



The 2014 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize

Kurodahan Press is pleased to announce the 2014 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize, awarded for translation excellence of a selected Japanese short story into English. The winning translation will be published in the upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology *Speculative Japan Volume 4*, which is scheduled for publication in 2014–15, and the translator given full credit.

1. Eligibility

There are no restrictions whatsoever on translator participation. All translators are encouraged to apply, regardless of whether or not you have worked with us before.

2. Submission

Send your translation to the below address, by regular postal mail or (preferably) E-mail.

Please be sure to read the submission instructions, which cover formatting requirements (for both printouts and electronic files) and provide information on Kurodahan Press standards and other points. Submission instructions are given in the style sheet included in the contest package at:

<http://www.kurodahan.com/mt/e/khpprize/2014prize.pdf>

Submitted translations will not be returned, but the translator will retain all rights to the translation. Kurodahan Press will receive first publication rights to the winning translation, to be arranged under a separate and specific agreement.

No information about any submissions, including the names or contact information for people submitting translations, will be made available to any third party, including the judges, with the exception of the name of the winner (or a pseudonym, if the winner prefers). Translators are of course welcome to tell anyone they wish that they have made a submission.

3. Source material

The story to be translated is

「残されていた文字」 by 井上雅彦 (roughly 2,000 字)

The submission package, including a PDF of the story, style sheet and instructions, is available as a downloadable PDF. The source book is not currently in print, but is available second-hand, including at Amazon Japan:

www.amazon.co.jp/dp/4882934353/kurodahanpres-22

4. Application Deadline

Translations must be received no later than September 30, 2014. A notice confirming receipt will be issued. The results should be announced by the end of the year.

However, the prize may be cancelled, or the deadline extended, if we haven't received at least twenty submissions by the initial deadline.



5. Submission address and contact

Grand Prize / one winner

30,000 yen prize money. At a later time we will invite the winner to publish the story in an upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology (*Speculative Japan Volume 4*) for an additional payment of 30,000 yen, to be covered by a separate contract (first English publication rights; translator keeps all other rights to translation).

Note: Prize payments will be subject to source-tax deductions as required by Japanese law.

Submissions should be sent to:

Kurodahan Press

3-9-10-403 Tenjin

Chuo-ku, Fukuoka

810-0001 Japan

Electronic submissions preferred via our website.

6. Notification

All contest entrants will be informed of the contest results. The winner's name (or a pseudonym if desired) will be posted on the Kurodahan Press website.

7. Judging

All decisions will be final and except in extremely unusual circumstances the reasons for the decision and the specific votes of the jurors will not be revealed. The goal of the contest, simply stated, is to produce an English translation faithful to the original, which can be read and enjoyed by someone with no specialized knowledge of Japan or Japanese.

The winner will be selected by a panel of three jurors:

Seth Jacobowitz

Ginny Tapley Takemori

Nancy Ross



Style Guide for Kurodahan Translation Contest Submissions

v1.3 of June 9, 2014

This document is in two parts. The first part refers to the technical specifications we expect to see in documents submitted to us. The second part covers conventions of usage we prefer to see. As one might expect, the first part is less open to modification than the second part.

Part One: Technical Specifications

Word processing:

Please submit documents in Microsoft Word DOC format if possible. RTF or TXT files are also acceptable, but DOC files are preferred. If you would like to use a file format other than one of these, please contact us in advance.

Document formatting:

Use a common font (such as Times) at 10 or 12 point size.

As much as possible, use only one font at one size throughout your document. See part two for a discussion of special accented characters.

Use italics for emphasis.

Do not start paragraphs with tabs, and do not insert an extra return between paragraphs.

If there is a blank line in the source text, use "***blank line" in the document.

You can use headers and footers if you wish, but do not put important information in headers or footers if it does not also appear somewhere else. If possible (depending on your software), put page numbers and your name in either the header or footer on every page.

This will result in a pretty boring layout, but we do not want typographical games in the submissions... before the submissions are given to the judges, all formatting (font, font size, etc.) will be made uniform (italics will of course be preserved), and legible. Everyone will be using the same formatting, and judges will have to judge you on the merits of your translation, not your skill as a book designer.

Document layout:

On the first page of your document, include the following information in the following order. Please put

(1) Your name. (This line can also include the translator's assertion of copyright.) You may of course specify a pseudonym for public release if you prefer, but please make it very clear which is which.

(2) Your contact information (current mailing address, telephone number and email). This information will be kept confidential from everyone except KHP administrative personnel and Japanese tax authorities. Specifically, it will not be released to other contestants, judges or the general public. It is required for Japanese tax purposes, however.

File name conventions:

Please give the file your own name, without spaces and using only letters and numerals. If your name is Fred Smith, for example, name your file something like FredSmith.doc. Please add the correct extension for the file type if you are using a Macintosh, UNIX or other non-Windows system.



In general:

Avoid fancy formatting of all types. The contest judges your translation and writing abilities, not your artistic skills.

Make your document plain and simple. It may not be as attractive as you might like, but it will keep problems and file sizes to a minimum.

Part Two: Style Conventions

For the sake of convenience and to aid in mutual understanding, Kurodahan Press turns to the Chicago Manual of Style to answer questions as they arise. We will not always follow the Chicago Manual's advice, but we will start there to explain what we prefer to see in print.

For information on handling uniquely Japanese situations, we refer to the style guide of Monumenta Nipponica, which is available as a downloadable PDF from

http://monumenta.cc.sophia.ac.jp/MN_Style.html

Kurodahan Press uses American English as the basis of its own documents and most of its publications. If a translator prefers to use a different set of spelling and usage conventions, we will not object, but we will insist on internal consistency. Punctuation will follow American usage as outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style.

We also use the following general reference works as authorities: Encyclopaedia Britannica, and for U.S. spelling, and Webster's Third New International Dictionary (the big heavy one that was in your school library).

We view matters of style and usage as conventions, not laws, and so we are open to reasoned argument if a translator wishes to do something other than what we initially require. Please be aware that "this is right" and "this is wrong" are not in themselves convincing arguments.

Representing the source language in the translation:

While Kurodahan Press normally romanizes extended vowels with macrons, people submitting translations may have difficulty with these special characters. For that reason, while we welcome the use of macrons or circumflexes over extended vowels, they are not required and will not be considered when judging a submission.

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given in Asian order (for example: Murakami Haruki). Western names are given in Western order (for example: Tom Hanks). The general principle we follow is this: we wish to represent names as they would be represented in the source language culture. We recognize that this gets tricky sometimes, so discussion is possible in special cases. The name of a character in a Japanese novel is not, in our view, a special case.

Recasting passages:

Recasting is often necessary to make an original text read smoothly in English. Our goal is to produce texts that will appeal to general readers: translations should read smoothly, and should not attract attention to themselves in places where their original authors did not intend to attract attention.



Allusions in the source text:

A source text will often refer to a work of art or literature, to a cultural practice, proverb, famous place, or other aspect of common culture that readers of the original can be expected to understand. In cases where English readers could be expected to follow the allusion, the translation should attempt to reproduce it as closely as possible. If the source text refers to something which would be unfamiliar to English readers, the translation should recast the passage to retain the flavor of the original as much as possible. This may involve brief, discreet definitions (something like: "Amaterasu, the sun goddess") or more substantial recasting.

Quoted titles of works in the source language:

If a work makes reference to a publication in the source language, the translator should (a) Romanize the reference if the work is not available in English translation, or (b) replace it with a reference to the most recent published English translation. If the atmosphere conveyed by a title, rather than the specific text being referred to, is most important to the meaning of a passage, the translator might choose to translate the title. This applies to works of fiction intended for general readers – specialist texts, nonfiction, and bibliographies require different treatment.

Unusual dialects

This is a constant problem, and many attempts at dialect can be way off course. You should try to suggest regional accents or bumpkin-ness through a few well-chosen words and phrases, and leave most of the sentences as standard speech.

Many translators have suggested or used many different ways of doing this, but (in our considered opinion) none of them is really successful. For example, "Them people up there" as opposed to "those people" is preferable to "Them people uppa yonder." We want to suggest something of the flavor of the original, but we can't slow readers down, or make them laugh when the scene isn't funny, or (the worst) make them stop and think "that's odd." Using prohibition-era gangster slang for a yakuza speaking Osaka dialect just doesn't work.

Translator notes

If you wish to add notes about your translation you are of course welcome to. However, your translation will be judged on its merits as a finished translation. You will have to come up with appropriate answers for your questions, and write the story to reflect them. **With the exception of design and layout issues, what you write should be ready for publication.**

One last word:

DON'T FORGET TO TRANSLATE THE TITLE, TOO!

Number	Score	Rank
2014.051	69.5	1
2014.026	68	2
2014.054	66	3
2014.058	63.5	4
2014.017	63	5
2014.004	62.5	6
2014.008	62.5	6
2014.023	61	8
2014.059	61	8
2014.022	60	10
2014.049	57	11
2014.002	56.5	12
2014.039	56.5	12
2014.024	56	14
2014.010	55.5	15
2014.065	55	16
2014.020	54.5	17
2014.029	53.5	18
2014.064	53.5	18
2014.066	52.8	20
2014.025	52.5	21
2014.011	52	22
2014.016	50.5	23
2014.040	50.5	23
2014.041	50.5	23
2014.042	50.5	23
2014.050	50	27
2014.057	50	27
2014.038	49.5	29
2014.044	48	30
2014.068	48	30
2014.034	47	32
2014.003	46.5	33
2014.028	46.5	33

Number	Score	Rank
2014.046	46.5	33
2014.048	46.5	33
2014.033	46	37
2014.056	46	37
2014.030	45.5	39
2014.037	45.5	39
2014.062	45.5	39
2014.018	45	42
2014.019	45	42
2014.060	45	42
2014.009	44.5	45
2014.053	44.5	45
2014.067	44.5	45
2014.001	44	48
2014.027	44	48
2014.005	43.5	50
2014.015	43.5	50
2014.032	43.5	50
2014.013	42.5	53
2014.063	42.5	53
2014.012	42	55
2014.014	42	55
2014.055	41.5	57
2014.007	41	58
2014.045	41	58
2014.043	39	60
2014.035	37.5	61
2014.006	36	62
2014.021	36	62
2014.031	36	62
2014.052	36	62
2014.047	35.5	66
2014.036	34.5	67
2014.061	23	68

The Writing Left Behind

Masahiko Inoue

I can no longer build a fire. There are no coals left. Or food. Nami's body gets colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. Glad I didn't burn it. This indelible ink pen still writes. I didn't think I would die in the moun

tains. I didn't think I was that kind of guy. But maybe it's a fitting way to die after all. I want to keep writing right up to the brink. The only issue is whether I'll have enough scraps

of paper. If that's the case, I should probably choose my words more carefully. It's probably meaningless to write all stream of consciousness. No, that's not true. What's the use of dying choosing my words? Dying with a blank piece of white paper would be a luxury to me now. As long as I'm still alive I want to

keep writing. If I were to cut off mid-sentence, it would mean either my paper supply had ended, or my life, one of the two. If the ink ran out I'd use blood. In any case, I can't stop moving the pen. It seems like if I stop moving the pen I'll die. That's how cold I am. I can't fall

asleep. I'm writing to live. I'm living to write. For me, writing is the same as a paleolithic man putting a handprint on the wall of a cave. I'm leaving a trace of myself on the earth. By writing out the contents of my mind I can make peace with Mother Nature as she kills me. It's not like I'm doing it for future humans to discover. I maintain that I'm writing for myself. Since I became an author I haven't written anything just for myself. I've always been thinking of entertaining others. But now I'm writing in earnest just for me. I'm not the least bit interested in having anyone rea

Of all the... Several scraps of paper I wrote on were just blown away in a gust of wind. There goes part of the proof I was alive. So that's how it is. Now I get it. I thought I'd been writing just for myself, but this is how I empty I feel when a part of it disappears. So I wanted someone to read it after all. I realize now that words exist for readers. They can't exist solely for the writer. Even if you're writing just to satisfy yourself, the words are for readers, yourself included from the moment you finish writing. I'm sure I knew that from the

[illegible]

I'm not sure how much more I'll be able to write, but at least I want to finish this before I die. I'm gonna write with the intention of etching out my soul with the tip of this pen. I have a favor to ask the people who find us. Would you take the scraps I wrote earlier and this, and edit it into a book? I've filled up all my paper, but here I still have space to write.

I'm writing on Nami's body now.

Poor Nami. I'm inscribing my last work upon her fair flesh that offered me so much love.

The letters I inscribe here are the last drops of my life force.

I offer them to Nami.

"I found them! Heyyyy! Here they are, here they are."

The search party found the two accident victims the next day, after the sun had already climbed past noon.

"What... What the heck happened here?"

They gasped in shock at the strange state of the two lying frozen in the snow and frost. The man had one hand clamped around several scraps of paper crammed with tiny letters, while his other hand firmly held a pen. Beneath his prone corpse was the woman, stark naked with every inch of her body covered in those same tiny letters.

"They're both dead, huh. ...No, wait. ...Whoa, crazy. The woman is alive!"

The woman's eyelids were moving faintly. Eventually, she slowly opened them. "Call a rescue team! The woman's alive. But why is she covered in writing...?"

The woman covered in letters slowly got up and looked down at the face of the dead man who had tried to protect her.

The face of the man who had given her the last drops of his life force.

She stroked his hair and held him, bringing her lips, to which the color had returned, slowly towards hi

His Final Work

Can't keep the fire going any longer. The last flames have gone out. And there's no food. Nami's body's getting colder and colder. She's stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of the silver paper from the chocolate. Lucky I didn't burn it. The permanent pen still writes. I never thought I'd die in the moun

tains. I never imagined it coming to this. But perhaps, unexpectedly, it's a fitting way to die. I want to write till the very end. The problem is how

much paper is left. And if there are enough scraps, should I choose my words as I'm writing? Is this stream-of-consciousness scribbling I'm doing now meaningless? No, it isn't. What happens if I end up snuffing it while I'm thinking of the right words? The way I feel now, I can't afford to leave behind paper with nothing written on it. While I'm alive I'll keep on wri

ting. If I'm cut off before I finish, will it be for lack of paper or lack of life? I'm prepared to use blood when there's no more ink. Anyway, I won't stop moving my pen across the page. I feel like I'll die if I stop it moving. That's how cold it is. It makes me sleepy. I mustn't sl

eep. I'm writing to stay alive. And I'll live to write. For me, putting words on paper is the same thing as pressing palm prints on a cave wall for some prehistoric man. It's leaving my mark on the planet. I'm coming to terms with Nature, my killer, by recording everything I feel as I feel it. It's not about having my words discovered by future generations—I'm simply writing for myself. I haven't once produced a sentence just for me ever since I became an author. I've always thought about keeping the reader happy. But now I'm writing entirely for myself. It really doesn't matter if anyone reads

it or not. Just then a sudden gust blew away some of my scraps. Part of the proof that I existed. So that's how it is. I understand now. I thought that I was writing these sentences only for myself. But a few of my scraps vanish in the wind and I feel so desolate. It turns out I really was hoping someone would read them afterwards. This has taught me that words exist for readers—they cannot exist for writers alone. No matter how much self-satisfaction I get from writing, sentences are for readers, and that includes me at the moment I set them down. I must have known that

really all along. I got a kick out of entertaining my readers when I was an author. I preferred writing tightly-crafted short stories to novels. I liked to imagine the look of shock on readers' faces at an unexpected final twist. It would be amazing to complete that kind of story before I die. But it's too late. Pointless thinking of it only on the last scrap. I can't write any smaller. Oh, Nami. You loved my stories better than anyone. I'll fill the rest of this paper with my favourite letters. Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how much I'll be able to write, but I want to complete this story before I die. With the tip of this pen, I'm planning to carve my soul. I'd like to ask a favour of the people who find us. Can you take the scraps of paper I wrote on earlier, put them together with this, and get it published in a book? I've filled up all of the paper, but there's still space to write here.

I'm writing on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. That white flesh, which gave me love until the end, has become the page for my last work. The words I will inscribe now are my final drops of life.
I offer those words to Nami.

* * *

“I’ve found them! Hey, over here! Over here!”

The search party discovered the lost couple the next day, when the sun was already high in the sky.

“What the... What’s been happening here?”

They cried out in astonishment at the bizarre way the two were found, lying in the middle of closely-packed frozen snow and frost.

The man was clutching several scraps of paper covered with tiny words in one hand, and holding a pen firmly in the other. He was lying on the woman, who was completely naked and whose whole body was also entirely covered with tiny words.

“They’re both dead... No, wait... I don’t believe it. The woman’s alive!”

The woman’s eyelids were faintly moving. Finally, they slowly opened.

“Call the medical team! The woman’s alive. But I don’t understand. How can she...?”

The woman, her whole body covered in letters, haltingly got to her feet and looked down at the face of the man who’d died trying to protect her.

The face of the man who’d squeezed out all of his drops of life.

The woman stroked the man’s hair and put her arms around him before moving her lips, once again full of colour, slowly towards the man’s li

The Words Left Behind
by
Inoue Masahiko

There's no way to keep the bonfire going. The embers have completely burned out. No rations left. Nami's body is gradually going cold. She stopped breathing a while ago. I now write these sentences on the back of the gold-foil paper of chocolate bars. Glad I didn't burn them. This weatherproof pen can still write. Dying in the mountains is the one thing I didn't

think of. Never thought I was the kind of guy to die like this, but maybe it really is the most fitting way for me to go. I want to keep writing until the point of death. The problem is paper. Do I have

enough scraps? And if I do, how do I choose what words to write? There's no reason for me to go on like this just writing whatever pops into my head. No, definitely not. What would happen if I died in the middle of picking over a word? Dying and leaving behind a blank piece of paper with nothing written down is a luxury I don't have. In the time I have left to live, writing

is what I want to keep doing. If I have more to write but my sentence gets cut off, I guess that means one of two things: either my paper ran out or my life did. Once the ink runs out, I will use my blood. Anyway I must not stop the flow of this pen. Once I put it down, I'm as good as dead. It's just so damn cold. I'm cold and sleepy. Sleep

is what I won't do. I will write to live. Gonna live to write. For me, writing is just like primitive man leaving his palm print on cave walls. It's like scratching the earth with your fingernails. Nature is going to kill me, but here I am working out a deal with her by writing down what feelings flow through me. It's not that I'm doing it to have people later discover my work. I'm writing strictly for myself. Ever since I become a novelist, I have never written sentences like this, just for me. I once had this idea that you write to make people happy, but now I write for myself and that's all. Me wishing I'd like to have someone one day read this has

no meaning. A gust of wind just came and all those sheets of paper with the words I wrote were blown away. Part of the proof that I had lived. Was that what those scraps were? Now I see. I had been thinking I wrote these sentences for my own sake, but after the writing vanished I have this empty feeling. Part of me did want to have someone later read these sentences. The wind taught me that these things called letters and words exist only for someone to read them. Now I see they cannot exist solely for the person who writes them. No matter how much they made me the writer happy, sentences really exist for a readership, of which the writer is one part. It's a truth I really knew from the start, I

swear I did. When I started working as a novelist what I loved was entertaining my readers. I loved writing short, well-made stories rather than long ones. I loved imagining my readers' faces and the gasps they'd let out, reaching the unexpected end. Wow, nothing could be better to write such a story right up to death. But now that

time is gone. How could I think about such things having come to my last sheet of paper! There's no way to write these letters any smaller. Ah, Nami! You were the one who always loved my stories the most. I wish this paper would let me write the words you loved so much.

Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami
Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

Don't know how much more I can write, but don't want to die until after I finish this story. Got to keep writing, got to use the tip of this pen to carve out a place for my soul. There's one thing I ask of the people who find our bodies for us. Could I ask you to gather up the scraps I have written, collect them into the story, and get it published? I've used up all of the paper I had, but I still have space to write with what I have here.

Now I write what I write on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. On your pale flesh, you who gave me all of your love until the end, I now record my final work. The final words I record are the last drops of my life force. To thee, Nami, these words I dedicate.

* * *

“We found them! Hey! Over here! They’re here!”

It was sometime the next day, with the sun high overhead, when the search party found the two survivors.

“What the hell...is this? What happened?”

Cries of astonishment issued forth from the search party members at the strange sight of the two people stretched out under the frost and hard layers of ice.

One of the man's hands clutched a number of sheets of scrap paper onto which had been scrawled countless small letters; in the other, a pen was tightly held. A woman's body was underneath the man's face-down one. Hers was naked for some reason. It had been completely inscribed with the tiny letters like those on the scraps. No flesh went unmarked.

“They both are dead.”

“...No, wait a minute.”

“...Amazing. The woman is still alive!”

The eyelids of the woman had slightly twitched. In time, she slowly opened her eyes.

“Call a medic!”

“The woman’s alive!

“How she could do it in her condition...”

The woman, whose whole body had been used for writing, gradually got up. She then looked down on the face of the man who had died trying somehow to protect her.

The face of this man who had squeezed out every drop of his life for her.

The woman picked up his body and brushed some of his hair with her hand, and then with her lips, which had regained their color, softly now to the lips of the man she brought them cl

The Letters Left Behind

I can't keep the fire going any longer. The embers are dead. There isn't any food, either. And Nami's body is slowly growing cold. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This waterproof pen can still write. I never thought I'd die on a moun

tain. I didn't think I was the type. Actually, maybe this kind of death suits me. I want to keep writing until the moment I die. The only problem is whether there are enough scra

ps of paper left. So should I be choosing my words more carefully? Is it meaningless for me to just write down my thoughts like this? No, no way. What if I died while I was carefully choosing words? I don't have the luxury of dying and leaving behind a blank white sheet anymore. As long as I'm living, I want to keep wri

ting. If my words get cut off before it's finished, it means either the paper or my life has run out. I'll even use blood, if I run out of ink. Either way, I can't stop moving my pen. I feel like I'll die, if I do. I'm *that* cold. Cold and tired. I can't let myself fall as

leep. I'll write to stay alive. And I'll stay alive to write. Writing, for me, is like handprints on cave walls were, for primitive people. I'm leaving my mark on the earth. By writing as my mind dictates, I'm forming a bond with the very nature that's killing me. It doesn't matter if humans discover it someday. I'm writing completely for myself. Since becoming a novelist, I haven't once written something just for myself. I've always been thinking of entertaining others. But now I'm writing only for myself. I don't care at all whether

Oh, hell! Some scraps of paper I'd written on were just blown away in a sudden gust of wind. A portion of the proof of my existence. Oh, is that it? Now I understand. I thought I'd been writing this for myself. But I feel such emptiness when part of it disappears. I guess I really did want someone to read this. Now I understand—letters exist for the sake of the reader. They can't exist only for the writer. Writing, even if it was written for self-satisfaction, exists for whoever reads it afterward – the writer himself included.

I probably knew that fro

m the start. In my life as a novelist, I liked entertaining my readers. Rather than writing long stories, I liked writing short, well-done ones. I liked imagining my readers' looks of surprise at the unexpected finale. If only I could write that sort of story until the moment I die. But it's too late. How can I even think of that, when I'm on my last scrap? I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were the one who enjoyed my novels the most. In the space left on this paper I'll write the letters I loved the most. Nami Na

I don't know how far I'll get, but I want to finish this piece before I die. I'm going to write as though I were inscribing my very soul with the tip of this pen. I have a request for whoever finds us. Would you please compile this work into a book, along with the other scraps? Although I've already used up all of the paper, there is still some space here to write.

I'm writing this on Nami's body now.

Poor Nami. On this white flesh, which loved me until the very end, I'll record my final piece. These letters are my last drops of life.

I give these letters to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey! Over here, over here!"

The search party found the victims the next day, after the sun had already climbed high in the sky.

"This is...what in the world happened?"

They raised their voices in surprise at the unusual sight of the two figures lying in the frozen-solid snow and frost.

In one fist, the man clutched several scraps of paper covered in tiny letters, and he gripped a pen tightly in the other. He was lying face down on top of the woman, who was completely naked and also covered in tiny letters.

“They’re both dead...No, wait...No way. The woman’s still alive!”

The woman’s eyelids fluttered slightly. Then finally, she slowly opened them.

“Call the rescue squad! The woman’s alive. But in these conditions, how...?”

The woman, her body covered completely in letters, slowly got up and looked down at the face of the man who had died protecting her.

The face of the man who had wrung out his last drops of life.

The woman held the man in her arms to stroke his hair, and brought her lips, which had regained color, t

A Legacy of Letters
by Masahiko Inoue

I can't make a fire anymore. The embers have already gone out. And there is no more food. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She is not breathing anymore. I am scribbling my last sentences on the back of a chocolate foil wrapper. I am just glad I didn't burn it. Thankfully the water-resistant ink still works. Dying in the mountains was the last thing I had ever

had ever expected. I was thinking it would be so out of character. But I somehow feel this way of dying might be quite becoming of me. I want to keep writing to my last breath. The problem is how many pieces of paper

paper are left. Should I be more careful in choosing the words I write? Is it meaningless to write everything that comes to my conscious mind? No. What if I die while choosing my words? I can't afford to die leaving blank paper, with nothing written on it. I need to keep writing as long as I am

I am alive. If a sentence finishes halfway, then either I have run out of paper or my life has ended. When the ink runs out, I will use my own blood. I can never stop pushing this pen. If I stop, I will be dead. It's so cold! It's freezing and I am sleepy. I cannot

cannot fall asleep. I used to write to live but now I will live to write. For me, writing is like a primitive man leaving a trace of his palm on a cave wall - to leave my mark on the world. I hope writing everything that pours from of my mind will let me come to terms with nature, nature that is now killing me. I am not leaving these words to be found by later human souls. I am writing only for myself. Ever since I became a novelist, I had never written only for myself. I have always written to amuse my readers. But now I devote myself to writing just for myself. Someone might read these words later but

but hmmm. A sudden gust of wind blows away several pieces of paper I was writing on. Evidence of my existence now lost. Now get it, I fully understand. I thought I was writing these words just for myself, but I feel so vain when even a small part of my writing has disappeared. After all, I want someone to read my sentences someday. Now I can see that words exist for the person who reads them. They cannot exist only for the person who writes them, even if they are written for the writer's self-satisfaction. Words exist for the reader, as well as the writer just as he finishes writing. From the beginning, such a thing must be

must be obvious. As a novelist, I have always enjoyed making my readers happy. I like writing short, well-organized stories rather than long ones. I liked imagining how an unexpected ending surprised my readers. It would be great if I could write such prose until the precipice of my death. But it's too late. I am thinking these things when there is only one piece of paper left. I cannot write smaller letters than these. Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my novels the most. In the margin of this final piece, I will write the letters I like most. NamiNa

I don't know how much more I can write, but I cannot die before I finish my work. I will write, releasing my soul from this writing tip. I have but one request to those who discover us. Could you please edit this work along with the pieces of paper I wrote on earlier

and make a book? I have filled all the paper but there still remains space to write.

Now, I am writing this sentence on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. On her white flesh, which devoted so much love to me until the very end, I inscribe my last work. The letters I write are the last drops of my life, of my existence.

I dedicate these letters, these words, these sentences to Nami.

"There they are! Yoo-Hoo. Here they are, over here."

It was the next day when the sun rose high that a rescue party found the two missing people.

"Look at this.... What on earth has happened here?"

They gasped in surprise at the extraordinary view of the two lying in the hard frozen snow.

The man tightly clenching many pieces of paper covered with small letters in one hand and firmly holding a pen in the other. And the woman, lying under the face-down man, fully naked and covered with small letters from head to toe.

"Both of them seem dead. Wait wait! Amazing. The woman is alive!"

Her eyelids moved slightly. Before long, the woman slowly opened her eyes.

"Call an emergency team! She's alive. But she's in bad condition, how...?"

The woman, with her body covered in letters, picked her self up slowly and looked down at the man who was lying dead as if he was sheltering her.

She looked at the face of the man who had squeezed out the last of his life energy.

The woman held him in her arms smoothing down his hair. Then slowly she moved her lips, now full of color, toward his...

Letters that were left behind

Can't even make a bonfire any more. The fire has burned out. There is no food left either. Nami's body is also steadily going colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this now on the back of a silver paper chocolate wrapper. Glad I didn't burn it. The pen with the water resistant ink still writes. I didn't think I'd die in the mountains. I didn't think that was how it would turn out. But maybe this is an unexpectedly appropriate way to die. I want to continue writing right up until the moment I die. The problem is how much paper is left. Maybe I ought to choose my words before I write them down. Isn't it just meaningless to write down what I'm thinking like this? No, it's not. What happens if I die while I'm choosing my words? Right now, dying and leaving behind blank pieces of paper with nothing written on them sounds like a luxury to me. I want to keep writing while I'm still alive. If the writing stops abruptly mid-sentence it means that either the paper or my life ran out. If the ink runs out, I'll even use blood. In any case I mustn't stop moving the pen. I have the feeling that if I stop moving the pen I'll die. I'm that cold. Cold and sleepy. I can't fall asleep. I write to live. I live to write. I write for the same reasons that cave men left imprints of their palms on cave walls. To leave a mark on the vastness of the earth. By writing down whatever springs to mind I am now making a compromise with the nature that is killing me. It's not to have it discovered by someone afterwards. I'm solely writing for myself. After becoming an author I haven't written in this way, only for myself. I was always thinking about how I could entertain people. But right now, I'm writing only for myself. Whether or not this is read by someone afterwards is completely irrelevant. Just now, some pieces of paper that I had written on were blown away by a sudden gust of wind. A part of the evidence that I have lived were. Is that what they were? And with that, I realized it. I thought I was only writing this for myself. Despite this I'm feeling this empty inside just because a part of what I had written blew away. I guess I really did want someone to read this at some point. I've come to realize that the written word is something that exists for a reader. It can't exist just for the writer. No matter how much you wrote simply for your own satisfaction, that which has been written exists for the readers, which also includes yourself. The truth is, I definitely understood this right from the beginning. As an author I loved to entertain the readers. Rather than long stories I liked to write short, well-crafted stories. I liked to picture the face of the readers as they gasped in astonishment at the unexpected ending of a story. It would be great if I could write such a story right up until the moment when I die. But, it's already too late. Thinking about something like that as I'm writing on my last scrap of paper. Geez. I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were the one who most enjoyed my books. Let me write the letters that were my favorites on the last blank spaces of this paper.

NamiNa I don't know how long I'll be able to write, but I want to at least finish writing this before I die. I plan to pour my soul out of the tip of this pen. I have a request to the person who found us. Could you please edit this together with the scraps of paper I already have written on and make it into a book? I have already used up all the paper, but if I write here is still some space. I am currently writing this on Nami's body. Poor Nami. I'm writing the last thing I'll ever write on this white flesh which loved me right until the end. The letters which I write from now on are the last drops of me. I dedicate these letters to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey! Over here! Over here!" The search party discovered the two missing people the following day when the sun had already climbed up high in the sky.

"This is... What in the world happened here?" Their surprise at the strange state of the two people lying on the frozen snow and ice was apparent in their voices. The man was clutching a bunch of papers overwritten with tiny letters, and in the other hand he was firmly grasping a pen. The woman, lying under the down-facing man, was completely naked and her whole body was completely covered from head to toe in the same tiny letters. "It looks like both of them are dead. No, wait! Well I've never. The woman is still alive!" The woman's eyelids were moving ever so slightly. Before long she opened her eyes completely. "Call the rescue party! The woman is still alive. But, in this condition. How...?" The woman, who was completely covered in writing, slowly raised herself up, and looked down on the dead man who lay over her, as if to protect her. Looked down on the face of the man who had poured out all of his life force. The woman embraced him gently, and with her lips, which had regained their color, slowly approached his.

Translator note:

At two points in the story there appears to be characters missing. The first instance is in the sentence: あとで誰かに読んでもらおうなどとはこれっぽなんということだ。

I assume that これっぽ is supposed to be これっぽっち and translated accordingly.

The second instance is the last sentence of the text, which ends with 近づ I assumed that this was supposed to be 近づいた or 近づく followed by a period and translated accordingly.

The Letters That Remained by Inoue Masahiko

I can't start a fire. There's nothing left to burn. The food is gone, too. Nami's body is quickly getting cold. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing these words on the back of the silver wrapper of a chocolate bar. It's good that it didn't burn. The pen of waterproof ink still writes. I never thought about dying

on the mountain. That was not the plan. But it may be a surprisingly fitting way to die. I want to keep writing until the moment I die. My problem is how many paper scraps

are left? In this case, shouldn't I choose the words and write? Writing down my stream of consciousness is probably meaningless. No, that's not right. What happens if I die before choosing the words? I can't indulge now in thoughts about blank paper and death. While I'm alive, I want to keep

writing. If a sentence is left unfinished before I'm done writing, will I have run out of paper, or will I have died? If I run out of ink, I'll use my blood. At least, the pen won't stop writing. But it's so cold, the pen could stop writing. If it does, I think I will die. I'm cold and tired. I must not

sleep. I will write to live. I will live to write. To me, writing is the same as prehistoric men leaving their palm prints on cave walls. The scratches made by their fingernails remain on Earth. By writing down the flow of my thoughts now, I can make peace with nature that is killing me. This writing is not especially for people of the future to discover. Until the end, I will write for me. After I became a novelist, I did not write only for me. My writings were always for others to enjoy. But now, I am writing only for me. Who will read this

matters little. A sudden gust of wind just blew away several scraps of paper I had written on. A part of the proof that I lived...is gone. Is that so? Now I understand. I thought I was writing these words just for me, but this loss of my writing left a void inside. Perhaps, I did want someone to read those words. I realized that writing exists for the reader and cannot be solely for the writer. No matter how pleased you are with your words, when you write, the words are for the readers, including you. This must truly be understood

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write, but after I write this for you, I want to die. I write to etch my soul with the tip of this pen. To the people who find us, I ask one favor. Would you bring the scraps of paper I had written on earlier and this work

together in a book? I've stuffed so much onto these papers, but there is still some space where I can write.
I'll write here, on Nami's body.

My poor, dear Nami. I will write my final work on the pale flesh that loved me until the end. The letters I write will be the final drops of my life.

I give these letters to you, Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey, they're here! They're here!"
The search team found the victims on the following day after the sun had risen high above.

"This is.... What the...? What happened?" they shouted, astonished by the strange sight of the two lying frozen in the snow and coated with frost.

The man gripped several scraps of paper crammed with tiny letters in one hand and firmly grasped a pen in the other. The woman beneath the man's prone body was completely naked with tiny letters covering every inch of her body.

"They're both dead.... No, wait...I don't believe it! The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids twitched slightly, and her eyes slowly opened.

"Get the medics! The woman's alive. But in this condition, how?"

The woman covered in letters from head to toe slowly awoke and gazed down at the face of the man who tried to protect her but had died.

The drops of her life had all been wrung from the man's face.

The woman stroked the man's hair, embraced him, and slowly drew her lips renewed with color close to the lips of the man....

Words Left Behind

Inoue Masahiko

I can't even add wood to the fire anymore, because the embers have completely died out. There's no food. Nami's body keeps growing colder. She's not breathing anymore. I'm writing this on the back of a foil candy bar wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This waterproof pen's still hanging on, too. I never thought I'd die in the moun

tains. That's the last thing I ever imagined for myself. But perhaps this is actually a fitting way for me to die. I want to keep writing until I'm on the verge of death. The only problem is how much paper I have

left. Maybe that means I should choose my words more carefully. Maybe it's meaningless to just write down everything in a stream of consciousness. No, on second thought, what if I die while I'm trying to choose the perfect words? I can't afford to die right now and leave behind nothing but a piece of blank paper. I want to keep writing for

as long as I'm still alive. Whenever these words stop, it means I've either run out of paper or I've run out of life. And if I run out of ink, I'll just use my own blood. Regardless, I can't stop writing. Because I feel like if I do, I'm going to die. But I'm so cold. Cold and tired. And I can't

sleep. I write to live. And I'm going to live to write. Writing means to me what leaving handprints on the cave walls meant to the cavemen. It's leaving my mark on this earth. Writing everything that's coming to mind right now is my way of coming to terms with Mother Nature, who's slowly killing me. I'm not leaving this behind for someone to discover in the distant future. I'm writing this for myself. Since I became a writer, I never once wrote a sentence solely for my own benefit. It was always to entertain someone else. But right now I am only writing for me. I'm not thinking of who might read thi

I can't believe this. A sudden gust of wind just blew away a bunch of paper scraps I'd written on. A fragment of the proof of my existence. So *that's* what it is. I understand now. I thought I was writing this just for myself. But even though only a small part of my writing is gone, I feel so empty. That must mean I want someone to read this later. It made me realize that words exist for the reader. They can't exist only for the writer. No matter how much you're writing for self-satisfaction, finished sentences are for the readers, yourself included. I must have known this from the very

beginning. As a writer, I've always loved pleasing my readers. I've always preferred short, well-written stories to longer ones. I especially love imagining the look of surprise on my readers' faces when they read an unexpected ending. If only I could write such a story right now, when I'm at Death's door. But it's already too late. I've already come to the last bit of paper, and I can't think of anything. I can't write any

smaller. Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my writing more than anyone. So I'll fill the rest of this paper with my favorite word in the entire world. Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how much longer I can write, but I won't die until I finish this story. I'm going to write as if the ink that pours from this pen is my very soul itself. I have one request for the kind soul who finds us. Please collect these scraps of paper I've written on and publish them as a book. I've run out of paper, but I still have some space to write.

