***Kimi wa shiranai ho ga ii*** (Better You Not Know (2014) ②) is about a girl who has finally moved on from school refusal. Back in the classroom, she becomes friends with a new boy who has been transferred from a school where he was bullied. Through the relationship, we can see the pain, struggle and displacement of children who feel caged inside schools. The reader is moved by the efforts of the main characters as they move relentlessly forward rather than giving up. For this work, Iwase won the Sankei Children's Book Award. ***Atarashii ko ga kite*** (A New Kid is Here (2014) ③) is another work of Iwase's chosen for the IBBY Honour List. The story describes in detail the psychology of a child whose family structure is going through a change. The reader is swept into the mind of a young girl who feels replaced by a newborn brother. This book masterfully expresses adults watching over children and the shrewd skills of observation children have when it comes to adults. This book won the Noma Prize for Juvenile Literature.

Boku ga ototo ni shita koto (I Shouldn't Have Done That! (2015) ④), ***Maru no senaka*** (Maru's Back (2016) ⑤), and ***Haru-kun no iru ie*** (The House Where Haru Lives (2017) ⑥) are all about the complicated feelings and difficult environments of children in broken homes. The twelve-year-old protagonist of *What I Did to My Brother* lives with his mother and younger brother. The story focuses on the compulsive way the boy violently attacks his brother and his reconsideration of his own family. Iwase gives a close and detailed look at the emotional states of family members suffering domestic abuse and its consequences. *Maru's Back* describes in understated tones the tortured existence of an eight-year-



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④ *Boku ga ototo ni shita koto* (I Shouldn't Have Done That!; Rironsha, 2015) ⑤ *Maru no senaka* (Maru's Back; Kodansha, 2016) ⑥ *Haru-kun no iru ie* (The House Where Haru Lives; Bunkeido, 2017)

old girl whose mother, defeated by the poverty of their existence, frequently suggests they “die together.” One day the girl enjoys a glimmer of hope when entrusted with the care of a cat with a reputation for bringing good fortune. Readers of this masterpiece feel both pity and affection for the girl’s heroic resolve. *The House Where Haru Lives* tells the story of a ten-year-old girl, her mother, grandparents and fourteen-year-old cousin, brought together by fate and life’s ironies—as they embark on a life together as a new family.

Iwase has continued to write. In 2017, she published ***Tomodachi no toki-chan*** (My Friend Toki (2017)) ❶. The first-person narrator has a friend whose personality, reactions and behavior are a little different from her own. Through this special friendship, the young narrator makes some important realizations that expand her horizons. about a classmate of the first-person narrator who does things a little more slowly than everyone else. In ***Mo hitotsu no magariikado*** (Another Turn in the Road (2019)) ❷, the main character is at a fork in the road where they must decide on her next step in life. ***Otosan no kao*** (My Father’s Face (2020)) ❸ describes how a father and daughter on different wavelengths are gradually brought closer together. Iwase’s latest work is ***Nemunoki o kiranaide*** (Don’t Cut Down the Silk Tree (2020)) ❹. It describes the feelings of a young boy wounded by risks to the lives of plants and animals, another deep and careful look into the growth and inner workings of young people.

From the very beginning of her writing career, Joko Iwase has portrayed the cry of the soul of adolescents forced to rebel. Her work is as vivid as if she had known about the predicaments and distress of today’s youth before they even happened. She uses imagery to depict the impatience of young people, feelings they are unable to discuss with their parents or siblings, the perilous behavior and intentions of adults that keep children off kilter and disheartens them, but which they work through in an effort to find freedom of spirit and independence. Iwase’s expressiveness soothes the hearts of children and youth, finding and carefully removing the tiny splinters piercing their souls.

These days, children’s literature is tilted in the direction of entertainment value found in comics and videogames. The world of Joko Iwase soars above this. The gap between haves and have-nots, poverty, discrimination and conflict are epidemic among the world’s children. They are what Joko Iwase writes about, and we in Japan seek to make known her often gentle yet always powerful literary allure.

(Translations by Deborah Iwabuchi)



❶ *Tomodachi no Toki-chan* (My Friend Toki; Froebel-kan, 2017) ❷ *Mo hitotsu no magariikado* (Another Turn in the Road; Kodansha, 2019) ❸ *Otosan no kao* (My Father’s Face; Kosei Shuppansha, 2020) ❹ *Nemunoki o kiranaide* (Don’t Cut Down the Silk Tree; Bunken Shuppan, 2020)

ESSAY

Joko Iwase

Most children's and YA book authors tend to be people with an interest in their own childhood or youth. I myself certainly have focused on my own childhood. I've never stopped wondering what it meant for me to be a child.