I'm writing this on Nami's body now.

Poor Nami. I'm going to leave my final work upon this white flesh which gave me so much love right up until the end. The words I write now contain the last traces of my life.

And I dedicate these words to Nami.

*

*

*

"I found them! Heeey, over here! Over here!"

It was the following day when the search party found the two victims, the sun already high in the sky.

"Oh my god... What in the world happened here?" Amidst the freezing snow and fog, the men let out a yelp of surprise upon discovering the bizarre state in which the two victims lay.

The man was clutching several scraps of paper, crammed with tiny writing in one hand and grasping a pen in the other. He was face-down, and underneath him was a woman. Every inch of her naked body was covered with that same tiny writing.

"They're both dead, aren't they? ...No, wait. I can't believe it, the woman's still alive!"

Her eyelids twitched slightly. And then she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the medics! She's alive. But how in the world did she ever survive...?"

The woman slowly sat up, her body completely covered in words. The man seemed to have died lying over her protectively, and she looked down at his face.

His face, which was completely devoid of all traces of life.

She pulled the man up and gently stroked his hair. Her lips were now back to their usual pink, and she slowly brought them close to the man's for a ki

“The Words Left Behind,” by Inoue Masahiko

I can't keep the bonfire going anymore. The coals are completely gone now. There's no more food. Nami's body is becoming colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this now on the back of a chocolate tinfoil wrapper. It's a good thing I didn't burn it. My waterproof fountain pen is still working. I didn't think I would die on a mountain like this. I didn't think it was in my nature, but surprisingly, I may be well suited to die this way. I want to continue writing until the last moment before my death. The problem is how much paper I have left. I guess I should choose my words and write them carefully then. It's probably senseless to write down anything that comes to my mind like this. No, that's wrong. If I die while I'm trying to think of a word, that would be senseless. At the moment, it's a luxury for me to even think about dying with leftover paper.

I want to continue writing as long as I'm still alive. When my words stop and I'm no longer able to write, I wonder if it'll be because I ran out of paper or died from using up my remaining strength. If I run out of ink, I will continue writing in blood. Anyway, I can't stop writing. I feel like I might die if I stop moving my hand. That's how cold it is. I'm cold and sleepy. I can't allow myself to sleep. I'm writing so I can live. I'm living so I can write. For me, writing is the same as it is for the cavemen long ago who left their palm marks on the walls of caves. They left their fingernail marks on the Earth. Now I'm writing whatever comes to my mind so that I can come to terms with the forces of nature that are killing me. I'm not doing this so that some future human beings can discover my writing. I'm absolutely writing for myself. Ever since I became a novelist, I haven't done any writing for just myself. I have always pursued writing with the thoughts of entertaining others. But now, I'm completely writing only for myself. I don't care if anyone reads any of this later. Just now, a gust of wind has blown away several pieces of paper with words written on them. There goes a measure of evidence that I existed. That's it. It all makes sense now. I thought I was writing this only for myself. But now that something I've written has disappeared, I feel empty. I guess I did want someone to read this later on after all. Now I realize that words exist so that people can read them. They can't only exist for people to write them. No matter how self-content I am writing just for myself, writing is for both me and the reader. Surely, I have really known this all along. Since I have become a novelist, I have always liked entertaining my readers. I liked writing well thought-out short stories over longer ones. I also liked picturing the shocked faces of my readers with my unsuspecting endings. If I can write my last unsuspecting ending just before my death, that'd be perfect. But, there's no time. I can't think about that now that I'm on my last page. I can't write my words any smaller than I am now. Oh, Nami. You were the one that enjoyed my stories the most. I'll write the word I loved the most on the space that I have left!

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write, but I only want to die after this work is complete. With the tip of my pen, I plan to inscribe my soul in writing. I have a request for the person who finds us. Could you please compile the papers and everything I've written on and put it together into a book for me? I have written all over the paper, but when it comes to this space here, there's still room. Right now, I'm writing this on Nami's body. Poor Nami. I'm now jotting down my last work on her fair body that loved me until the end. The words I jot down from this point on are the last drops of my life. I give those words to Nami.

“I found them! Hey, they’re over here, they’re over here.”

The two man search party found the survivors the next day long after the sun had risen up.

“What is this....What... what happened here?”

The two men let out a surprised gasp when they saw the two bodies of a man and woman lying eerily together among the tightly frozen snow and frost. The man on the ground was holding a pen tightly in one hand, and in the other he held several pieces of paper with tightly spaced words carefully written on them. The woman was completely naked and lay underneath the man’s facedown body similarly covered with tightly spaced words all over her body.

“It looks like the two of them are both dead. No, wait a moment...this is surprising. The woman is alive!”

The woman’s eyelid was just barely moving. Soon, her eyes gradually began to open.

“Quick, call a first aid crew! This woman is alive. In these conditions, I don’t know how it could be but...”

The naked woman with words written all over body began to slowly get up while looking down at the face of the dead man whose body was positioned as if he had died protecting her. She looked at that face – the face of the man who had squeezed the last drops from the remaining moments of his life. She caressed the man’s hair, lifted him up in her arms, and then, with her lips returned to full color, slowly moved them close to the man’s lips.

Last Words

by Inoue Masahiko

So much for starting another fire. The embers are dead. There's no more food. And Nami's body is growing colder by the minute. She's not breathing anymore. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. Glad I didn't burn it. There's still indelible ink in my pen. I never thought I'd die on a moun

tain. Just didn't see myself as the type. Then again, maybe this is a fitting end for me. I'd like to go out writing. The problem is whether I have enough scrap pa

per. So I guess I should choose my words carefully. There's no sense in just scribbling whatever comes to mind like this, right? Wrong. I could die looking for the right word, and what then? I'm not about to leave a blank, white page for posterity. While there's still life in me, I want to keep wri

ting. If I leave off in the middle of a sentence, it means I've either come to the end of my paper or the end of my life. If I run out of ink, it's simple, I'll just switch to blood. Until then I have to keep my pen in motion. I'm afraid if I put it down I'll die. That's how cold it is. I'm so cold and tired. I can't let myself fall asl

eep. I write that I may live. And I live that I may write. I write for the same reason primitive man left handprints on the walls of his cave. To let the world know I was here. In putting these

feelings down on paper, I'm reckoning with Mother Nature before she kills me. I don't expect anyone in the future to find this. I'm just writing it for my own peace of mind. In all the time I spent writing stories, I never once wrote anything just for me. It was always about entertaining other people. Every last word of this, however, is for me. I don't care if anyone ever reads th

Oh, wonderful. There goes a handful of my writing on a gust of wind. A handful of my legacy. Hold on a second. I think I get it now. I was convinced I was writing this just for me. But I didn't know losing such a small part would make me feel so empty. Guess I wanted someone to read this after all. I'm starting to see now that all writing is meant to be read. It's never there just for the writer's sake. Even when you write to amuse yourself, you're still writing for a reader, if only the one inside of you. I must have known this from the begi

nning. As a storyteller I always liked to entertain the reader. I liked to keep my stories short and punchy. And I liked to imagine the surprise on the reader's face when they got to the twist ending. I just wish I could write another story like that before I die. But it's too late. A ridiculous idea to have when I'm on my last piece of paper. I'm already writing as small as I can. Oh, Nami. No one enjoyed my stories more than you. Let me fill the rest of this paper with the word I loved the most. Nami Na

I don't know how far I'll get, but I want to tackle this last story before I die. I'm going to try and channel my heart and soul into this pen. If anyone finds us, I have a favor to ask. Take this story, along with the fragments I wrote earlier, and publish it for me. I've used up all my

paper, but there's more space if I write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. She loved me to the end, her pale skin now my final page. What little life I have left I'm going to devote to the following story.

I dedicate it to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! They're over here!"

The sun was already high the next day when the search party found the missing couple.

"My god... What happened here?"

The state of the couple lying in the hard, frost-furred snow astonished the rescuers.

The man had a fistful of small papers covered in tiny writing in one hand, and a pen gripped tight in the other. Under his crumpled body lay the woman, stark naked and covered head-to-toe with the same tiny letters.

"Both dead, looks like....No, wait....I can't believe this. The woman's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids trembled. Then they slowly came open.

"Get the medical unit over here! She's alive, though I don't see how..."

The woman covered in words sat up gently and looked down into the face of the man who had died sheltering her with his body.

It was the face of a man who had given every last ounce of energy.

She cradled him, stroking his hair, and then slowly brought her lips, which had regained their color, to his lips and

space to write here. I am writing this on Nami's body. Poor Nami. I will leave my final work on that white flesh which devoted itself to me until the very end. The words I am about to write are the last drops of myself. I give these words to Nami.

"Found them! Over here! Over here!" The search party found the lost hikers the next day after the sun had climbed into the sky.

"This... What in the world happened?" They gave cries of surprise at the two strange figures lying in the snow and frost. The man was grasping scraps of paper covered in small writing in one hand and holding tightly onto a pen with the other. He was lying on top of the woman. She was completely naked, and every inch of her body, from head to toe, was covered with small writing.

"They're both dead... No wait. The woman is still alive!"

The woman's eyelids moved slightly, and she eventually opened her eyes.

"Call the paramedics! The woman is alive! But in this condition... why...?"

The woman, with her body covered in writing, rose up slowly and looked down at the face of the man who died covering her, the man who wrought out the last drops of himself. The woman embraced him and held his head, bringing her now warm lips to his and

The writing left behind

I can't even make a bonfire; I've used up all my kindling. There's no food left either. Nami's body is becoming colder and colder, and she's not breathing anymore. I'm writing this on the back of a silver foil chocolate wrapper – good thing I didn't burn it. My waterproof ink pen still has some life left in it. Ahh...I never thought I would end up dying on a mountain. That's not how I would go. Then again, maybe it's a surprisingly fitting way for me to die.

I want to keep writing until I'm at death's door. The only problem is whether I'll have enough scraps of paper left. And if so, then should I choose my words carefully? Just writing my thoughts as they come to mind will probably result in gibberish. No no... what happens if I eventually die while thinking about the right words to use?

Wondering whether I will die and leave behind only blank pieces of paper is a fanciful thought, considering my current situation. I want to keep writing though, for as long as I am breathing.

If my words suddenly stop while trying to write all I can, will it be because I ran out of paper or because my number came up? Well, if there's no more ink left, then I'll use my own blood if I have to. Whatever happens, I can't let the flow of my pen stop. If it does, I feel like it will be the end for me - it's that cold. The cold is making me sleepy, but I can't succumb to it. I will write to keep on living, and I will live so I can write.

To me, the act of writing is the same as primitive man leaving his handprints on cave walls. It's how we leave our own mark on the earth. So jotting down the river of thoughts flowing through my mind now is my way of coming to terms with nature, which will end up killing me. I'm not interested in writing for the sake humanity in the distant future. Up to the very end, I'll be writing for myself.

Since becoming a novelist, I've yet to come across an author who writes for just one reader – themselves. It's always a case of writing for the enjoyment of others. Right now though, I'm completely focused on writing for only me. Whether or not someone else will enjoy reading my words later on is the farthest thing from my mind.

A sudden gust of wind blows away several scraps of paper containing some of my writing; and with that, one proof of my existence is gone in the wind. So, that's how it goes then...now I get it. I thought I was writing this purely for my own benefit, but if even a part of my writing disappears into thin air, I feel like everything is complete lie. So in the end, it seems I really just want my writing to be read by others after I've gone.

Writing is, as I've come to realize, for the purpose of the reader – it cannot exist for the writer alone. No matter how much one may write for self satisfaction, the finished product is a part of yourself that's in fact been written for the reader. And really, I've always known this.

As a novelist, I've enjoyed writing to please my readers, preferring short and well-written stories to long and rambling ones. I also liked to imagine the astonished face of my readers at the unexpected final twist in my novels. The ultimate would be if I

could keep writing such stories until the very end...but alas, it's not to be. What's the point of even thinking about that when I'm down to my last piece of paper.

I can't write any smaller than this...oh, Nami; you were the one who loved my stories the most. So now, let me write the word I love the most on the blank space of this last piece of paper.

Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami

Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami....

I don't know how much I can write, but I just want to finish this work before I die. I'll write like I'm carving my heart and soul into my work with the tip of this pen. I have a favor to ask of the people who will discover us; please compile this work into a book, together with the scraps of paper I've already written on. I've used up all the paper I have, but there's still some space here to write – on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I'm writing my final work on the white flesh of the person who loved me until the end. The words I inscribe now come from the very last drops of life in me. And I dedicate them to Nami.

* * *

“Hey, I’ve found them! Oi, over here, they’re over here!”

It's the next day and the sun is already high in the sky when the search party finds the two victims.

“What the...what happened here, exactly?” They let out a gasp of surprise upon seeing the strange way the two bodies are sprawled out in the frozen snow and frost.

In one hand the man is tightly grasping several pieces of paper completely covered with very small writing, while in the other hand he is firmly holding a pen. The woman, whom he is lying on top of face down, is completely naked, and covering every inch of her body is again tiny-sized writing.

“Ahh, looks like they’re both dead....no, wait...Whoa! The woman – she’s alive!”

Her eyelids faintly flutter, showing signs of life; then after a while, she gently she opens her eyes.

“Call the rescue squad! She’s alive! But, in such a state...why, what happened...?”

The woman, with writing scribbled all over her body, slowly begins to rise. Once awake, she looks down upon the face of the dead man who had tried to shield her with his body; the face of the man who used every last drop of his life for her.

She touches his hair as if to caress it, and then scoops him up in her arms. The color has returned to her lips, which she tenderly brings closer to his.

The Words That Remain

Masahiko Inoue

No more fire. Used up the last of the coal. No food, either. Nami's body is cold to the touch. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing on the back of a chocolate wrapper. Thank God I didn't burn it. This waterproof ink is still going. I never thought I'd die on a moun

taintop. Didn't think that would be the way of things for me. Could be a fitting way to die, though, oddly enough. I aim to keep writing till I'm at death's door. The question is how much scrap pa

per I've got left. Should I choose my words more carefully? Is it nonsense, putting stream of consciousness to paper like this? No. For what if I expired as I pondered my next word? Dying with pages left unfilled is a luxury I don't have. While I still live, I must keep

writing. If this unceasing hand should falter, will it be for the exhaustion of my paper, or my life? If it's the ink that goes, then I'll use my own blood. In any case, I cannot stop the flow. If I put down this pen, I'm dead, I feel it. It's so very cold. It's cold, and I'm tired, but I ca

n't go to sleep. I write, that I may live. I *will* live, that I may write. In so doing, I am like the Neanderthal, affixing his handprint to the wall. Leaving my mark upon this earth. By inscribing my soul in these words, I'm making a deal with Nature, even as it seeks to destroy me. I write not so some future explorer might unearth this, no—I'm determined to write for myself alone. Ever since I became a novelist, not *once* did I write anything for my own sake; always I thought only of what would please others. But now, I can give myself over to writing for *me*. Having someone read this later is the last thi

Bloody hell. Some of my scraps just blew away in a gust. Pieces of the proof of my existence. Oh, but I see! I have it now! I thought I'd been writing these sentences solely for myself. But even a single section of what I've written goes and vanishes, and I feel such an *emptiness*! I did, after all, want someone to read these pages. I realize now: the written word exists for the purpose of its reader. It *cannot* exist only for its writer. Even a sentence written thoroughly out of selfishness is meant for its readers, he who's just composed it among them. I have no

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write, but I cannot die until I finish this piece. I'll write with the conviction that this nib engraves my very soul. I wish for the discovery of our bodies—for the compilation of this work, and my earlier scraps, into a book. I've used up all of my paper, but I have more space to write *here*.

I write this on Nami's body.

My poor Nami. Until the bitter end I've drunk of the love from your white, white skin, and here I inscribe my final work. The words I set down now are the last drops of my existence. I dedicate these words to you.

□ □ □

"I found something! Oi, over here!"

The sun had climbed high in the sky when the search party discovered the two victims the following day.

"What...what the hell happened here?"

Shouts of surprise went up at the strange sight before them. Amidst the snow and ice, two bodies lay frozen solid.

The man clutched a sheaf of papers crowded with narrow writing in one hand and a pen the other. Underneath the man's prostrate form, the same dense, narrow letters covered every nook and cranny of a woman's naked body.

"Both long dead, looks like. Wait, hold on...no way. The girl's alive!"

The woman's eyelids gave a weak flutter. After a moment, she opened her eyes.

"Get the rescue team! She's alive. But how—in this state—"

The woman rose, her body covered with words. She looked down at the face of the dead man—the man who had wrung out every last drop of his life—as if trying to shield herself from the sight.

Smoothing his hair, she lifted the man in an embrace, and with lips now flush with color, slowly lowered her mouth to hi—

What Words Were Left

The embers have died and I am no longer able to make a fire. The food has all gone. Nami is no longer breathing and her body grows colder. I am writing this on the back of a silver chocolate wrapper. I am glad I did not burn it. This pen's ink is waterproof and so it still works. I did not think I would

die on this mountain. I did not think this was my destiny. But maybe this is how I should die. I want to keep writing right up until the end. It is whether the paper will last

or not that is the question. I should choose my words carefully. Writing down my stream of thoughts like this is meaningless. No, wait. What if I die while choosing my words? If I die without writing anything, leaving only blank pages, that is a luxury I cannot afford right now. As long as I am alive, I want to keep

writing. If the sentence stops abruptly while I am writing, it is either because I ran out of paper or ran out of life. If the ink runs out, I will use blood. No matter what, I must not let this pen stop moving. If it does, I feel I will die. It is so cold. So cold that I want to sleep. I must not

sleep. I write to stay alive. Stay alive to write. Writing to me is the same as a caveman punching the print of his fist on the cave wall. I am leaving my mark on this earth by writing what I feel in my heart right now. I am reconciling myself with the very nature that is killing me. It is not so much that it will be discovered later by humankind. I am writing only for me. Being a novelist, I have never written just for me. I have always thought of how to please others with my words. But now I am writing entirely for myself. It is not the same style as when I would get someone else to read thi

I do not believe it. The wind has just blown away some of the pieces of paper on which I was writing. Part of the proof I am alive has gone. So that is how it is to be. Now I understand. I thought I was only writing this for myself. But even though it is only a part that has gone, I feel so empty. I obviously did want someone to read this afterwards. It has reminded me that the written word exists to be read by others. It cannot exist merely to be read by the writer. No matter how much it is for my self-satisfaction, once it is written down, it is a passage for readers, including myself as such. I have really known that from

the beginning. As a novelist, I liked to entertain my readers. I enjoyed writing short, well-composed stories, not long drawn out tales, imagining the readers' faces as the plot took one final unexpected twist. If I could write that kind of story just before I die, it would be perfect. But it is too late. I think of this only now that it is my last piece of paper. I cannot write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami! You were the one who enjoyed my novels the most. I will use the last blank part of this paper to write my most favorite word.