I remember playing with my friends from sunrise to sunset, but I don't recall my childhood as the best years of my life. While I did have a lot of fun, it has always seemed to me that difficulties somewhat outweighed the happiness, and I've never let go of that perceived discrepancy. Indeed, my impression is that being a child means simultaneously living and being destroyed. . . .

We often hear that, over the past decade or so, relationships between children and adults have changed quite a bit. In the past, there were things adults were supposed to communicate to children, and children were supposed to accept what they were taught. For better or for worse, this thread connecting the two seems to have unraveled. I don't think I'm the only one who feels this way. Whether due to rapid changes in the structure of society or the unstoppable momentum of the media, it is no longer clear where childhood ends and adulthood begins. In the midst of all this, the image of the child has changed. . . .

The society we live in is a mixture of fact and fiction, and the self-images of children take on these often-vague characteristics of imagination and reality. I even see a pronounced emptiness in young people, although this is probably true of everyone living in Japan these days, not just children.

If this then is the case, and one is to write for readers with images of children in mind, and if one is writing conscious of the ever-changing image of children, one must imagine the children who are nurturing these fluid and uncertain self-images, and that is not an easy thing to do.



From "On the Brink of Ruin" by Joko Iwase
in *Nihon jido bungaku* (Japan Children's Literature) May 1990 edition.

AWARDS

1977 The 11th Newcomer of the Japanese Association of Writers for Children



朝はだんだん見えてくる

Asa wa dandan miete kuru

(Morning Gradually Appears)

illus. Cho, Shinta | Tokyo: Rironsha | 1977/2005

1992 The 39th Sankei Children's Book Award

1992 The 41st Shogakukan Children' Publication Culture Award

1994 IBBY Honour List 1994



「うそじゃないよ」と谷川くんはいった

Uso ja naiyo to Tanikawa-kun wa itta

(Tanikawa Said "It's Not a Lie")

illus. Ajito, Keiko | Tokyo: PHP | 1991

1995 The 17th Robo no Ishi Awards



ステゴザウルス

Sutegozaurusu (Stegosaurus)

illus. Arai, Ryoji | Tokyo: magazine House | 1994

迷い鳥とぶ

Mayoi dori tobu (Lost Bird Flies)

illus. Yagyū, Machiko | Tokyo: Rironsha | 1994

2008 The 48th Japanese Association of Writers for Children Prize



そのぬくもりはきえない

Sono nukumori wa kienai (The Warmth is Still There)

Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2007

2014 The 52nd Noma Prize for Juvenile Literature IBBY Honour List / The 5th JBBY Award



あたらしい子がきて

Atarashii ko ga kite (A New Kid is Here)

illus. Ueji, Naoko | Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten | 2014

2015 The 62nd Sankei Children's Book Award



きみは知らないほうがいい

Kimi wa shiranai ho ga ii (Better You Not Know)

illus. Hasegawa, Shuhei | Tokyo: Bunken Shuppan | 2014

2021 The 36th Tsubota Joji Literature Award

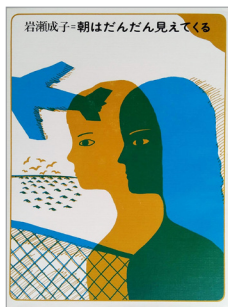


もうひとつの曲がり角

Mo hitotsu no magariikado (Another Turn in the Road)

Tokyo: Kodansha | 2019

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Rironsha | 1977



わたしねこ
Watashi neko (I am a Cat)
| illus. Sano, Yoko | Tokyo:
Rironsha | 1979



小さな獣たちの冬
Chiisana kemono tachi no
fuyu (Winter of Small Beasts)
| illus. Ajito, Keiko | Tokyo:
Shogakukan | 1980



アトリエの馬
Atorie no uma (The Horse at
a Studio) | illus. Uno, Akira |
Tokyo: Gakko Tosho | 1981



額の中の街
Gaku no naka no machi (The
Town in the Frame) | illus.
Yagyu, Machiko | Tokyo:
Rironsha | 1984



あたしをさがして
Atahi o sagashite (Looking for
Me) | illus. Iino, Kazuyoshi |
Tokyo: Rironsha | 1987



ポケットの中の<エーエン>
Poketto no naka no e-en
(Eternity in My Pocket) |
illus. Yagyu, Machiko | Tokyo:
Rironsha | 1988



日曜日の手品師
Nichiyobi no tejinashi (A
Magician on Sunday) | illus.
Iino, Kazuyoshi | Tokyo: Kyoiku
Gageki | 1989



「うそじゃないよ」と谷川くんはいった
Uso ja nai yo to Tanikawa-kun
wa itta (Tanikawa said "It's
Not a Lie") | illus. Ajito, Keiko |
Tokyo: PHP | 1991



アイスクリーム・ドリーム
Aisukurimu dorimu (Ice Cream
Dream) | illus. Hasegawa,
Shuhei | Tokyo: Rironsha | 1991



もうちょっとだけ 子どもでいよう
Mo chotto dake kodomo de iyo
(I'm Going to Stay a Child for a
Little Longer) | Tokyo: Rironsha
| 1992



子どもたちの森
Kodomo tachi no mori
(Children's Woods) | illus. Ise,
Hideko | Tokyo: Akane Shobo |
1993



ステゴザウルス
Stegozaurusu (Stegosaurus)
| illus. Ryoji Arai | Tokyo:
Magazine House | 1994



迷い鳥とぶ
Mayoi dori tobu (Lost Bird
Flies) | illus. Yagyū, Machiko |
Tokyo: Rironsha | 1994



イタチ帽子
Itachi boshi (Weasel Hat)
| illus. Cho, Shinta | Tokyo:
Bunkeido | 1995



やわらかい扉
Yawarakai tobira (Door of
Tender) | Tokyo: Benesse |
1996



どうぶつふうせん
Dobutsu fusen (Animal
Balloon) | illus. Sasameya, Yuki
| Tokyo: Holp Shuppan | 1996



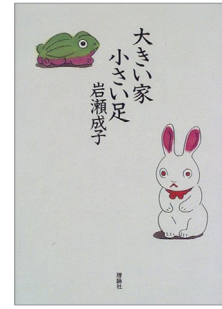
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Yoru kuru tori (The Owl Coming
at Night) | illus. Ajito, Keiko |
Tokyo: PHP | 1997



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Arumajiro no shippo
(Armadillo's Tale) | illus.
Watanabe, Yoji | Tokyo: Akane
Shobo | 1997



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Daietto kurabu (Diet Club) | by
many authors | Tokyo: Nihon
Tosho Center | 1997



大きい家 小さい足
Okii ie chiisai ashi (A Big
House, Small feet) | Tokyo:
Rironsha | 1997



金色の象
Kin-iro no zo (The Golden
Elephant) | illus. Kitami, Yuko |
Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2001



さらわれる
Sarawareru (Kidnapped) | illus.
Cho, Shinta | Kobe: BL Shuppan
| 2002



二十歳だった頃
Hatachi datta koro (When I
was 20 Years Old) | Tokyo:
Shobunsha | 2002



月夜の誕生日
Tsukiyo no tanjobi (Birthday on
a Moonlight Night) | illus. Ajito,
Keiko | Tokyo: Kinnohoshi-sha |
2004



となりのこども
Tonari no kodomo (The Child
Next Door) | Tokyo: Rironsha |
2004

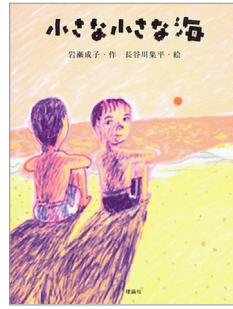


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(revised edition)) | illus. Cho,
Shinta | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2005



かくれんぼ

Kakurenbo (Hide and Seek: Through the Photographs) | photos: Yeda, Shoji | Tokyo: Fukuinkan Shoten | 2005



小さな小さな海

Chiisana chiisana umi (Tiny Tiny Sea) | illus. Hasegawa, Shuhei | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2005



「さやか」ぼくはさけんだ

Sayaka boku wa sakenda (Sayaka, I hailed) | illus. Tashima, Seizo | Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha | 2007



そのぬくもりは きえない

Sono nukumori wa kienai (The Warmth is Still There) | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2007



だれか ないてる

Dare ka naiteru (Someone is crying) | illus. Ajito, Keiko | Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha | 2008



冬ものがたり

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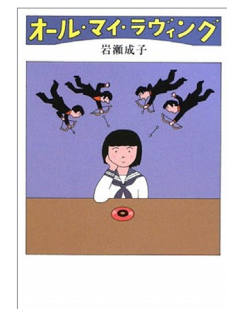
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Shirayuki hime (Snow White) | illus. Arai, Ryoji | Kobe: Felissimo | 2009