[illegible]

I do not know how much I can write, but I want to finish this work before I die. It is as if I am engraving my soul with this pen nib.

I have a request to the person that finds us. Please collect together the pieces of paper I have written on and, together with this work, edit and publish them. I may have used up all the paper, but I still have space to write here.

I am writing this on the parchment of your skin, Nami.

Poor Nami. You were devoted to me right up until the end and now I will emblazon my final work on your translucent body.

The words I inscribe here are the final essence of my life.

I devote these words to you, Nami.

"I've found them! Hey, over here, here!"

The rescue team discovered the two casualties the next day when the sun had risen high on the horizon.

“What the...? What happened here?”

They gasped, shocked at the bizarre spectacle before them of the couple collapsed in the frozen frost and snow.

The man was gripping pieces of paper covered in painstakingly small writing in one hand and in the other firmly holding a pen.

He was laid on his stomach, with the woman underneath him completely naked, her entire body etched with tiny words.

“They’re both dead. ...No, wait.Incredible! She’s alive!”

The woman's eyelids fluttered faintly. Finally she opened her eyes.

“Call the relief team! She’s alive! But how, in this state...?”

The woman, with her ink-laden body, slowly sat up and gazed at the face of the dead

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man who had protected her, the face of the man who had exhausted all his life essence. She drew him up towards her, stroked his hair, and moved so that her lips, now returned to their natural hue, came close to his li

Words left behind

It's too late to even start a fire. I'm out of kindling, out of food. Nami's corpse grows more frigid by the second. She's no longer breathing. I'm now writing these words on the back of a chocolate wrapper; thank god I didn't burn it. My waterproof ink pen can still write. Never imagined I would die on a moun

tain – didn't think I was the type. Though perhaps this is a surprisingly fitting way to die. I thirst to keep writing up to the very brink of death. The only issue is a matter of how much pa

per is left. That being so, I best choose my words wisely. Maybe it's pointless to go on jotting down my thoughts straight as they come to me... No, no. What would become of things if I just up and croaked in the middle of groping for the right words? Dying only to leave behind blank pages devoid of a single word – well that's simply out of the question at this point. I just want to keep writing for so long as I li

ve. If my words are to be cut short before I'm through with what I have to say, it will likely be because I've either run out of paper or run out of time on this earth. If I should run out of ink, I'll simply turn to using blood. Whatever the case, I absolutely must not halt the flow of this pen – it feels as though I will die right on the spot should I stop. That's how cold I am. Cold and tired. Must. not. fall. a

sleep. I'm writing to go on living; I go on living to write. In my view, writing is no different from a caveman bestowing his palm print upon the wall of a cave. It is leaving one's mark on this earth. In pouring my heart out in writing I come to terms with the nature that is out to kill me. I'm not so much doing this for it to be discovered by mankind to come – I am writing this entirely for my own sake. In all my life since becoming a writer I never wrote exclusively for myself – I had come to always focus on pleasing others. But now I am writing entirely for myself and myself only. That is to say, I couldn't give a damn whether this were ever read by anyone el

se down the road. Pages and pages fraught with words have taken flight in this mad flurry – partial testimony to the fact I have lived... or was that how to put it. Aha... now it all makes sense. I had thought I was only writing this for my own sake, though if even a portion of these written words were to vanish the whole thing takes on this sense of a hollow lie. In the end, I *did* want someone else to read this. I've realized that words exist for the reader; they can't exist solely for the sake of the writer. No matter how much of it be penned in aim of self-fulfillment, the written content is there for the reader – including the self, as author of the finished product. I'm certain that I actually knew this all along, from the very be

ginning. Having become a writer, I enjoyed pleasing the reader. I enjoyed penning a short, well-written story as opposed a long one. I enjoyed picturing the surprised look on the face of the reader in reaction to a twist ending. If only I could finish writing that kind of story just before I die... but it's already too late. How could I think of such a thing now, here on my last scrap of paper? I can't write words any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were the one who most enjoyed my stories. Allow me to fill the remaining blank space of this paper with my favorite word: Nami Na

Though I'm not sure how much further I can write, it is this work only that I wish to finish before my death. I will go on writing in hope of reaching the very core of my soul through the tip of this pen. I have a favor to ask of the person who finds us: could you perhaps, together with the other scraps, edit this work and make it into a book for me? I've already used up all of the paper, but over here there is still some space left to write.

I am now writing this on the body of Nami.

Poor Nami. Upon this fair flesh which until the last hour devoted to me its love, I inscribe my final work. The words to follow are to be the very last drops of my being.

These words I dedicate to Nami.

* * *

“It's them! Hey, over here!”

It was the following day, after the sun had climbed quite high in the sky that the search party discovered the two victims.

“Jesus... what the hell happened here?”

The searchers gasped in astonishment at the queer sight of the two bodies lying frigidly encrusted within the solid frost and snow.

The man was clenching a handful of paper scraps strewn with finely written letters in one hand and firmly grasping a pen with the other. The woman, lying beneath the felled man, was for some reason stark naked, every square inch of her body coated meticulously in fine print.

“Looks like they're both goners... No, wait. Holy... The woman! She's alive!”

The woman's eyelids were quivering ever so slightly. In time her eyes came to slowly open.

“Call in the rescue squad, the woman's still alive! But how on earth did she end up like this...”

Upon slowly coming to a rise, the woman, covered head to toe in writing, braced herself as she gazed down upon the dead man's face.

The face of the man who had wrung out every last drop of his being.

She stroked the man's hair and cradled him within her arms, then with lips which had regained hints of hue, gently eased towards the lips of the ma

Letters Left Behind

I can't even build a fire any more. We've run out of kindling. Food, too. Nami's body is getting cold. She's not breathing now. I'm writing this on the backs of foil chocolate bar wrappers. I'm glad we didn't burn them. My waterproof pen still writes. A mountain's not the place I thought I'd

die. I didn't think I was the type. Still, it may be an oddly fitting way for me to go. I want to keep writing right up until the end. The problem lies in how many scraps of pa

per I have left. Should I choose my words more carefully? Isn't it pointless to write whatever comes into my head like this? ...No. What if I die while I'm choosing what to say? Leaving blank sheets of paper when I go is too much of a luxury for me now. I want to fill up all the time I have left with wri

ting. If the text breaks off in the middle of a thought, it will mean either that I've run out of paper, or that my life ran out on me. If I run out of ink, I'll use blood. No matter what, I can't let my pen stop. It feels as if I'll die if I stop. It's that cold. I'm cold, and I'm sleepy. I mustn't

sleep. I'm writing to live. I'll live so I can write. Writing is to me what leaving handprints on cave walls was to primitive man. It's leaving my own mark on the wide world. Nature is killing me, and right now, by writing down my thoughts as they flow past, I'm coming to terms with that. I'm not writing this in the hopes that humanity will discover it later. I'm writing strictly for myself. I haven't written anything just for myself since I became a novelist. I always thought of what others would enjoy. Now, though, I'm writing for me and me alone. I don't have the slightest intention of ever letting someone else read thi

I can't believe it. That gust of wind took several of the scraps I'd filled and blew them away. Part of the proof that I was alive. ...Ah, is that what it was. ... Now I understand. I thought I was writing these words for my own sake, and yet, now that part of what I've written is gone, just look at how empty I feel. I did want someone to find this and read it later, after all. I realize now that letters exist for the reader. They can't exist solely for their writer. Even if written for sheer self-gratification, the work exists for readers.

—Including me, when I've finished writing it. I must have known that right

from the start. I've lived as a novelist for a long time, and I loved to thrill people. I liked writing short, cleverly built stories better than long ones. I liked to imagine my readers' startled faces when they encountered a surprise ending. I couldn't ask for more than to be able to write a story like that right up until I die. . . .But it's too late. What a thing to think of when I'm on the very last wrapper. I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were always the one who liked my stories best. I'll fill up the rest of this space with the letters I loved most. NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNami
NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNa

I don't know how much of it I'll be able to write, but I want to finish this one work before I die. I'll write as if I'm using the tip of this pen to engrave my soul. If you've found us, I have a request for you. Would you edit this work and publish it, along with the earlier scraps of paper? I filled up all the paper I had, but there's still space for me to write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body.

My poor Nami. I'll write my last work on your white flesh, the flesh which was kind enough to love me to the very end. The letters I'm about to write are the last drops of my life.

I dedicate them to Nami.

“Found them! Heeeeeeey, over here! Here!”

The next day, when the sun was high in the sky, a search party found the two stranded climbers.

“Would you look at that... What the heck happened?” the men exclaimed at the strange sight of the pair, lying in the icy snow and frost.

In one hand, the man clutched several scraps of paper densely covered in writing, while the other was clenched around a pen. He was lying face down over the body of the woman, who was not only stark naked, but completely covered with fine, dense writing.

"They're both dead. . . . No, wait. . . . Well, I'll be. The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids fluttered slightly. At length, slowly, her eyes opened.

“Call the relief party! The woman’s alive. . . .And under these conditions. . . How?”

Clothed from head to toe in letters, the woman raised herself, slowly, looking down into the face of the man who seemed to have died shielding her.

The face of a man who'd wrung out the last drops of his life.

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The woman pulled him into an embrace, stroking his hair. Her lips, now flushed with color again, slowly dipped toward the man's, and

Last Words

There's no more fire. The embers have burned out. There's no more food, either. Nami's body is steadily getting colder. She's already not breathing. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This waterproof pen still writes. I didn't think I would die on a

mountain. That's not how I pictured it. But it might be a surprisingly fitting way to go. I want to write until I'm on the verge of death. The problem is how few

scraps of paper are left. Maybe I should choose my words before I write. Writing this stream of consciousness is meaningless. No, it isn't. What would happen if I up and died while choosing my words? I don't have the luxury to leave behind some blank paper with nothing written on it. I want to continue writing while I'm

alive. If I get cut off mid-sentence, then either the paper or my life has run out. I will even use my blood if the ink runs out. At any rate, I can't stop making this pen move. I think I'll die if this pen stops. It's just that cold. I'm cold and sleepy. I can't

sleep. I write to live. I live to write. To me, writing is identical to cavemen imprinting their hands on their cave walls. It's the same as leaving scratches in the earth. My compromise with nature is to write what flows through me as she kills me. This isn't for someone to discover in the future. I'm absolutely writing for myself. In all these years since I became a novelist, I haven't written anything just for myself. I was always thinking of something to entertain people. But this is nothing but me writing for myself. Having someone read this afterwards would just be some

Oh no. A gust of wind just blew away who knows how many scraps of my writing—evidence that I was alive. Oh, I see. Now I get it. I thought I was writing this only for my sake. But I feel so empty now that a part of my work has disappeared. I actually wanted someone to read these words at some point. I realize that words exist for the sake of their readers. They cannot exist only for the sake of their writer. Written material exists for the readers, including the person who wrote it, no matter how much he thinks it's just for himself. Actually, I'm sure that I knew that

[illegible]

I don't know how much I can write, but I want to write this one last work before I die as though I am pouring my entire soul through the tip of this pen. I have a request for whoever finds us: please edit this work together with the scraps of paper into a book. I used up all of the paper, but I still have room to write here.

I am now writing this on Nami's body.

Oh, poor Nami. I will pen my final work on her white flesh, which she in the end gave to me as a dedication of her love. The words I write now are the last drops of my life. I dedicate these words to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey, over here! They're right here!"

The search party discovered the two victims the next day after the sun was already high in the sky.

"What... What on earth happened here? "

They gasped in surprise at the strangeness of the two people lain in the hard-frozen snow and frost. In one hand, the man was steadfastly grasping a wad of paper scraps, which were tightly packed with tiny letters scribbled all over them, and in the other, he was firmly holding onto a pen. The woman lying below his facedown body was completely nude, and as before, small letters were written tightly packed all over her body.

"They're both dead. No, wait... I'll be damned. The woman is still alive! "

The woman's eyelids moved slightly. Before long, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the medical team! The woman is still alive. But why are they like this..."

The woman with words written all over her body slowly stood up, and looked down upon the face of the man who died protecting her.

She gazed at the face of the man who wrung out every last drop of his own life.

She held him in her arms so she could stroke his hair, and as the color came back to her lips, she slowly approached his

Words Left Behind

by Inoue Masahiko

I can't make another fire. The kindling is used up. There's no food. Nami's body is quickly getting cold. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of a foil wrapper from a chocolate bar. Glad I didn't burn it. This waterproof pen can still write. I didn't think that I'd die—

on this mountain. I thought I wasn't that kind of person. But I suppose it's an unexpectedly suitable death. I want to keep writing till I'm right on the verge of death. The problem is, do I—

have that much paper? So I suppose I'll have to choose my words carefully. Perhaps writing in stream of consciousness is meaningless. No, it's not. What if I die in the middle of choosing my words? Dying with blank pages left would be a luxury to me now. I want to keep writing—

as long as I'm still alive. If I'm suddenly forced to stop writing, will it be because I ran out of paper or out of life first? If I ran out of ink, I'd even write this in blood. At any rate, I won't stop my pen. I feel like I'll die if I do. It's that cold. I'm cold and tired. But I can't—

rest. I'm writing to stay alive. I'm staying alive to write. This is just like a caveman leaving a handprint on the wall of a cave. Leaving a trace of myself on the earth. In writing down my stream of thoughts, I have accepted that nature will eventually kill me.

I'm not writing so that humans in the distant future will discover my work. I'm writing for myself till the bitter end. Since I became a novelist, I haven't ever written anything just for myself. It was always for the pleasure of others. But now I'm writing this entirely for myself. What would even be—

the point of someone reading it? After a while, some of the scraps of paper I've written on will just be blown away by this awful wind. This is one piece of proof that I was alive. Was that it? I think I understand now. I thought I was writing this just for myself. But to lose even one part of the things I've written feels so empty. I actually wanted someone to read these words after I'm gone. I was made to believe that words exist for the readers. They can't just exist for the author. No matter how self-satisfied I am with my writing, when I write, the writing is for the reader—including myself. There's no way I didn't know that—

from the start. What I have done as a novelist is please my readers, and I enjoyed that. I liked writing short, well-crafted stories better than long ones. I liked imagining the surprised look on my readers' faces when they read the final twist. If only I could write one of those stories in my last moments. But it's too late. To think of this when I'm down to my last piece of paper! I can't write any smaller. Ah, Nami. You loved my novels best of all. Let me write the word I loved the most on the remaining paper: Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na—

I don't know how much more I can write, but after I finish this piece for you, I want to die. I am going to keep on writing it until the tip of the pen engraves it on my soul. A request to the person who finds us: could you please publish what I wrote on those scraps of paper along

with this as a book? The papers are all crumpled but there's still a little space left where I can write. Now I'm going to write on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I will record my final work on this fair flesh that you offered to me out of love till the very end. These words are the final drops of my life. I consecrate Nami with these words.

“Found them! Hey, over here! Over here!”

When the search party found the two victims, the sun was high in the sky on the following day.

“What on earth happened here?” one of the search party cried out in shock at the strange tableau of the two bodies frozen over in snow and frost.

The man was grasping innumerable scraps of paper covered in tiny handwriting in one hand and clutching a pen in the other. His body lay face down, and beneath him was a woman, who was completely nude and covered from head to toe in the small, dense characters.

“These two are dead—no, wait; I'll be damned, the woman's alive!”

The woman's eyelids twitched, and slowly she opened her eyes.

“Call a med-evac! She's alive! But how?”

The woman, whose body was covered in writing, slowly sat up. She looked down at the face of the dead man who had tried to cover her.

The face of a man whose own life had been squeezed out of him, drop by drop.

The woman moved as if to stroke his hair and draw him close to her; the color returned to her lips, and she drew her lips close to his—

The Words Left Behind

Inoue Masahiko

Can't even start a fire any longer—no more kindling. No food either. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She stopped breathing a while ago. I'm writing this now on the insides of chocolate foil wrappers; glad they didn't burn. The water-resistant ink pen still works. Never thought I'd

die in the mountains—didn't think I'd go out like that. But surprisingly, it might be a fitting way to die after all. I want to keep writing until the end. The problem is how much I have left to write on, in which case I ought to choose my words carefully. Probably no point in stream-of-consciousness writing like this. No, that's not true—what if I died before deciding what to write? To die leaving behind a blank page would be a waste under the circumstances. I want to keep writing as long as I'm

still alive. If this cuts off before I finish it means either I ran out of paper or I ran out of life. If I run out of ink I'll use blood. No matter what, I have to keep the pen moving; I feel like I'll die if I don't. That's how cold it is. It's cold and I'm sleepy. Can't fall

asleep. I write to live; I live to write—writing for me is like making handprints on cave walls was for the cavemen. Like leaving clawmarks in the earth. In writing down what's going through my mind now I'm coming to terms with Nature as it kills me. I'm not really writing this for someone to find later; ultimately, I'm writing for myself. Since becoming a writer this is the first time I've ever done anything like this, writing only for myself. I've always been concerned with entertaining others. But now I'm writing only for myself. I'm not in the least concerned with having someone

read it later. A gust of wind just now blew away some of the scraps I've written on. Part of the proof that I existed. That's right—now I understand: Thought I was writing just for myself, but I feel so empty now that part of what I've written is gone; clearly I wanted someone to read it later after all. It's made me realize that the written word exists for the sake of the reader. It can't exist just for the sake of the writer. Even if the purpose in writing is self-satisfaction, a text exists for the sake of its readers, including the author of the finished product himself. Of course I already knew that

[illegible]

Don't know how far I can get, but I'd like to finish this before I die, writing as if carving my soul into the page with the tip of this pen. I have a favor to ask of those who find us: could you please take this, along with the bits I've already written, and compile them into a book? I may have already used up all the paper, but there's still something here that I can write on.

I'm writing now on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I'm recording my final work on the pale flesh of she who dedicated her love to me till the end. The words I leave behind now are the last drops of my life.

I dedicate those words to Nami.

* * *

"Hey, over here! Over here! I found them."

It was the following day, after the sun had risen high, that the search team discovered the bodies of the two victims.

"Look at this... What the hell happened?!" came the cries of surprise at the strange way in which the two bodies were lying under the frozen-over snow and frost.

In one hand, the man was clutching multiple scraps of paper covered in closely packed, tiny lettering, while his other hand was firmly grasping a pen. The woman lying beneath the prone body of the man was completely naked and also covered, without any spaces, in closely-packed, tiny lettering.

"They're both dead... No, wait! Holy crap! The woman's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids fluttered faintly. Before long, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Get a rescue team up here! I have no idea how, with the state she's in, but the woman's alive!"