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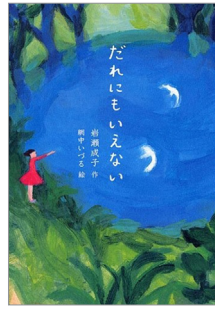
オール・マイ・ラヴィング

Oru mai rabingu (All My Loving) | Tokyo: Home-sha | 2010



まつりちゃん

Matsuri-chan (Matsuri-chan) |
Tokyo: Rironsha | 2010



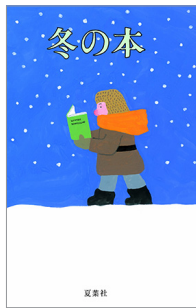
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Darenimo ienai (I Cannot Tell
Anyone) | illus. Aminaka, Izuru
| Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbunsha |
2011



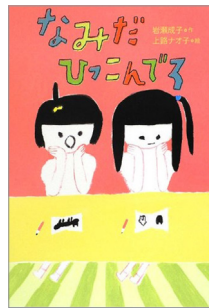
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Pisu birejji (Peace Village) |
Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2011



冬の本

Fuyu no hon (Winter Book)
| by many authors | Tokyo:
Natsuhasha | 2012



なみだひっこんでろ

Namida hikkondero (Back Off,
Tears) | illus. Ueji, Naoko |
Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten | 2012



子どもの本の海で泳いで

Kodomo no hon no umi de
oyoide (Swimming in the Ocean
of Children's Books) | by many
authors | illus. Uno, Akira |
Kobe: BL Shuppan | 2013



とっとこトマちゃん

Tottoko Toma-chan (Lively
Toma-chan) | illus. Nakatani,
Haruhiko | Tokyo: WAVE
Shuppan | 2013



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Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten | 2014



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Hasegawa, Shuhei | Tokyo:
Bunken Shuppan | 2014



くもりときどき晴レル

Kumori tokidoki hareru (Cloudy and Sometimes Sunny) | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2014



ともだちってだれのこと?

Tomodachi tte dare no koto? (Who is a Friend?) | illus. Nakazawa, Miho | Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha | 2015



100万分の1回のねこ

Hyakuman bun no ikkai no neko (One Millionth Cat) | by many authors | illus. Sano, Yoko | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2015



ぼくが弟にしたこと

Boku ga ototo ni shita koto (I Shouldn't Have Done That!) | illus. Hasegawa, Shuhei | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2015



わたしが子どものころ戦争があった

Watashi ga kodomo no koro senso ga atta (There was a War in My Childhood) | by many authors | edit. Nogami, Akira | Tokyo: Rironsha | 2015



マルの背中

Maru no senaka (Maru's Back) | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2016



あまからすっぱい物語 2

Amakara suppai monogatari 2 (Sweet, Spicy and Sour Stories 2) | by many authors | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 2016



オール・マイ・ラヴィング

Oru mai rabingu (All My Loving) | Tokyo: Shogakukan | 2016



ともだちのときちゃん

Tomodachi no Toki-chan (My Friend Toki) | illus. Ueda, Makoto | Tokyo: Froebel-kan | 2017



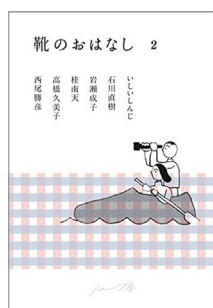
ちよっとおんぶ
Chotto onbu (Piggyback, Please) | illus. Kitami, Yuko | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2017



春くんのいる家
Haru-kun no iru ie (The House Where Haru Lives) | illus. Tsubotani, Reiko | Tokyo: Bunkeido | 2017



地図を広げて
Chizu o hirogete (Spreading a Map) | Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2018



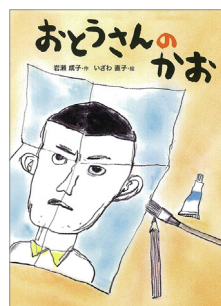
靴のおはなし 2
Kutsu no ohanashi 2 (Shoes Stories 2) | by many authors | Nara: Loopsha | 2019



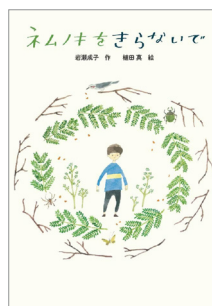
もうひとつの曲がり角
Mo hitotsu no magari kado (Another Turn in the Road) | Tokyo: Kodansha | 2019



夜明け前のキョーフ
Yoakemae no kyofu (Fears Before Dawn) | by many authors | illus. Karube, Takehiro | edit. JAWC | Tokyo: Froebelkan | 2020



おとうさんのかお
Otosan no kao (My Father's Face) | illus. Izawa, Naoko | Tokyo: Kosei Shuppansha | 2020



ネムノキをきらないで
Nemunoki o kiranaide (Don't Cut Down the Silk Tree) | illus. Ueda, Makoto | Tokyo: Bunken Shuppan | 2020



わたしのあのこ あのこのわたし
Watashi no anoko anoko no watashi (You and I) | Tokyo: PHP | 2021

TRANSLATIONS



「うそじゃないよ」と谷川くんはいつた

Usa ja naiyo to Tanikawa-kun wa itta (Tanikawa Said "It's Not a Lie") | PHP | 1991

●**KOREAN** | Miseghy | 2013 | ISBN 9788980713431



金色の象

Kin-iro no zo (The Golden Elephant) | Kaiseisha | 2001

●**KOREAN** | MOONWON | 2003 | ISBN 9788986396669



そのぬくもりは きえない

Sono nukumori wa kienai (The Warmth is Still There) | Kaiseisha | 2007

●**KOREAN** | Miseghy Children's Press | 2011 | ISBN 9788980712755

●**CHINESE (Simplified)** | New Buds Publishing House | 2013



きみは知らないほうがいい

Kimi wa shiranai ho ga ii (Better You Not Know) | Bunken Shuppan | 2014

●**KOREAN** | 2016 | ISBN 9788980714087



あたらしい子がきて

Atarashii ko ga kite (A New Kid is Here) | Iwasaki Shoten | 2014

●**CHINESE (Simplified)** | 北京禹田幹風圖書有限公司 | in preparation for 2021



10 Important Titles





小さな獣たちの冬

Chiisana kemono tachi no fuyu

Little Beasts in Winter

illus. Keiko Ajito | Shogakukan | 1980 | 142 pp

Yoko is a sixth-grade student. Her parents aren't officially married, so her last name remains Aoki, her mother's. Her father quits his job, spends his time idly, and eventually moves out. Her mother takes Yoko to stay with her grandparents, saying she (Yoko's mother) needs to talk to her husband alone.

At her grandparents' place, Yoko spends time with Yu, her mother's brother. He is supposed to be starting high school, but was kept back a year because of illness he had in his first year of middle school. Unable to move up with his peers despite his outstanding grades takes a toll on him mentally. In addition, his parents, Yoko's grandparents, argue frequently, and his grandmother is an enthusiastic follower of a certain religion. Both Yu and Yoko live in clouds of uncertainty and apprehension created by the friction between their respective parents. Less like an uncle and niece, and more like brother and sister, Yu and Yoko connect so that they can take a step back from the daily deceit of adults and view it in cooler, more objective way.

Yu enters a swimming competition with his friends from elementary school. He confronts the race with great confidence and wins first in both the preliminary and final heats. However, he is disqualified for missing the touch during a turn. Overwhelmed by sadness, he wanders the city, and with a lighter he takes out of his pocket, sets fire to a dust bin in a back alley.

Yoko's father comes home and the family is reunited. Her mother says everything is back to normal, but Yoko senses more delusions. The story closes when she decides to keep a disobedient dog, a move that can be interpreted as an attack on adult society by a powerless child.



額の中の街

Gaku no naka no machi

The Town in the Frame

illus. Machiko Yagyū | Rironsha | 1984 | 214 pp

14-year-old Naoko's father is an American soldier in Japan, and her mother Yoshiko is Japanese. After Yoshiko gives birth to Naoko, the three of them move to the U.S, where her father jilts her mother. Naoko and her mother fly back to Japan leaving her brother Tim behind. Back in Japan, Yoshiko starts working at a pub in a military town and brings home her new male friends night after night. Naoko seems to accept her mother's life, but eventually begins to show frustration and hatred for George, a young American soldier Yoshiko brings home, and vents her anger at the way Yoshiko works at night, seducing the soldiers. George develops a drug addiction that aggravates his bipolar disease and he ends up killing Yoshiko. Naoko thinks about her mother. "She has worked in this town for years, meeting countless American soldiers and inviting them home for fun. George, Robert, and probably even my father came to know her that way." Now it is Naoko's turn to follow soldiers into dingy hotels in the seedy part of town.