As the woman covered in writing slowly got up and moved to cover herself, she looked down at the face of the dead man, the man who had squeezed out the last drops of his own life.

Cradling him, she stroked his hair and brought her lips, which had regained their color, toward his li

Bequeathed Letters

I can not even make a bonfire. The coals are exhausted. The food has run out. Also, Naomi's body is chilling quickly. She has already quit breathing. I am writing this on the back of the lining paper from a box of chocolates. Good thing it was not burned. The insoluble ink pen still writes. I never thought I would die on a mountain.

It never seemed my style. But I suppose it is a fashionable way to perish. I want to carry on writing until the verge of death. The problem is how much paper remains?

That is why I should choose my words with caution. Spewing my consciousness is senseless. Oh *contraire*. What is the point of dying in the midst of word choice? To even think of dying leaving a blank sheet of paper is quite a luxury.

I am desperate to keep writing so long as I live.

In the event of an interruption of the text, whether it was due to an insufficiency of paper, or the author's perishing, will be the big question. Even if ink is exhausted, one can carry on with blood. At any rate, I can not bear to see the pen left idle. When the pen has stopped, I feel as though I shall die. Such is the degree of my somnolent chill. I am Cold and sleepy. I must not sleep.

In order to live, I write. In order to write, I keep living. I would give my life to write. For me writing is the same as primeval man's leaving an impression of his hand on a cave wall. It is one's personal mark in the vast land. As for now, I have come to terms with the spontaneous nature of my death by writing about it. It is not especially important that some population in the future discover my work. To the bitter end I write for my own purposes. But that is not to say I write only for my own purposes. I do also always consider what will please other people. For now, however, I am writing determinedly for myself. Down the road, if someone else finds this and enjoys it that would be great.

Just now a strong gust of wind has blown away how many sheets of paper, how many letters? Some proof of my existence. That is the way it goes. Now I get it. I thought I was writing this for solely my own purpose. But even if just a small portion of the work was cut out, I would still feel this vast emptiness. I guess I really did want somebody to read this composition, after all. It is said that readers give existence to letters. They are not for the sole purpose of granting writers an existence. However much self-satisfaction one receives upon finishing a piece, there can be none without including an audience. Make no mistaking, this is the first time I really understand this.

As a writer I did like pleasing a reader. I prefer short, concise verse over long drawn out prose. Imaging a reader's face at an unexpected ending is particularly enjoyable. If I can write like this on the verge of death, that is exceptional. But it is already too late. How can I think this on my last piece of paper? I can't write anything but short compositions. Oh Naomi. You are the one who I hoped would receive the most enjoyment from my work. It is in the margins of the paper that I beg you to allow me to write my favorite letters. Naomi, Naomi, Naomi, Naomi, Naomi, Naomi. Naomi, Naomi, Naomi, Naomi.

I don't know how far I can write, but I want to die having finished just this work. From the tip of this pen I intend to engrave my soul into this writing. I have a request for whoever

discovers us. Please do not compile the papers along with this work into a book. The papers may be completely smashed together, but right here there is still space to write. I am, as of now, writing this on Naomi's body. Oh how pitiful Naomi is. To the end I give offerings of love unto her body's white flesh, where I record my final story. From now, the recorded letters are the final drops of my life. I offer this up to her.

"I have found them! Hey, over here. Over here."

The search party found the two lost people. The next day the sun was high in the sky.

"What do you think about this? What the heck. What's this here?" Surprised was the voice shouting about the unsightly pair crammed together, frozen and stretched out in the snow and ice. The man clutched a piece of paper cluttered with delicate letters in one hand. And in the other he held firmly onto a pen. A woman was lying under his prostrate body completely naked, and her figure was covered all over with letters closely packed together.

"The two died together, didn't they? Wait just a moment. Surprise! The woman seems to be living!"

The woman's eyelids fluttered faintly. Before long she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call a rescue party! The woman lives. But, in this condition, how can it be?"

Completely covered in letters, the woman slowly lifted herself up, and looks down at the dead man's face. The drops of her soul completely extinguished in his face. She strokes his hair as if to embrace him, and color returning to her lips, slowly draws his lips in close

The Letters That Were Left Behind

By INOUE Masahiko

I can't even light a fire. The embers have gone out. There's no food left either. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing these sentences on the inside of a silver chocolate wrapper. Good job I didn't burn it. Thankfully my waterproof ink pen still writes. I didn't expect to die in the moun

tains. I thought I was made of stronger stuff than that. Then again, it may be a surprisingly fitting way to die. I want to keep writing until I breathe my last. The only problem is the a

mount of paper scraps left. With so few remaining, do I need to choose my words carefully as I write? Is it meaningless to continue writing down whatever comes to mind in this way? Not at all! What would come of my dying whilst choosing my words? I'm not in a position where I can afford to leave behind blank white paper when I die. As long as I'm alive, I want to

keep writing. If my sentences trail off while I'm trying in vain to write everything down, would that be due to the paper—or my life—having run out? If the ink runs out I'll continue writing in blood. Whatever happens, I mustn't put the pen down. If I put it down, I get the feeling it will be the last of me. It's that cold. So cold and sleepy. I must not

sleep. I write to live. And I'll stay alive to write. Writing is to me what placing a palm print on the wall of a cave was to ancient man. It's leaving your mark on the land. By writing down my deepest inner thoughts I'm coming to terms with the natural environment that is killing me. I'm not writing these words for future generations to find them. I'm writing them for myself and myself alone. Ever since I became a novelist I haven't written a single thing just for myself. I've always been thinking about how I can amuse people. But now I do nothing but write solely for myself. The thought of having someone read this afterward or anything doesn't even enter my

What was that? That gust of wind just blew away the slips of paper that I've been writing on. The proof of my life up to now simply blown away. Is that how it is? Now I understand. I thought that I'd been writing for myself alone. But losing even a part of what I've written makes me feel so empty. Now I see that I really wanted this to be read by someone—which brings it home to me that, inherently, letters exist for the reader. They can't possibly exist only for the person who wrote them. No matter how much I do this for self-satisfaction,

everything I write exists for the reader; including myself after I've finished. This is something that I actually under

stood from the beginning. As a novelist all this time I loved to entertain my readers. I preferred to write short well-crafted stories, as opposed to long ones. I loved to picture the surprise on the faces of the readers, taken aback by an unexpected ending. Wouldn't it be great if I could continue writing stories like that right up until the last moment before I die . . . But now it's too late. Even thinking about such a thing now that I've reached the last page . . . *Oh*, I can't write letters any smaller than this. *Ah, Nami*—you were the one who enjoyed my novels the most. I'm going to go ahead and write the letters that I loved the most in the margin of this paper.

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write, but I just want to complete this work before I die; my intention in writing—to engrave my very soul with the tip of this pen. I have a request to those who find us: could you please edit this work together with what I first wrote on the slips of paper to make a book. I've used up all the paper, but here I find more space to write.

I am now writing this on Nami's body.

My poor Nami. I write my final work on the white flesh that devoted its love to me to the last. The letters I will proceed to write are the last drop of life I have in me.

I devote these letters to *Nami*.

* * *

“We found them! Hey, they’re over here—over here!”

It was the following day, after the sun had risen high in the sky, that the search party found the two missing persons.

“What is this . . . What on earth's happened here?”

They raised their voices in shock at the bizarre scene of the two bodies that lay before them, blanketed by a brittle layer of frost and snow.

The man was clutching some slips of paper covered in tiny letters in one hand, while gripping a pen in the other. Beneath the man, who was lying face down, was the woman—who was not only completely naked, but also covered from head to toe with the same tiny tightly-packed letters.

"They're both dead . . . *Ah*, hold on—it can't be—the woman is alive!"

The woman's eyelids were trembling slightly. Before long she slowly opened her eyes.

“Call the relief team! The woman is alive. But, in this state, *how* . . .”

#022

The woman, with letters written all over her body, rose slowly and looked down at the face of the man who lay dead beneath her, his body frozen as if to protect her.

The face of the man who had poured out every last drop of life he had in him.

Holding him in her arms and stroking his hair, the woman slowly brought her lips, now flushed with red again, closer

Last Words

I can't make another fire. The embers are dead. And there's no more food. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She's no longer breathing. I'm writing these words on the back of wrappers from chocolate bars. I'm glad I didn't burn them. The pen still writes with its waterproof ink. I never thought I'd die in the

mountains. I didn't think I was the type. But who knows, it just might be a fitting way for me to die. I'd like to keep writing right to the end. The question is how much

paper do I have left. In which case maybe I should choose my words carefully. Maybe it's pointless to keep writing whatever pops into my head like this. No, it's not pointless. What if I die while in the middle of choosing my words? I can't afford to die and leave blank paper. I want to keep writing as long as I'm

alive. If my writing ends in mid-sentence, it probably means that I either ran out of paper or I ran out of time. If I run out of ink, I can just use blood. Either way, I have to keep writing. I have a feeling that if I stop writing I'll die. That's how cold I am. I'm cold and sleepy. I have to stay

awake. I'm writing to stay alive. I'll stay alive to write. For me, writing is now akin to primitive man leaving his handprint on the wall of a cave. I'm leaving claw marks on the earth. I'm coming to terms with nature, which is killing me, by writing down my thoughts. I'm not doing it in the hopes that mankind will find it one day. I'm doing it purely for myself. Since becoming a novelist, I've never written anything just for myself. I've always thought first and foremost about entertaining people. But now I'm writing purely for myself. I have absolutely no expectations of someone reading

I can't believe it. The wind just blew away some of the scraps of paper I had written on. A part of the testament to my life just blew away. Wait, I just realized something. I thought I was writing purely for myself. But losing even a portion of my writing gives me a considerable feeling of emptiness. It means I want someone to read this one day. This has made me realize that written words exist for the reader. They cannot exist only for the writer. No matter how much a person writes for their own satisfaction, the end product is ultimately for the reader, including the person who did the writing. I had to have known this from

[illegible]

I don't know how far I can get, but I want to finish writing this story before I die. I plan to write as if I'm carving my soul with the tip of this pen. I have a favor to ask of the people who find us. Could you please edit and publish this story along with the scraps of paper I wrote earlier? There's no more space to write on the paper, but there's still space to write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I'm recording my last work on the white flesh of the woman who loved me until the end. The words I am about to write are the last drops of my life.

I dedicate these words to Nami.

"I found them! Hey! Over here. Over here."

It was the following day that the search party found the missing couple, with the sun high in the sky.

“What in the world happened here?”

They raised their voices in surprise at the odd spectacle of the two as they lay in the frozen snow and frost.

The man was clenching in one hand several scraps of paper, each jam-packed with small writing, and holding a pen firmly in the other hand. The woman, with the man face down on top of her, was completely naked. Every inch of her body was also covered in small writing.

“It looks like they’re both dead. Wait! I can’t believe it! The woman’s alive!”

The woman's eyelids are moving slightly. After a short time, she slowly opened her eyes.

“Call the medic! The woman’s alive. But how in the world did she end up like this?”

The woman, her entire body covered in writing, slowly got up and looked down on the face of the man who died as if protecting her. The face of the man who squeezed out

every drop of his own life.

The woman took the man in her arms, caressing his hair. With the color returning to her lips, she slowly moved them towards those of the

The Words That Remain

It's too late to make another fire. There's nothing left to light it with. There's no more food, either. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She's not breathing anymore. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. My waterproof pen still has ink. I never thought I'd die in the

mountains. I didn't think it was my style. But maybe this way of dying fits me better than I realized. I want to keep on writing to the brink of death. The only question is how much paper I

have left. I guess I should choose my words carefully. I wonder if there's even any meaning in writing whatever comes to me like this. Wait, no. What if I die while I'm choosing my words. This isn't the time for me to be leaving behind a blank white sheet of paper while I die. For as long as I'm alive, I want to keep

writing. If the words end before I'm done, it will either be because I ran out of paper or I ran out of life. If I run out of ink, I'll just use blood. I just can't stop moving the pen. I have a feeling that, if the pen stops, I'll die. It's so cold. It's cold and I'm sleepy. I can't fall

asleep. I'll write to live. I'll live so I can write. Writing to me is the same as making handprints on the wall to the cavemen. It's leaving the scratch of my nails in the earth. Writing this stream of consciousness is my way of striking a compromise with nature as she kills me now. It's not important whether other people find it someday. I'm only writing it for myself. I've never written just for myself since I became an author. I was always thinking of how to please other people. But now I'm writing desperately for myself alone. I couldn't care less whether anyone

How ridiculous. A gust of wind took several of the sheets I'd been writing on. Part of the proof I was alive. That's it. Now I understand. I thought I was writing this only for myself. Yet even losing part of what I've written makes me feel so hollow. I did want someone to read this later. I've been forced to see that words exist for readers. They can't exist just for the writer. No matter how self-indulgent they are, words are always written for a reader, even if it's yourself once you've written them. The truth is I must have known that all

along. I wrote stories because I liked to please readers. I liked to write short, polished stories better than to write long stories. I liked to imagine my readers' faces as they gasped at the twist ending. If only I could keep writing stories like that to the brink of death. But it's too late. How can I think of that when this is the only sheet left. I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were the one who found the greatest pleasure in my stories. All the space left on this sheet I devote to the word I loved the most.

NAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMIN
AMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINAMINA

I don't know how much further I can go, but I want to finish this work before I die. With this nib, I want to carve my soul into it. I have a request for those who find us. Can you edit this work and publish it as a book? Please include the paper scraps I wrote on previously. Now I've filled up all the paper, but I still have space to write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body.

My poor Nami. On this white body of the one who gave me her love to the end, I write my last work. The words I shall write are my final drops of life.

These words are for Nami.

"I found them! Hey, over here, over here!"

The search party found the two victims the next day, when the sun was already high in the sky.

"What—holy smokes, what happened here?"

They raised their voices in surprise at the bizarre sight of the two, who were lying in snow and frost frozen stiff.

The man had a bunch of scraps of paper, filled all over with tiny writing, clutched tightly in one hand, and a pen grasped fast in the other. Underneath the man, who was lying face down, the woman was stark naked, and her body was covered all over, head to toe, with that tiny writing.

"They're both dead.—Hey, wait... This is something. The woman is alive!"

The woman's eyelids were moving slightly. Eventually, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue squad! The woman's alive. But how is it possible..."

The woman covered in words slowly rose and looked down at the face of the man who had died as if to shield her.

The face of the man who had wrung out every drop of his life.

The woman scooped him up, so as to caress his hair, and slowly brought her lips, which had regained their color, towards the

Epistles

by Masahiko Inoue

I can no longer make fire. The embers have faded. The food is all gone. Nami's body grows colder. She has long since ceased breathing. I record this on the inside of a foil chocolate wrapper which, thank God, I did not spend in the fire. And this water-resistant pen can still write. Truly, I Never thought I would be the type to die on a moun

tainside. But, then again perhaps this is a rather fitting end for me. I intend to continue writing like this, right up to death's precipice. The only problem is, how many scraps of pa

per do I have left? Should I not choose my words carefully, limited as they are? Is it not pointless to write in this stream of conscious manner? No, it is not pointless. For what if I were to die while trying to arrive at just the right words? Dying and leaving behind an unblemished sheet of white paper is a luxury I can scarce afford. I shall continue writing, whi

le I yet live. If I am cut off before finishing, will it be because my paper has run out, or because my life has? I suppose I'll use blood if I run out of ink. In the meantime, my pen must not cease, for I feel as if I shall die if it does. It is so very cold. So cold I feel drowsy. Yet I must

not sleep. I write for my very life. I shall prolong my life that I may write. I write for the very same reason cavemen left handprints on cave walls. I shall leave claw marks in the earth with my fingernails. Even as they occur I record my waking thoughts. And in so doing I extend a prayer to these elements that will soon claim my life. I do not care if anyone ever finds it for that was never the point. This I do for myself alone. I have not written anything for myself entirely since becoming a novelist—having always considered writing a means of entertaining others. And yet now I write for none other but myself. Whether someone reads this later or not, is of no conse

Goddamit! A gust of wind just blew away several strips of the paper I had written on. Some small evidence of my existence... I see. I was convinced I wrote only for

myself, but see now how empty I am that part of my testament is lost. I have yearned for an audience all along. I am confronted now with the truth—words exist for those who would read them. They are not suited to being only what their erstwhile makers would have them be. No matter how self-indulgent the act of writing is, the text itself belongs to the reader. If I were to pause now and reread what I have written, I too would become its reader and, as only a reader can, I would become author of its meaning. Surely I must have known

[illegible]

I do not know how much more I can write, but I would finish this last piece before I die. I shall write as if transferring my soul through the tip of this pen. I do have a request for whoever finds us here. Could you compile this piece into a book, together with the scraps of paper upon which I have written? I have used up all of the paper scraps, but I have the space to write here.

I am now writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. Loving to the end. On your white flesh I record my final story. The words I shall write hereafter are the last drops of my life. I give them unto you.

“I found them! Hey! They’re here! They’re right over here!” The search and rescue team discovered the two missing people the following day, when the sun was high in the sky.

“What on Earth happened?”

Their voices rang out in surprise at the strange sight of the two of them lying frozen, encased in ice and frost.

In one hand the man clutches a handful of paper strips covered completely in finely-printed writing. A pen rests firmly in the grip of the other.

The woman beneath his prone body is, of all things, naked, every inch covered likewise in the very same avalanche of finely-printed text.

“They’re both dead. Wait! Hold on... My God! This woman’s alive!”

Her eyelids are fluttering. A few moments pass and she slowly opens her eyes.

“Call the paramedics! The woman is still alive, though in this condition, I don’t know how...”

The woman with writing all over her body slowly rises and looks down at the man who died protecting her.

She caresses the face of the man, this man who gave his last breath in sacrifice to her.

She smooths his hair, embracing him. With renewed color in her lips, she slowly brings her mouth to ki

Last Words, by Inoue Masahiko

Starting a fire is impossible, as there's no means to start one with anymore. All of our rations are gone. Nami's body is rapidly losing heat, and she's not even breathing anymore. I'm writing this on the back of some chocolate bar wrappers. Glad I didn't burn them yet. It's surprising that this ink pen, while waterproof, is still usable in this weather. I never expected that I'd be the guy that ends up

dying out in the mountains like this. Or, perhaps this kind of death suits me. Either way, I want to keep writing until the brink of death, until I can write no longer. The only problem is that there aren't many

wrappers left to write on, so maybe I should choose my words more carefully. I seem to be using too much paper writing as a stream of consciousness, writing down these thoughts as they come along. No, perhaps not. What if I were to freeze to death while thinking of how to phrase my next sentence? I can't afford to die leaving any of these wrappers blank. As long as I am alive, I have to keep

on writing. If any of my sentences are left unfinished, it's because there are no more wrappers, or I am dead. If I run out of ink, blood will work. In any case, I have to keep my pen moving. The moment it stops, my body will die along with it. That's how cold it is, and I'm feeling quite sleepy too, but I

can't allow myself to sleep. I will live to write, and write to live. Just like how cavemen left imprints of their fists on the walls of the caves they lived in to leave

theirs, writing is now my only way of leaving my mark here on this earth. Writing this down will help me come to terms with Mother Nature, who is hell-bent on killing me. It's not like I'm hoping for these last words of mine to be found by some advanced civilization in the future. I am writing this for me. When I became a writer, nothing I wrote was simply just for my own amusement, as I cared only about everyone else's entertainment. But now I can finally write for myself. I don't believe that anybody would ever want to

Damn it all! A sudden gust of wind just ripped some of the wrappers out of my hand!