Drug, sex, prostitution, pregnancy, and abortion. The Town in the Frame matter-of-factly deals with themes that have traditionally been taboo in children's literature. Against a background of different characters living in a military town, the story brilliantly captures Naoko's affection for and hatred towards her mother, and depicts her own unsettling fragility born of her inability to be either completely American or Japanese.



あたしをさがして

Atashi o sagashite

Looking for Me

illus. Kazuyoshi Iino | Rironsha | 1987 | 242 pp | ISBN 4-652-01417-1

In the maze called childhood, an 11-year-old girl searches for herself. Notified that her grandmother is in critical condition, the girl and her mother are on a bullet train to the hospital. The girl feels nauseous, so they stop at a station where she gets separated from her mother on the platform. A woman, who mistakes her for a delinquent runaway, approaches her and takes her away. The woman buys her clothes and pajamas. The girl suspects that the woman is a kidnapper, but she also starts to feel as if she may very well be a juvenile delinquent.

The girl's parents run a café, but her father is rarely at home, which seems to presage a divorce.

The girl is at an empty yakiniku restaurant. The owner rambles on about his crush on a girl he has looked after since she was a baby. She starts to feel as if she is that girl.

The girl is in a classroom. She and her friends make a plan to kidnap and rescue an abused child, but it turns out that the whole story is a lie made up by the "abused child"'s sister.

The girl is at the whim of her younger sister, who is smarter than her and conceited. All of a sudden, readers find out that the sister is an imaginary person and that the only sister the girl ever had was a fetus in a lost pregnancy.

At the end of the book, the nausea is gone and the girl stands up on the station platform. She finds herself staring at her mother's back as it disappears into the crowd. She might have been dreaming the whole time. In all the uncanny and eerie episodes that make up the story, Looking for Me depicts the ambiguous boundary between reality and the girl's imagination. It is a mosaic of adult situations woven together by the girl's mental images.



「うそじゃないよ」と谷川くんはいった

Usso ja naiyo to Tanikawa-kun wa itta

Tanikawa Said 'It's Not a Lie'

illus. Keiko Ajito | PHP | 1991 | 118 pp | ISBN 4-569-58519-1

Rui has selective mutism, which is why she speaks normally at home, but almost never at school. Tanikawa is a new boy at Rui's school. He approaches her and tries to get her to talk to him. Tanikawa tells Rui that his father is a scholar of zoo-ecology and that both of his parents are doing research in Brazil. He brings her stamps from overseas and postcards with pictures of endangered animals. He also frequently borrows money from his new friend. The truth is that Tanikawa's mother has left him and his younger sister and run off with her lover. The two children are living in a shabby apartment, barely making ends meet with the small amount of money their mother sends and Tanikawa's earnings from his after-school job. Children alone, though, can't make it on their own forever, and Tanikawa suddenly stops showing up at school. Through the friendship of this young boy, who defends rather than denounces the neglect of the mother who abandoned him for a lover, and Rui, who goes along with his improbable story, we see the innate kindness of children who manage to transcend adult egoism.



もうちょっとだけ 子どもでいよう

Mo chotto dake kodomo de iyo

I'm Going to Stay a Child for a Little Longer

Rironsha | 1992 | 331 pp | ISBN 4-652-04214-0

Saki, age 11, makes friends with Mio, who has had her head shaved for brain surgery. Saki's elder sister Hikaru, about 14, sends letters to a radio DJ, pretending to be the unhappy child of a broken home. Saki and Hikaru's mother is a former junior high school teacher who now tutors children in Japanese and English. Her weakness is getting overinvolved in anything that takes her fancy, and right now she is deeply into religion. The girls' father had, in his younger years, been close to alcoholism, but these days he runs a small company together with a friend. On the surface, the four are the sort of typical family you'd expect to find anywhere, but a closer look into their individual worries and the problems they have remind the reader of what "typical" families these days face. In other words, this story is a universal portrait of modern life.

Hikaru meets some high-school drop-outs in a vacant house on the beach. The youth are continuing their education at a cram school. As for Saki, she comes face-to-face with Mio who was carried into the hospital and totters on the brink of death. The two sisters catch glimpses of modern life through the different adults and young people they come into contact with.

Reading the words of Saki and Hikaru, the reader is struck by the keenly perceptive sensitivities of children, described in a way only Iriguchi can do. We can see the words as expressions of the ire of children towards the inert sensitivities of adults. The literary power of this work is in how the writer interprets the difficulties of living as a child, and the intention of the writer to bear witness to it. In this book is an inner world that children of the same generation can profoundly empathize with. Iriguchi's story gives impressionable children, who face similar confusion and dilemmas, relief and courage in the discovery that they are not the only ones who feel isolated and helpless.

Excerpted from an article in *Tobu kyoshitsu* Issue 44, Fall 1992



ステゴザウルス

Sutegozaurusu

Stegosaurus

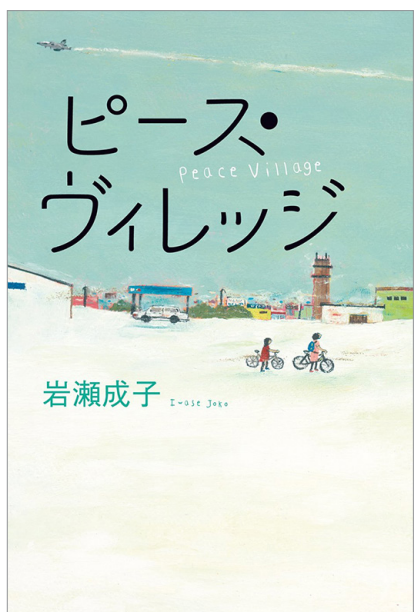
Magazine House | 1994 | 255 pp | ISBN 4-8387-0513-1

Machiko, age 17, is in high school. Her parents are divorced and she lives in the city with her father. Her sister Aoko, about 11, has gone with her mother to live with a farmer in a country village.

One day, Machiko takes her pet cat to a vet, who tries to molest the girl. Machiko fends him off with her fists and consequently decides to take up muscle training. Meanwhile, Aoko sends her elder sisters letters full of descriptions of life in the village. Among other things, the village is a temporary home to children from urban families who have been sent to experience rural life. Local children call the outsiders "stegosaurus." It makes Aoko think of the picture of a stegosaurus in the book *Dinosaur Time* illustrated by Arnold Lobel, and the nickname thrills her.

Aoko and her city friends run away from the village together and begin a community deep in the mountains in a hideaway they call the House of the Stegosaurus. When the entire village goes looking for the children, Machiko joins the search. She thinks to herself, "If I can somehow make it to the House of the Stegosaurus, I believe it will help get rid of the burning pain in my heart. Maybe I'm just like the children, looking for healing in that house."

Machiko has hardened her heart and armed her body. She rebels against the selfishness of adults and hurts herself. Coming up against the sensibilities of her 11-year-old sister, however, she ends up conspiring with her as a way to heal the "burning pain" in her own heart. 17-year-old Machiko, on the verge of adulthood, is confronted by the obstinance of children filled with inexhaustible reckless energy and discovers how deeply it resonates with her.



ピース・ヴィレッジ

Pisu birejji

Peace Village

Kaiseisha | 2011 | 194 pp |
ISBN 978-4-036430901

Kaede's town in Japan is home to a U.S. military base, which even now sends soldiers to war. Kaede is in sixth grade, and her father runs a bar catering to the soldiers. Kaede learns that Kiri, a friend a year older than her, has been giving soldiers anti-war pamphlets that Kiri's father wrote in English. Perhaps because of this, Kaede finds that Kiri avoids her. As the story progresses, Kaede and Kiri interact with people at the Peace Village, a beloved spot in town, and learn stories of their neighbors that alert them to complex realities.



ぼくが 弟に したこと

Boku ga ototo ni shita koto

I Shouldn't Have Done That!

illus. Syuhei Hasegawa | Rironsha | 2015 | 160 pp |
ISBN 978-4-652201312

This book explores the feelings of children scarred by violence that grown-ups do not see. The author, a pioneer in Japan's YA genre with many works to her credit, portrays a sixth-grade boy who lives with his mother and his brother, who is four years younger, after a divorce. The main character hits his brother over little things, and remembers how his own father hit him. Observing his friend's family, however, he rethinks how a family should get along. The climax, when he and his brother begin to understand each other, is deeply moving. A masterful look at a family facing up to violence.

☆ [find attached full translation in English](#)



マルの背中

Maru no senaka

Maru's Back

Kodansha | 2016 | 166 pp |
ISBN 978-4-062200639

Since Azumi's parents divorced two years ago, her younger brother Rio has lived with her father, while Azumi lives with her mother in a public apartment. Her mother works at the convenience store and another part-time job, but still struggles to pay their rent. She sometimes asks Azumi, "Shall the two of us die together?" When the man who runs the sweet shop has to be away, he entrusts Azumi with his white cat named Maru, who has a circle shape on his back. Azumi, who thinks often of her brother living apart from her, proves a loving caregiver, and it seems as if Maru may bring happiness to her life.