A part of my living testimony! Fine. I am no longer writing this for myself. But I feel empty now because those words are lost forever. I suppose I really do want someone to read this when I'm gone. That gust was a reminder: the written word exists not just for the one who writes, but also for those who read it. No matter how satisfying writing is for me, my stories exist for all of my readers, including myself. I should have

known this from the beginning. As a writer, entertaining my readers comes first.

Rather than writing novels, I've always preferred writing short stories that were perfectly thought out. I loved imagining the shocked faces of my readers as they read my last, unexpected plot twists. If only I could keep writing those stories until my very last moments! But it's too late. How can I, when this is my last piece of paper?

My writing can't get any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my stories the most, didn't you? Let me write my favorite word in the extra spaces on this wrapper.

Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami
Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how much longer I have to live, but I don't want to die until this, my last masterpiece, is finished. I shall write, carving out my entire soul with the tip of this pen. To the kind person who finds us, this is my final request. Along with the other wrappers I have written on, please edit this work and publish it as a book. I have used up all the paper I had on me, but there is still space to write on here. I am writing on Nami's body. Poor Nami. Upon your white flesh, which you devoted to me in love until the very end, I shall inscribe my last work. These last words I write are the final drops of my life.

I dedicate this to my beloved Nami.

* * *

"I found them! They're over here!" When the search team found their bodies the next day, the sun had already risen high in the sky.

"What in the world happened here?" They raised their voices in surprise after coming across the peculiar appearance of the couple lying down together upon the hard frozen snow and frost. The man had small bits of paper full of writing grasped in one hand, while a pen was still held tightly by the other. The woman, lying beneath the face down man, was completely naked, and all over her body, there were sentences written in dense, tiny handwriting, leaving no blank spaces.

"Looks like neither of them made it. No, wait... I don't believe it. This woman is still alive!" The woman's eyelids twitched slightly. Slowly, she opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue team! She's moving! But how is she still alive?"

#028

The woman covered in writing all over her body slowly raised herself up, and looked down upon the lifeless man who died protecting her, at the face of a man who had wrung out the final drops of his life. She embraced him and stroked his hair, and with lips that had regained their lush color, she slowly leaned in closer to the man's lips and

The Writing in the Snow

There is no hope of keeping the fire alive. The ember has finally gone out. There is no food. With each passing moment Nami's body grows colder. She has already ceased to breathe. Now I am writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapping paper. I was right not to have used it for the fire. The waterproof marker pen is still working. Never thought I'd end up dying on a

mountain, a fate so unbecoming of me. But come to think of it, maybe it is a fitting end. I want to continue writing, until my life gives out. Sadly, I have a problem;

I'm running out of paper scraps to write on. Should I choose my words before putting them on paper? But wouldn't that mean that writing what comes to mind, as I had been doing up to now, is meaningless? That cannot be so. What if I take upon myself this added burden, simply to die leaving my remaining scraps unwritten? That is a luxury I just cannot afford in this desperate situation. I want to keep writing

while there is still life left in me. Only when I have exhausted the scraps to write on, or when I have exhausted my life, shall my writings be left unfinished. When I have exhausted my ink, I'll simply use my blood instead. But I must keep my pen moving. Because the moment I stop, I feel it would be the end. For it is so cold. So cold I can barely stay awake. But I know

I must. I must keep writing to live, and live to keep writing. I am writing for the same reason as the cavemen who had left their handprints on their cave walls: in order to leave the imprint of my existence on this green earth. By writing as my thoughts flow, I am coming to terms with the elements, which is killing me. Not so that posterity may someday find what I have written. This is something that I do for myself. Ever since I became a writer, I have never written a single story for myself alone. It was always to entertain the readers. But now, I am writing for no one other than myself. The thought of somebody reading this in the future never occ

Damn! A gust of wind blew away the scraps that I was writing on; these last vestiges of my earthly existence. Of course! Now I understand. All this time I thought that I was writing for myself. But when a part of it was lost, my heart became fraught with emptiness. And that made me realize that I have been writing all along in the hope

that someday, someone may read what I am writing; that writing exists for the sake of the readers, and not for the sake of the writer alone. No matter how much personal pleasure I take in writing, when I am finished, it is meant for my readers as much as it is meant for me. I guess I have known this

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write. But this story I shall see through to the end, before I meet mine. With each stroke of my pen I shall scribble the thread of my very soul. To those who would find us, may I humbly request that you rewrite these words, and those on the paper scraps, and complete it into a book. Now, I have filled in all the blank spaces. No wait; there is still a place to write on.

Now I am writing on Nami's flesh.

Poor Nami. Your pale flesh had provided me with so much love and warmth to the very end. On your flesh, shall I compose my last work. The following words, written with the last remaining drops of my life, shall I dedicate to my beloved Nami.

* * *

“I found them! Hey, they’re over here.”

The search party found the lost couple the following day, when the sun had climbed high in the sky.

“Oh... What happened here?”

Everybody gasped at the extraordinary sight of the couple lying inside a cocoon of solidly frozen snow and frost. The man was holding, in a death grip, a fistful of paper scraps written over with words on one hand and a pen on the other, as his body covered in a protective embrace a woman completely naked, every inch of her skin scribbled with tiny writings.

“They’re both dead... no, wait... By the grace of God, the woman is still alive!”

The woman's eyelids twitched slightly. Slowly, they parted open.

"Call the paramedics! She's still alive. But how... in this condition? Why..."

As the woman, whose entire body had been written over with words, rose to her feet, she looked down at the man who had died protecting her.

She studied his face, now completely drained of life.

As gently as she had stroked his hair so many times in life, the woman lifted his body up into her arms, and slowly, brought her lips, now flushed with life, upon his lips

Remnant Letters
By Inoue Masahiko

Can't build a fire anymore. All the coals have run out. No food, either. Mami's body is steadily getting colder. She's already stopped breathing. Right now I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This indelible ink pen still works. I never thought I'd die in the mountains. It's not what I was planning on. But it might actually be a death that suits me. I want to keep writing until I reach the very brink of death. The only problem is whether I'll have enough paper. Rather than worry about that I should choose my words and write. Is it meaningless to write like this, just in a stream of consciousness? No, it can't be. What if I died while thinking of the right words? The idea of leaving behind any blank paper, without writing anything... as I am now, that would be a luxury. I want to keep writing for as long as I'm still alive. If a sentence breaks off before I'm finished, will it mean my paper has run out, or my life has run out? If I run out of ink then I'll use blood. In any case I can't stop the flow of the pen now. I feel like if the pen stops then I'll die. That's how cold I am. Cold and sleepy. Mustn't sleep. I write to live. I live to write. Writing is to me what leaving a handprint on caves was for early humans. It's leaving behind some trace of myself on the earth. By writing out the flow of my thoughts as I am now I'm also attaching a prayer to this natural landscape. The same landscape that's killing me. It's not really for humans in the distant future to discover. All I'm doing is writing for my own sake. Ever since becoming a novelist I've never written exclusively for myself. I always had other people's enjoyment in mind. But now here I am, passionately writing for me alone. If there's any desire for someone to read it afterwards then it's only How should I put it? Just now a sudden gust blew away several of the scraps of paper I'd written on. They were part of my proof that I have been alive. I guess that's it. I get it now. I thought I was writing this passage just for my own sake. But if even one part of what I've written were lost I'd feel so empty. I suppose I really did want someone to read what I've written. I was taught that writing is something that exists for a reader. It's not created for the benefit of the writer. No matter how much self-satisfaction there is in writing, the finished product will always have a reader, even if it's only the author. I have no doubt I really understood that right from the start. As a novelist I liked making things that readers would enjoy. More so than longer stories, I like short, well-constructed ones. I liked imagining the reader's shocked face as they reacted to a final twist. It would have been great if I had been able to write stories like that right until the moment I died. But it's too late now. Why did I only think of that after I got to my last sheet? I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Mami. You were the one who enjoyed my novels the most. I will fill up the remaining space on this paper with the word I loved the most. Mami Ma

I don't know how much more I can write, but I want to at least finish this piece before I die. I am going to write as if to carve out my very soul with this pen nib. To the person who discovers us, I have a request. Would you collect this piece, along with the other scraps of paper I've written on, and organise them into a book? I've filled up all the paper, but if I do it here I can make some more space.

Now I'm writing on Mami's body.

Poor Mami. I will scribe my final piece on the same pale flesh with which you offered up your love to me. What I write from here on are the very last drops of my life.

I dedicate them to you, Mami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey, over here, over here!"

The following day, the sun had climbed high in the sky when the search party discovered the two victims.

"This... What the hell happened?"

They gave a cry of surprise at the two figures they found frozen solid in snow and frost, laid flat in irregular positions.

The man was clutching scraps of paper completely covered in tiny writing, his other hand still tightly grasping a pen. The woman laid underneath his body was, unbelievably, stark naked, every inch of her body having been written on.

"They're both dead, huh. ...Hey, wait! ...No way! The woman's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids flickered lightly. After some time, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue party! The woman's alive! But...like this...why...?"

The writing-covered woman slowly began to come to her senses, and as she did her gaze fell upon the body of the man who had died covering her.

The face of a man who had fully exhausted every last drop of his life.

She took him in her arms to stroke his hair. The colour was returning to her lips. She brought those lips close to hi

The Words Left Behind

by Inoue Masahiko

I can't make a bonfire. I've already burned everything. There's nothing left to eat. Nami's body is growing steadily colder. She's no longer breathing. I'm writing these words on the back of a silver foil chocolate wrapper. Thank goodness I didn't burn it. I can still write with this waterproof pen. I never thought I would die on a moun

tain. I never imaged my life would end like this, but perhaps this manner of dying suits me. I want to keep writing right up until the final moment. The problem is whe

ther I have enough scraps left to write on. I should choose my words carefully. No – what if I died searching for the right word? Dying while leaving nothing behind but blank white paper is a luxury I can't afford. I want to keep wri

ting while I'm still alive. If I don't finish a sentence, I wonder whether it will be because I ran out of paper or because I ran out of time. I'll use my own blood if I run out of ink. In any case, I can't stop moving my pen. I feel that if my pen stops then my breath will cease as well. I'm so cold. Cold and sleepy. But I can'

t sleep. I'm writing to live. I must stay alive to write. My writing is like the palm prints early humans left on the walls of their caves – it's my own scratching into the face of the earth. By writing down my thoughts I'm able to come to terms with nature, even as it kills me. This isn't for the benefit of whomever may find me in the future. I'm writing for myself and no one else. I've never written anything for just myself since I became a novelist. I was always thinking about how to please other people. The chances are sli

ght anyone will read this at all. The scraps of paper I'm covering with words may be blown away by a sudden gust of wind. These bits of proof that I was alive. That's it! I understand now. I thought I was writing this composition just for me, but I feel empty inside when I image even a part of what I've written being lost. I suppose I really did want someone to come along and read this. After all, words exist for the benefit those who read them; they don't exist solely for the sake of the person who wrote them. No matter how much you enjoyed writing, what you wrote is for your readers, including yourself. It's as if I'm finally understand

ing this for the first time. As a novelist, I liked pleasing my readers. I liked writing short, well-crafted stories better than long stories. I liked imagining the faces of my readers shocked by a surprise ending. I only wish I could have kept writing stories until I died, but it's too late. Oh Nami. You're the one I most wanted to please. Let me fill the remaining space on this paper with the word I love the most. Nami. Nami Nami Nami
 NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNami
 NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNa

I don't know how long I'll be able to write, but I want to finish this before I die. I will carve out my soul from the tip of my pen. To whoever discovers us, I have a request: Please edit this along with the scraps of paper I wrote on before and see that they're published. I've already used up all the paper, but I still have space here.

I'm writing on Nami's body now.

My poor Nami. Upon your white flesh, to which I offered my love until the very end, I now record my final story. The words I now set down are my last drops of life.

Nami, I offer them to you.

"I found them! Hey, come here! They're over here!"

"What in the world...?"

They cried out in surprise when they saw the bizarre state of the two people lying amidst the thickly frozen snow and ice.

The man was gripping a pen tightly in one hand, and the other clutched several scraps of paper covered in tiny, densely written words. The woman under the man's body was completely naked, and like the paper her skin was covered in tiny, densely written words.

"They're both dead..."

"No, wait! The woman is still alive!"

The woman's eyelids fluttered. At long last, she opened her eyes.

"Get the rescue party over here! The woman's alive! But how could she..."

The woman, covered with words, slowly woke and gazed down upon the face of the man who had died trying to shield her. It was the face of a man from whom all the drops of life had been squeezed.

The woman embraced the man, stroking his hair. She brought her warm and living lips slowly down to his, and th

Surviving Words

by: Inoue Masahiko

No more fires. The embers have turned to ash. No more food. Nami's body will grow colder and colder. She has already stopped breathing. I write these words on the back of a tinfoil chocolate wrapper. Glad I didn't burn it. And this waterproof-ink pen can still write. Never thought I'd die

in the mountains. Had imagined death differently. Might be a fitting death all the same. Must keep on writing until the very end. The only problem is whether

I have enough scraps of paper. Shouldn't I be choosing my words more carefully? Isn't it senseless to be free writing? Not on your life. I could die while waiting for the right words to come. To die and leave behind a blank scrap of paper would be out of the question. Must write while there is still

life in me. I suppose that the words would break off in mid-sentence if I ran out of either life or paper. I shall write in blood if the ink runs out. This pen must keep moving at all costs. I have a feeling that I will draw my last breath as the pen draws its last stroke. That's how bitter the cold is. I'm cold and weary. Mustn't

sleep. I write to live. And will live to write. For me writing is the same as primitive man leaving palm prints on the walls of a cave. We both leave our mark upon the earth. Free writing has allowed me to realize that the very act of writing will naturally lead to my demise. I do not write out of a desire to be discovered by near-future generations. I write only for myself. Hadn't written a single word with myself in mind since I became a novelist. Only ever thought of pleasing my readers. But now I write for myself and no one else. Having someone read through this later would be an utter

Hell! A sudden gust of wind just blew away some of the scraps of paper I had written on. Shreds of evidence of my existence. Wait. Thought I was only writing for myself. Yet I feel this empty if even a small piece is lost. Must've wanted someone to read this after all. Can't say that all words are written for the sake of their readers. Some words are written for a readership that includes their author once the work has been completed despite even the most self-gratifying motives at the source of their creation. No denying that

[illegible]

Don't know how much longer I can continue, but I don't want to die until after I have completed this piece. I will write so that the tip of this pen engraves my soul upon

what now remains. I have a request for those who stumble across our bodies. Please collect the scraps of paper, along with this piece, and compile them into a book. I have filled in all of the scraps of paper, but have found some space to write here. I now write on Nami's flesh.

Poor Nami. I leave these last words upon the same pale flesh that gave me love until the very end. May the words that follow serve as the final vestiges of my existence. These words are my gift to you, Nami.

*

*

*

"Hey, I found 'em! Over here, over here."

The sun was high in the sky by the time the search party discovered the bodies the next day.

"Wha ... what the hell happened here?"

Members of the search party cried out in surprise at the sight of the couple lying in the hoar frost and ice-encrusted snow. The man was clutching several scraps of paper scrawled with compactly written words in one hand and a pen in the other. The woman was beneath the man's prostrate body, bare-naked and covered in the inked renderings of tiny text.

"They're dead ... err, wait ... I can't believe it. She's alive!"

The woman's eyelids were twitching. Little by little, her eyes began to open.

"Call the rescue party! The woman is alive. Given the circumstances, though, why..."

The woman with the full-body inscription got up slowly and gazed down at the lifeless body that had died trying to shelter hers.

The face was that of a man who had drained himself of every last drop of life. She held him up in an embrace, and caressed his head as her lips—which had regained their natural color—drew in

The writing left behind

I cannot even start another fire. The firewood's used up, there's no more food, and Nami's body is getting colder. She has already stopped breathing. I'm writing this passage on the back of the foil wrapper of a chocolate bar. Good thing I didn't burn this. The permanent marker still writes.

I never thought I'd die in the mountains. That wouldn't be me. But maybe this way of death would unexpectedly suit me.

I want to keep writing up to the verge of my death. The problem is how many scraps of paper I have left. If that's the case perhaps I should choose my words. It must be meaningless to keep up this stream-of-consciousness writing. No, that's not right. What if I die while I'm mulling over what to put to paper? At this point dying leaving behind a blank piece of white paper would be a luxury for me.

I want to keep writing while I'm still alive. If a sentence goes unfinished during the time these words keep flowing, would it be that I have run out of paper or that I have run out of breath? If the ink runs dry I'll use my blood.

I can't put my pen down at any rate. I've a feeling I'll die if I stop writing. It's that cold. I am cold and drowsy. I must not fall asleep.

I'm writing to stay alive, and I am staying alive to keep writing. Writing to me is like what handprinting on cave walls was to primitive people—to leave one's trace behind in this world.

I'm writing just what I feel right now to make peace with that same nature that is threatening my life, and not for my writing to be discovered by some person in the distant future; I'm simply writing for myself.

As a novelist, I had never written just for myself like this. I had always written with the reader's enjoyment in mind. But now I'm writing just for myself. I don't care who reads this afterwards.

A sudden gust of wind blew away a few of the scraps I had written on. Those were part of the proof of my life. Is that how it has been? Now I know. I thought I was writing this just for myself, but I feel this empty now that part of what I wrote has disappeared.

I do want someone to read this after all. I came to the realization that writing exists for the reader. Writing cannot exist just for the writer. Even when writing for self-satisfaction, the writing is there for the reader that includes the writer who will read it when it is done.