ともだちのときちゃん

Tomodachi no Toki-chan

My Friend Toki

illus. Makoto Ueda | Froebel-kan | 2017 | 72 pp |
ISBN978-4-577-04574-9

Satsuki, a girl in her second year of elementary school, likes to chat and get things done. Her classmate Toki-chan, on the other hand, often cannot answer questions quickly and takes her time with things. At the request of Toki-chan's mother, Satsuki walks to school with Toki-chan daily and spends lots of time with her. But when Toki-chan moves slowly, Satsuki often grows frustrated, and when Satsuki can't stand to wait anymore, she sometimes goes ahead, thinking to herself, "Surely this isn't mean." At first, Satsuki thinks Toki-chan strange because she can watch a line of ants by the roadside endlessly, and she says things like, "The tree is living, so it's not the same tree it was yesterday." But Satsuki eventually comes to see that because Toki-chan takes her time, she sees and feels things that others cannot. Satsuki's story, which is told in the straightforward words of a seven-year-old, shows how she changes and grows through her friendship with someone who has quite a different personality and way of doing things. The illustrations lend a gentle touch that calms the heart.



地図を広げて
Chizu o hirogete
Spreading Out the Map

Kaiseisha | 2018 | 246 pp | ISBN978-4-03-613180-9

This story of adolescence focuses on the awkwardness of reuniting as a family after four years of living apart and the process of overcoming it.

Twelve-year-old Suzu has been living with her father since he and her mother divorced four years ago. When Suzu's mother suddenly dies, however, Suzu and her father must welcome Kei, Suzu's eight-year-old brother, back into the family after an absence of four years. The story begins with Suzu waiting for her father to bring Kei home. Kei is quiet and polite, but he wants to spend every weekend at their grandmother's on his mother's side. He gets his father to buy him a map of the neighborhood and starts disappearing on his bicycle every day. Worried about him, Suzu follows along. She also begins spending the weekends at their grandmother's. By doing so, she learns that Kei has been visiting the neighborhood they used to live in before their parents divorced, searching for people who might remember him, recording all these places on his map, and looking at photos on his mother's cellphone which their grandmother has kept.

The book's 24 chapters cover the period from mid-May to the end of June. Suzu's memories, which have been awakened by her mother's death and Kei's addition to her family, are inserted throughout, carrying the reader along.

Suzu's father, a newspaper reporter, likes to photograph rivers, and a river runs through the town where they live. The image of characters crossing the top of the dam recurs throughout the tale, symbolizing Suzu's feelings of anxiety and release. Unique supporting characters, such as her father's former classmate Makiko, Suzu's only friend Tsukita, and her mother's high school friend, contribute to Suzu's deepening understanding.

5 Books Sent to the Jurors





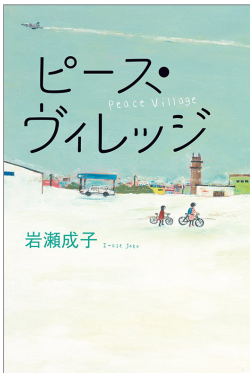
朝はだんだん見えてくる (*Asa wa dandan miete kuru*)

Morning Gradually Appears

illus. Cho, Shinta

Tokyo: Rironsha | 1977 | 255 pp

ISBN 978-4-652-00529-3



ピース・ヴィレッジ (*Pisu birejji*)

Peace Village

Tokyo: Kaiseisha | 2011 | 194 pp

ISBN 978-4-03-643090-1



あたらしい子がきて (*Atarashii ko ga kite*)

A New Kid is Here

illus. Ueji, Naoko

Tokyo: Iwasaki Shoten | 2014 | 128 pp

ISBN 9784265054916



きみは知らないほうがいい (*Kimi wa shiranai ho ga ii*)

Better You Not Know

illus. Hasegawa, Shuhei

Tokyo: Bunken Shuppan | 2014 | 184 pp

ISBN 978-4-580-82232-0



ぼくが弟にしたこと (*Boku ga ototo ni shita koto*)

I Shouldn't Have Done That!

illus. Hasegawa, Shuhei

Tokyo: Rironsha | 2015 | 160 pp

ISBN 978-4-652-20131-2

☆ [Full English translation](#)