I must have known that all along. As a novelist I liked my readers to enjoy themselves. I liked writing good short stories more than long ones. I liked imagining my readers' faces when an unexpected conclusion takes them by surprise. It would be divine if I was able to write such a story even on the verge of my death. But it's too late. I'm already at my last scrap of paper as I think this. I cannot write any smaller. Oh, Nami. It was you who enjoyed my novels the most. I'll write the words I loved most on the space left on this paper. Nami

Words Left Behind

Inoue Masahiko

I can't keep the fire going. The embers have died. There's no food left. Nami's body is getting colder and colder, too. She stopped breathing. I'm writing now on the reverse side of the silver paper from the chocolate. It's lucky we didn't burn it. The pen with the waterproof ink is still working. I never imagined I'd die in the mount

ains. I didn't think I was the type. But perhaps it's not an unfitting death for me, after all. I'd like to keep writing until I'm on the verge of death. The problem is how

far these scraps of paper will last me. Should I choose my words carefully because of that? Is it foolish just to keep writing as I think? No, I don't think so. What if I died while I was carefully selecting the words to use? It would seem extravagant to me now to die and leave behind blank paper with nothing written on it. I want to keep writing as long as I'm still

alive. If the text cuts off before it's finished, it's probably either because I ran out of paper or because I ran out of time. If I run out of ink, though, I'm ready to write in blood. In any case, I mustn't let the pen stop moving. I have the feeling that I'll die if I let the pen stop moving. That's how cold I am. Cold and sleepy. I mustn't fall

asleep. I write in order to stay alive. I must stay alive in order to write. For me, writing is the same as an early human leaving a hand-print on the wall of a cave. It's a way of scratching your own traces onto the face of the earth. By writing down what's going through my mind at the moment, I am attempting to come to terms with the natural world that is going to kill me. It's not so that I can be discovered by future generations. I'm writing entirely for myself. I haven't written anything that was purely for my own self since I became writer. I'm more used to thinking about how to please others. Now, though, I'm writing for me and me alone. I couldn't care less whether anyone else reads

Damn it. Several of the scraps of paper I already wrote on just got blown away by a sudden gust. One part of the evidence of my having been alive. So, that's how it is, is it? I know now. I thought I was writing this text for myself alone. Yet when just one part of what I've written gets lost, I'm left with such a hollow feeling. It appears that I did want someone to read it later on, after all. Now I realize that written words are there for the sake of the reader. They can't exist only for the sake of the writer. However much you might be writing for your own self-satisfaction, the text is there for the sake of its readers, among whom you, the writer, are included as soon as you've finished writing. In reality I suppose I knew this from

the start. As a writer of fiction, I always liked to please the reader. I preferred writing short, well-turned stories to writing longer ones. I always liked to imagine the surprise on the reader's face at the unexpected ending. If I could write such a story even on the verge of my own death, what a fantastic thing . . . However, it's a little late for that. How stupid of me to think of it only when I got to the last sheet. And I can't write any smaller than I'm doing now. Oh, Nami! It was you who always enjoyed my stories

[illegible]

I don't know how far I can get, but all I want now is to complete this one work before I die. I will write as if I intend to incise my very soul through the tip of the pen. I have a favor to ask of whoever finds us both. Could you please put this work together with the scraps of paper I've written on, and make them into a book? I've used up all of my paper, but there is still space for me to write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I will write my last work down on the white flesh that bestowed its love on me until the last. The letters I am going to trace now are the last drops of my lifeblood.

I offer those letters to Nami.

* * *

"I've found them!" Hey, over here! They're over here!"

It was the next day and the sun was already high in the sky when the search party found them.

"This is weird . . . What on earth went on here?"

The searchers let out exclamations of surprise over the strange appearance of the two bodies lying outstretched amidst the hard-frozen snow and frost.

The man had several scraps of paper grasped in his hand, covered all over in cramped handwriting, and his other hand was holding firmly onto a pen. The woman, who was lying underneath the prone body of the man, was for some reason completely naked, and her entire body was covered with the same cramped handwriting with not a space to spare.

"Looks like they're both dead. . . . No, hold on! . . . Well, that's a surprise. The woman's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids flutter faintly. At last, she slowly opens her eyes.

"Call the rescue squad! The woman's alive. Though how she survived like this . . ."

The woman with the writing all over her body pulls herself up slowly, and looks down at the face of the dead man as she tries to cover herself.

The face of the man who has wrung from himself every last drop of his own lifeblood. She holds the man to her, stroking his hair, then slowly brings her lips, now flushed with color again, towards his li

The words that were left behind

I can't keep the fire going any longer - the coal has run out. We don't have any food left either. Naomi's body is rapidly growing cold. She has already stopped breathing. I am writing this on the back of a piece of silver foil from a chocolate wrapper. Thank God we didn't burn that too. My pen still works, with its waterproof ink. I never thought I would die on a mou

ntain. I didn't think I was the type. But in the end, it might be quite a fitting death after all. I want to keep writing, right up to the moment I die. The problem is there aren't many scra

ps of paper left. Should I be choosing my words carefully then? Is it stupid to write in a stream of consciousness like this? But no. What if I died while choosing them? I can't afford to die and leave behind only blank slips of paper. As long as I'm still alive, I want to keep wri

ting. If I trail off mid sentence, will it be because I have run out of paper, or life? If I use up all the ink, I would go so far as to use my blood. Anyhow, I mustn't stop moving this pen. I feel like if I stop writing I will die. I'm that cold. Cold and sleepy. I mustn't sl

eep. I am writing to stay alive. I am staying alive to write. For me, writing is the same as a prehistoric man leaving hand prints on the wall of a cave. I am leaving my trace on the earth. By committing my innermost thoughts to paper, I am reconciling myself with the forces of nature that will be my demise. I am not really writing with future generations in mind. I am writing for myself, until there's nothing left. I haven't done that since I became a novelist. I was always preoccupied with trying to amuse people. But now I am writing solely for myself. Having someone read it afterwards is the

last thing on my mind. A few slips of paper on which I'd written were blown away in a gust of wind just now. Part of the proof that I was alive. Oh I see. Now I get it. I thought I was writing this just for myself, but now that a part of it has disappeared, I feel so empty. Of course I wanted someone to read it. I realise now that words exist for the reader. They can't exist just for the person who writes them. No matter how

egotistical the writer, words are for the person reading them - including him, once he has finished writing. This must be the first time that I really underst

ood that. As a novelist, I liked entertaining people. I preferred writing short, well-crafted stories to long ones. I enjoyed imagining my readers' faces as they reacted to a final twist in the plot. I can't imagine any greater joy than to keep writing these kinds of stories until my dying breath. But it's too late. I can't believe I'm thinking like this when I've reached my last piece of paper. I can't make my handwriting any smaller. Oh Naomi. You loved my stories more than anyone else, didn't you. I will cover the rest of this page with the characters I loved most in the world. Naomi
Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi
Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Nao

I don't know how far I'll get, but I want to finish this one story before I die. As I write, I will try to carve out my own soul with this pen. Will you gather this story together with the scraps I wrote before, and put them in a book for me? The paper has run out, but there's still one more place where I can write.

I am writing this now on Naomi's body.

Poor Naomi. On this white flesh which loved me until its very end, I will record my final tale. These words will be my last drops of life. I dedicate them to her.

"I've found them! Hey, over here, over here!"

It was the following day, when the sun was already high in the sky, that the search party came upon the two missing people.

“Jesus, what the hell happened here!”

They let out cries of surprise at the strange appearance of the couple. The snow had frozen over them like a layer of ice.

The man was lying face down. In one hand, he was clutching several pieces of paper covered in small, cramped characters, while the other held tightly onto a pen. The woman who was stretched out beneath him was completely nude, and filling every inch of her naked flesh were the same narrow, tightly-packed characters.

"They're both dead. No, wait! The woman is still alive!"

Her eyelids flickered slightly. Gradually, she opened her eyes.

“Call an ambulance! She’s alive! But how did she end up like this?”

The woman slowly got to her feet, and looked down at the man who had died trying to protect her.

The face of a man whose life had been wrung out of him.

She held him in her arms, and stroked his hair. Slowly she leant over him and brought her lips, which had regained their colour, towards hi

Words Left Behind

I can't even build a fire anymore. The coal has run out. Nor do I have food. Even Nami's body is gradually growing cold. Already she's stopped breathing. I'm writing this record on the backs of foil chocolate wrappers. It's a good thing I didn't burn those. The waterproof pen can still write. I never imagined I would die in the mou

ntains. I wouldn't have thought myself the type. But this might be an unexpectedly characteristic way to die. I want to keep writing until I'm on the verge of death. The problem is how much paper I have left bef

ore I run out. In that case, should I take more care with my words? Might recording my stream of consciousness be a futile effort? No, that's wrong. Suppose I die while choosing a word? As of now I don't have the luxury of dying and leaving behind a blank unwritten page. As long as I'm still alive, I want to keep wr

iting. If my writing cuts off in the middle of a sentence, I wonder which it will be—out of paper, or out of life? Even if the ink runs out, I'll use blood. In any case, I musn't stop moving my pen. I get the feeling if I do, I might die. That's how cold I am. Cold and sleepy. I musn't go to sle

ep. I write to live. I live to write. To me the act of writing is the same as a primitive man leaving his palm-print on the wall of a cave. It means leaving my own mark on the world. By spilling my heart onto the page, I am reconciling with the very nature that is killing me. This is not something for humanity in some distant future to discover. To my very last, I'm writing for myself. Since I became a novelist, not once I have ever written for me as such. All along I've thought only of pleasing other people. But now I am writing for me and only me. Whether or not someone gets to read it, I don't even ca

Give me a break. A gust of wind just now picked up who knows many pages I've written and sent them flying—my proof of living. Is that how it was? I get it now. Here I thought I was only writing this story for myself. But losing even a fragment of what I wrote makes me feel so hollow. I guess I just wanted somebody to read this story someday. I've come to realize that what we call "words" exists for those who read them. Words cannot exist for the writer alone. No matter how much of it was for my own satisfaction, the story is for the readers, even if I include myself when I wrote it down. All this time, I never even came close to unde

rstanding that. As a working novelist, I loved nothing more than making the readers happy. Rather than a long drawn-out story, I loved writing something short and sweet. I loved to picture the surprise on a reader's face and their gasp when they reach an ending they did not expect. To write such a story on the brink of death would be sublime. But. It's too late. To think I would only come up with such an idea on my last scrap of paper. And I can't print any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You always enjoyed my novels more than anyone. With the last space I have left, I'll write for you the one word I loved most of all.
Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how much more I can write, but once I've finished this, I want to die. I'll write until I've engraved my soul with the nib of this pen. To whoever finds us, I have a request. Along with the pages I wrote before, would you please publish this in a book? I've used up all my paper, but I still have a little space left.

I'm now writing on Nami's body.

Poor dearest Nami. On the white flesh that offered me love until the very end, I will inscribe my final work. With this, the words I record are the last drops of my very life.

Nami, I dedicate those words to you.

“Found them! Hey, over here! Over here!”

By the next day, after the sun had risen, the search party had discovered the two victims.

“What the...what on earth happened here?”

Their voices rose in shock at the abnormal condition of the two bodies, lying frozen stiff in the snow and frost.

Precise, densely packed writing filled the scraps of paper the man clutched in one hand. In the other hand he held tight to a pen. Underneath his overturned body, the woman was stark naked. Scrawled over every square inch of her skin was that same precise, densely packed script.

“Both dead...No, wait! What a shock. The woman is still alive!”

The woman’s eyelids fluttered faintly, and at last, her eyes slowly opened.

“Call the rescue party. The woman’s alive. But how did she survive such an ordeal...?”

As she slowly sat up, taking care to cover herself, the woman with a body of the written word looked down at the dead man’s face.

The face of the man who wrung his life dry to the last drop.

The woman pulled him into her arms and stroked his hair. As the color returned to her lips, closer she slowly drew to his

The Words Left Behind

I can't keep the fire going anymore. The coals have all gone out. No more food either. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of aluminum chocolate wrappers. I'm glad I didn't burn them. My waterproof pen still writes. I never thoug

ht I'd die in the mountains. I didn't think I was that kind of person. But maybe it's a fitting fate for me after all. I want to keep writing right up until I die. The problem is, how many scra

ps do I have left? Should I choose my words carefully before I write them? Is it pointless to just keep writing out my thoughts like this? No, no it's not. What if I die while thinking about what to write? It'd be pretty grand to die leaving behind just blank, white paper. I want to keep writing as long as I'm still ali

ve. If these words come to an end before I'm finished writing, is it because I ran out of paper? Or is it because I'm dead? If I run out of ink, I'll even use blood. In any case, I can't let myself stop moving this pen. I feel like if I stop writing, I'll just die. It's *that* cold. It's freezing and I'm so sleepy. But I can't let myself fall asl

eep. I'm writing to keep on living. I'm living to keep on writing. Writing for me is the same as cavemen leaving their handprints on the walls of their cave dwellings. It's leaving fingermarks scraped in the dirt. With this stream-of-consciousness writing I'm trying to come to terms with the same nature that's killing me. It's not like I'm writing for it to be discovered by some people in the distant future. I'm just writing for myself. Since I became a novelist, I haven't written simply for myself. I was always thinking about what would make people happy. But right now, I'm writing completely and entirely for myself. I don't even know who'll end up reading this aft

I can't believe it. Just now the wind came and blew away God-knows how many scraps I'd written. Part of the proof of my existence—gone like that. But I get it now. I thought I was writing these words just for myself. But I feel an emptiness inside if even one piece of what I'm writing disappears. I guess I wanted someone to read this after all. Writing exists to be read by someone. It can't exist simply for the writer. Writing is for the reader. That includes the writer, no matter how self-satisfied he may have been when he wrote it in the first place. I really knew that from th

e first. As a writer, I liked to entertain my readers. Rather than long stories, I preferred to make them short and sweet. I liked to imagine the surprised look on my readers' faces when they made it to the last page and read that final twist. There'd be nothing better than if here, in my final moments, I could write that kind of story again. But it's too late. To think I came up with this idea on my last scrap of paper. I can't write any smaller than I already am. Oh, Nami! You liked my stories more than anyone else. I'm going to use this last blank space to write my favorite word. Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how long I'll be able to write, but I just want to finish this one story before I die. I want to carve out my soul with this pen. I have a request for those who find our bodies. I'd like to have this story, along with the previous scraps, collected and published as a book. I've

already filled up all of the paper, but there's still space to write here. I'm writing this on Nami's body now.

My poor Nami. I write this final story on your beautiful body, the body of the woman who loved me to the very end. The words I write hereafter are the last drops of my life. I dedicate these words to Nami.

"I found them! Hey, over here! They're over here!"

The search party found the two missing persons the next day, after the sun had climbed high overhead.

"What in the world...?" one of them spoke in wonder as they beheld the bizarre state of those two lying covered in snow and frost.

The man clutched in one hand a pen, and in the other scraps of paper absolutely covered in tiny scrawl. Under the man, who lay face down, was the body of the woman. She was completely naked and yes, covered head to toe with writing.

"Both dead, huh... Hey...wait a second! Oh my God! The woman's still alive!"

Her eyelids strained and flickered, and then finally opened. "Call the med team! She's still alive! But completely exposed like this, how the heck is she not dead?"

The woman covered in writing slowly came to, and peered at the face of the man whose body covered her, the face of the man who had poured out his entire soul into his writing. Stroking his hair, she held his body against her own. The color slowly returned to her lips as she gently bent down to ki

Fragments

by Inoue Masahiko

I can't get the fire to light anymore. The fire is completely out. And all our food is gone. Nami's body grows colder—she's stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of candy bar wrappers. Thank God we didn't burn these wrappers. Thank God the waterproof pen still writes. I never imagined we would die on this

mountain. I never dreamed it would be this way. But the thing is, I'm finding this a fitting way to die. I want to keep writing until the very end. The problem is going to be how much

paper I have left. So I'd better choose my words carefully. This stream-of-consciousness is meaningless now. No, it's not. What's the point in dying while I'm busy carefully choosing my words? I can't afford to die like this and leave behind scraps of blank paper. I want to keep writing

while I yet live. If a sentence cuts off midway, it'll mean I either ran out of paper or I ran out of time, one. If the pen runs dry I'll write in blood. Whatever it takes—but I must not stop writing. I know that if I stop writing, I will die. I am so cold. Cold and tired. I must not

sleep. I'm writing now to stay alive. I'll stay alive in order to write. Writing for me is like making a handprint on a cave wall was for primitive man. I want to leave some trace of myself behind in the world. Putting down on paper this river of words from my mind is my way of coming to terms with a world that is going to kill me. I'm not writing in the hopes of any of this being discovered by posterity. I'm just writing for myself. Ever since I started writing novels, I haven't written a single thing for myself. I think only of what others might enjoy reading. But now I'm going to write for myself, write like hell. And I don't give a damn if anybody reads any of

Dammit. A gust of wind just blew some of these fragments away. A little bundle of the proof that I was alive. I was wrong earlier—I see it now. I thought I was writing this only for myself. But when part of that was gone, I just felt empty inside. I *do* want someone to read these fragments, after all. What's written is meant to be read. Losing those scraps just taught me that. What's written can't possibly exist only for the sake of

the writer. No matter how much you think you're writing for your own satisfaction, when you've finished writing something, the words on the page are to be read, by you and by other people. I knew that from the

beginning. I really did. I've made my living as a novelist. I liked to keep my readers entertained. More than epics, I liked to write concise, well-wrought tales. I liked to imagine the surprised look on the reader's face when they got to the twist at the end. What if I could write something like that right before I died? Wouldn't that be something? But it's too late. I'm down to my last wrapper. It's too late to think of all that now. I can't write any smaller than I already am. Oh, Nami. You loved my novels more than anyone. I'm going to fill what space is left on this paper with my favorite word of all: Nami Na

I don't know how much longer I can keep writing. But as soon as I'm done writing this story, I want to die. I'm going to use the tip of this pen to carve my soul into her. Whoever finds us, please—collect the wrappers and publish what I wrote on them along with what I've written here. I filled up every last inch of the wrappers with words—this is all there is left, writing here on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I'm writing my final story on the white flesh that you loved me with right up to the very end. The words I write now, I write with the last drop of life I have left. I dedicate these final words to Nami.

///

"They're over here! I found them! Over here!"

The search-and-rescue team found the two missing persons the following day, in broad daylight.

"What in the... What in the hell happened here?"

The team members gasped when they saw how strangely the two were arranged, stretched out in the hard-frozen frost and snow.

The man was clenching several fragments of paper in one hand, each one completely covered in cramped writing. In his other hand he was holding a pen, exactly as you would when writing. The man was lying face down on a woman. She was completely

naked, her body covered literally everywhere, head to toe, with the same cramped writing as on the scraps of paper.

“It looks like neither one made it. Wait a minute, though... Well, I’ll be damned. The woman is still alive!”

The woman’s eyelids fluttered almost imperceptibly. And then her eyes opened, slowly.

“Get a medic up here! The woman is alive. But she’s... what in the world...”

As she slowly raised herself up, Nami, covered in writing, looked down on the face of the dead man who had been protecting her body with his.

The face of the man who had wrung every last drop of his own life out in order to save hers.

Nami lifted him up to her, as though smoothing back his hair. When she did this, she moved closer to his face, bringing her own lips, to which the color had returned, towards hi

Word Prints

The fire has gone out. There is nothing left to burn. Nothing to eat. Nami's body is getting progressively colder. She has already stopped breathing. I'm writing these words on the back of chocolate foil wrappers. Good thing they didn't go in the fire. This waterproof pen still writes. Dying on a mountain was not how

I thought it would end. Didn't think I was the type. But maybe dying like this is totally me. I intend to keep writing till the very end. But is there enough paper lef

t? And should I be choosy about what I write? Maybe a stream of consciousness is ridiculous, right? Wrong - imagine if I snuffed it in the middle of overthinking a word. There's no way I'm going to up and die with just a blank piece of paper to show for it. I intend to keep writing as long as

I am alive. If the words stop as I'm trying to write them, either the paper or my life has run out. One or the other. If the ink runs out, I swear I'll use blood. Whatever happens, the pen has to keep moving. If the pen stops, I'm dead. That's how cold it is. I'm cold and I'm sleepy. Sleep is not an o

ption. I write to live. I will stay alive to write. Writing is to me is like primitive man leaving a handprint on the cave wall. It is the marks of my fingernails on the earth. Writing about where I'm at right now is me making a deal with Nature, my killer. I'm not doing it for others to find after I'm gone. I'm doing it for me – no question. In all my time as a novelist, I've never written anything just for me. All I ever thought about was entertaining others. Now, I'm seriously writing just for me. Hoping someone will read it later is the l

ast thing on my mind. Scraps of my writing have just blown away in that last gust of wind; partial proof I existed gone right there. Wow. I've just realised. I did think I was writing just for me; but look how gutted I feel after losing some of my words. All along, I've been hoping someone would read them later. It's forced me to remember that the written text must exist for the reader; it can't be something for the writer alone. You can write for your own satisfaction but as soon as you're finished, the words exist for the reader as well as yourself. Of course, I've known this from

the very beginning. As a novelist, I liked to entertain my readers. I liked to write short, well-rounded stories rather than longer ones. I liked picturing the astonished faces of my readers at the twist in the end. It would be cool to write a story like that just before I die...but. It's too

late now. Crazy thought seeing this is my last scrap of paper...I can't make my writing any smaller. Oh Nami! You loved my novels the most. I'm going to write my favourite word in this last bit of blank space.

NamiNa

I've no idea how much more I can write but I want to die only after I've finished this last work. I'm going to write as though the tip of this pen is a chisel for my soul. I have a favour to ask of you who finds us. Could you please edit this work and the scraps I wrote on before and make them into a book? I covered every bit of the paper with words but there's still space here. Now, I'm writing this on Nami's body. Poor Nami! I'm recording my last work on the pale body that offered me its love till the end. The words I set down now are the last drops of my life's blood.

I offer these words to Nami.

* * *

'Here they are! Over here!'

The two victims were discovered by the search party on the following day, well after the sun had risen high in the sky.

'What the hell happened here?'

The party was astonished at the strange sight of two bodies lying under the crisply frozen snow and ice. The man's fist clutched several scraps of paper covered in miniscule writing. The other fist was locked around a pen. Under his prone body, the woman's body was naked and it too was covered in miniscule writing from head to toe.

'Looks like they're both dead. No. Hang on...Oh my God! The female's alive!'

The woman's eyelids were fluttering. Slowly she opened her eyes.

'Call an ambulance! She's alive. But in that state....it's incredible...?'

The woman, covered in writing, slowly picked herself up and looked down guardedly at the dead man's face; the man who had wrung out the last drops of his life's blood.

As though to stroke his hair, the woman pulled him up and slowly brought her lips, to which color had returned, to hi

The Words Left to
by Inoue Masahiko

Can't build a fire, the embers have all gone out. There's no food. Nami's body keeps getting colder. She's stopped breathing. I'm writing on the back of a chocolate wrapper. Glad we didn't burn it. This waterproof pen is still writing. Never thought I would die on a

mountain. Thought it wasn't in my genes. But it may just be a fitting end for me. I want to keep writing until it's over. But whether I can depends on how

much of the wrappers is left. Should I be choosing my words more carefully? Is writing whatever words come to mind just a waste of life? No, no, I might die without writing anything, and then what? I can't afford to die leaving blank space behind. As long as I'm living I'll keep

on writing, or at least I plan to. If my thoughts end mid-sentence it's either because I ran out of paper or because my life ended. If this pen runs out of ink I'll write in blood. I know that I cannot stop writing. I'll die if I do, I know it. It's that cold. So cold I want to sleep. Sleep? No, I must

not. I write to stay alive. And I will damn sure live long enough to put these thoughts down. Me writing carries the same weight as cavemen painting their handprints on cave walls; we all want to leave our mark on this vast earth. Writing these words as they come is my way of settling the score with nature, who is my killer, my death. These words are for me, and are not being written for some later human to find. Since becoming a writer I have never written anything for myself. I always wrote with the idea of bringing enjoyment to others in mind. But now, I can write for myself. No part of me wants another person to come along and read this later. Not even a

Damn. The gust just now took several of the wrappers I had written on. Proof of my existence, gone in an instant. And that's it. I was wrong. I was so sure that I was writing those words for no man other than myself. But as soon I lose even a part of these writings, I feel this great sense of emptiness. When it comes down to it, I really did want someone to read this after I was gone. A little wind was all it took to teach me how foolish I was to believe that the written word exists for anyone other than the reader. Words cannot exist solely for the writer. No matter how self-centered the intent in writing is, once on the page words exist for readers, and the writer himself becomes one. I knew as much from the beginning

and that, my friend, is certain. As a writer, I loved engrossing my readers. I liked writing short, well-written stories better than doing longer pieces. And I spent hours picturing my readers' faces scrunched up in shock after reading one of my surprise endings. If only I could write something like that during my last and final moments... but it's too late for that now. What made me think I could finish a story like that on my last bit of paper? I cannot write any smaller than I already am. Oh, Nami. It was you who enjoyed my stories the most, wasn't

it. In the space I have left, I'll write the words you knew I loved most. Nami Nami Nami
Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami
Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I am not sure how much I will be able to complete, but I pray I can finish this before dying. I will write with my soul pouring forth from the tip of this pen. I have but one request for whoever finds us: please gather all the chocolate wrappers I've written on, put them together with the piece I am about to write, and publish it as a book. I've filled all the paper I have, but here, I have found more space to write.

Right now, I am writing on Nami's body.

Oh, Nami. She gave me her love and her body right up to the end. My last work will be written on the white canvas of her skin. These words I write are the last drops of my soul. They are for Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Here, over here!"

The sun had already risen high over the sky the next day by the time the search and rescue team found them.

"What the... just what in the world happened to these two?"

Rescue team members shouted in confusion at the sight of their bodies, frozen stiff, lying together in the snow and frost.

In one hand, the man is squeezing a pen tight. In the other, he holds a number of scraps of paper firmly in his grasp, each piece filled to the brim with small writing. The man is face down, and underneath him lies a woman. She is naked, yet that same small writing is all over her body, leaving no stretch of skin uncovered.

"Both of them are dead alright... Wait, no, looks like I spoke too soon. Hey! The woman's alive!"

He had noticed the woman's eyelids twitching. Slowly, her eyes open.

"Get the medics over here! This woman's alive. What the hell happened to her..."

The woman, her white flesh covered in writing, sat herself up and looked down into the face of the man who died lying as if to protect her.

At the face of a man who had poured out the last drops of his soul.

The woman raised the man's head to hers, as gentle as if she were stroking his hair.

Deliberate, she moved her lips, which had finally regained their color, closer to the man's own and

Lingering Words

By Inoue Masahiko

I couldn't keep the fire going any longer. The embers had died out. We had no food. Nami's body was gradually growing colder. She was no longer breathing. I'm writing on the foil wrapper of a chocolate bar. Good thing I didn't burn it for fuel. The waterproof marker still has ink. I never thought I'd die in the

mountains. I wasn't the type to die like that, I had thought. But it seems an oddly fitting way to die. I want to keep writing even to the brink of death. The problem is that I

only have so much paper to write on. I guess I should be choosier over what to write. I guess that there's no meaning in me writing down whatever thoughts as they come to me. No, that's not true. What if I died as I was deciding on the words to write? The thought of dying and leaving behind a blank, wordless sheet of paper is too much of a luxury now. I want to keep writing as long as I'm

alive. If I'm suddenly cut off, it'll be either I ran out of paper, or my life ran out. If I run out of ink, I'll use blood. At any rate, my pen can't stop moving at any cost. It seems that if I stop moving my pen, I'll die - it's that cold. It's so cold and I'm sleepy. I mustn't

sleep. I have to write in order to live. I'll live for the sake of writing. Writing to me is to prehistoric man what leaving their handprints on the walls of their caves was - leaving behind my mark on the earth. By writing out my thoughts as they flow, I've come to an understanding with nature even as it's killing me. I'm not writing something to be found by future generations - at the end of it all, I'm writing for myself. Ever since I became a writer, I've never written anything for myself alone. I was always thinking how others would enjoy my stories. But now, I'm writing frantically for my own sake. Someone to read it afterwards - there isn't even the tiniest bit of me that's

What the hell! A sudden gust of wind blew away some scraps I had been writing on - the proof of my existence. That's right - I know it now. All along, I had thought that I was writing this for myself, but I felt such emptiness when I lost those few scraps. In the end, I do want someone to read this. It brought home to me that the story exists for the reader's sake. The story can't exist for the writer alone. No matter how much I wrote to please myself, the finished text was for the readers, among whom I am counted. Without a doubt, I had known this from

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write, but I want to finish this before I die. As I write, the tip of my pen will scratch my soul into these words. To the one who will find us – please, won't you gather up these scraps and publish them as a book? I've all but filled up every last bit of paper, but here, there's still space for me to write.

I'm now writing these words on Nami's body.

My poor Nami. On this white flesh that offered me love until the very end, I shall write my final work. The next words I write will be the last drops of my life.

I give these words to Nami.

"I found them! Hey, over here! Here!"

When the search party found the missing persons the next day, the sun was already high in the sky.

“What the ...? What the hell is this?”

The members of the search party cried out in shock at the strangeness of the pair lying in the frozen snow and frost.

In one hand, the man clutched several scraps of paper covered in tiny letters, and in his other hand, he firmly gripped a pen. Under the man, who laid face-down, the woman was stark naked, every inch of her body covered in tiny letters.

"It looks like they're both dead. No, wait... Well, I'll be damned – she's alive!"

The woman's eyelids flickered faintly. Eventually, she slowly opened her eyes.

“Call the rescue team! She’s alive! But how...?”

The woman with writing all over her body slowly lifted herself off the snow and gazed down into the face of the man who had died trying to shield her from the cold.

Down into the face of the man who had squeezed out every last drop of his life force –

#046

She pulled him towards her and cradled him in her arms, stroking his hair. Gently, she lowered her lips, to which the color was slowly returning, towards

Survived By A Text

Can't kindle anymore fire. Remaining coals have died down to nothing. No more food to eat. And Nami's body keeps on getting colder and colder. She's all ready stopped breathing. Right now I'm writing these sentences on the back of one of those foil wrappers used to cover chocolate. I'm glad I didn't burn it. The permanent ink in the pen is still coming out. I never thought I'd end up dying in the mount

ains. I never thought I was that sort of person. Amazingly, it might be just right for me, though. I want to keep writing right to the bitter end. The only problem is how

much paper I've got left. And if that's the case, should I be careful and choose the words I write? Or would it just be pointless to use a stream of consciousness? No, it can't be. It'd be stupid if I died searching for the right words, wouldn't it? I can't afford the luxury of dying or losing it while there's still blank pages with nothing written on them. While I'm alive I want to keep on

writing. There's only two reasons why my writing might stop before I finish: either I've run out of paper or I've given up the ghost. I'd even use my own blood if the ink runs out. Either way I definitely can't stop my pen's journey down the page. I feel like I would die if I put down this pen. It's so cold now. So cold I want to sleep. But I can't

sleep. I'm writing to stay alive. I'm going to keep myself alive so I can keep on writing. For me this kind of writing is like those early humans who left the outline of their hands on cave walls. The act of leaving one's claw marks in the hard ground. I'm writing whatever comes to me and thus coming to terms with mother nature's indifference towards my fate. I'm not writing this in the hopes that it will be found by a later people. In the end it's just for me. As a novelist I'd never done anything like write something just for me, as I do now. I'd always been concerned with pleasing other people. Now, however I'm writing solely for myself. It's not some kind of material intended for others to read at a later

[illegible]

Don't know how much longer I'll be able to write, but I'd rather die knowing that I've at least finished this piece of writing. I wanna write these words down like I'm carving my very being into the paper with the end of the pen. I have a request for the kind individuals who discovered us. Could you possibly take this work here, and together with the other pages I'd written earlier, edit them and put them together into a book? I've gone and used up all the paper with my writing, but there's some space just here where I can still write.

I'm writing this on Nami's body now. Poor, poor Nami. That uncoloured flesh, that had given all its love to me right to the very end, is now the surface for my last work. The text that I'm about to write down here constitutes the last little trickle of my life.

I dedicate this text to Nami.

* * *

"We've found 'em! Hey, you guys, over here! They're here!"

The sun was all ready high in the sky the following day when the search party found the two lost souls.

“What is ... this? What on earth happened here?”

The rescuers' voices made plain their surprise at the abnormal way in which the two bodies lay on the ground among the

frozen solid frost and snow.

The male was holding several pieces of paper completely covered in minute handwritten text, and in his other hand he was still holding fast to a pen. The female, who lay beneath the male's prone body, was surprisingly completely naked. And in some weird connection to the written pieces of paper, had her entire body completely covered, without any space leftover, in the same minute handwritten scrawl.

"They're both dead, of course. Hang on, wait a minute! What the?! She's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids were moving ever so slightly, and then at the last she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the paramedics! She's alive. But, why like this"

This woman, with the writing covering her entire body, slowly got up and looked down at the face of the man who, in death, was still trying to protect her.

She looked down at the face of the man who had squeezed every last drop of life from himself for her.

Holding him up in her arms, the woman touched his hair with light strokes. Then, with lips that had regained their colour, she slowly brought them closer to his mouth and

“Words Left Behind” by Inoue Masahiko

I can no longer get a fire going. The tinder has run out along with all food supplies. Nami’s body temperature is dropping rapidly and she has already stopped breathing. I am currently writing these very words on the back of a chocolate wrapper. Luckily it hadn’t burned up and this waterproof ink pen can still write. Who’d have thought that I’d end up dying in the mountains?

Never really seemed like my style. Surprisingly though this may actually turn out to be quite a fitting way to die. Writing until my very last breath. The problem is how long until I run out of space.

It looks like I should be choosing my words very carefully. Continuing to write off the top of my head like this is meaningless. No wait, hold on. What if I end up dying whilst thinking of what to write? I can’t afford to die leaving behind a blank piece of paper. As long as I am still breathing I won’t stop writing. *If* my words were to suddenly stop, would it mean that I have run out of paper? Or that I have died? I guess I could always use my blood should I run out of ink. Either way, I mustn’t let my pen stop. I feel like I would die the moment I stop. That’s how cold it is. I’m so cold... sleepy too. I mustn’t let myself fall asleep.

For the sake of staying alive, I will write. For the sake of writing, I will stay alive. To me, writing this right now is analogous to our primitive ancestors making hand markings on cave walls. I am leaving my mark on the world. Compromising with the natural world which is trying to kill me by leaving behind these words from my heart. But it’s not as though I want these words to be found in the distant future. I am writing completely for myself. Since becoming a novelist I have never actually written for just myself. I always focused on giving my readers enjoyment, but at this moment I am fixated on writing for my own sake. Hoping that someone will read this is not my intention, not even in the slightest.

Just now a gust of wind blew some of my scraps away. Pieces of my proof of existence. Oh I see, now I understand. I thought that I was writing for just myself. But losing even just a small fragment causes me such a hollow feeling. As I thought, I really *am* hoping that these words will be later read by someone. I mean, don’t words exist for the sake of being read in the first place? They don’t just exist for the sake of the writer. No matter how much it is for the sake of self gratification, writing exists because the writer is also a reader at the time of writing. It’s no mistake that I’ve always held that to be true.

As a novelist, what I’ve always loved is giving readers enjoyment and I preferred writing nice short pieces as opposed to long stories. I’ve always loved imagining the surprised reactions of readers when they come across an unexpected ending. I would’ve loved to write a story like that before I die here. But it’s too late. That idea is futile seeing as I’m already down to my last sheet of paper. From here on out I can only afford to write small. Oh Nami... You were always the one who enjoyed my novels the most. With the remaining space left on this paper, I will write my most favorite word.
Nami

I don’t know how much further I can write but nevertheless I wish to finish this piece of writing before I die. I hope to impart my soul using this pen. I have a request to the people who find my body. Would it be possible to take these papers I have written and publish them as a book? This piece of paper has been scribbled to death but there’s still space over here.

I am currently writing this on Nami’s body.

Poor Nami. As my last piece of writing, I will write it on the person who devoted her love to me until the very end. These next words will be the final vestiges of my life.

I devote... these words... to Nami.

“We found them! Over here, over here!”

The next day, once the sun had risen high above the sky, a search party discovered the two bodies.

“What is this.....what exactly happened here”

The rescuer let out a gasp of surprise as he saw a man and woman lying frozen in the snow.

He saw the man, in one hand gripping tightly many pieces of paper filled with tiny writing, and in the other, tightly holding onto a pen. Lying with his face towards the ground, the man had a woman underneath him. She was naked with tiny writing covered all over her body.

“Those two are dead aren’t they...? No, wait... the woman is still alive!”

The woman was moving her eyelids ever so slightly and before long, had slowly opened her eyes.

“Call the rescue party! The woman is still alive! But why is she in this state...”

The woman, covered in writing, slowly rose up and gazed down upon the face of the lifeless man who had used his body to shield her.

The man who had exhausted every last drop of his life force.

She held him close and gently stroked his hair. With her lips that had returned to color, she slowly moved in for a kiss.

Last Words

I can't even make a fire any more. The coals are all used up. There's no food either. Nami's body is quickly growing cold. She isn't breathing any more. I am writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. It's a good thing I didn't burn it. This water-resistant ink pen still writes. I didn't think I would die on the moun

tain. I thought it wasn't my style. But maybe this is an appropriate way to go. I want to keep writing until the moment of death. The problem is how much

paper I have left. So perhaps I should choose my words carefully. Maybe continuing to write wherever my thoughts take me is meaningless. No, that's not true. What if I died while choosing my words? Dying and leaving behind white paper with nothing on it is a luxury I can't afford any more. I want to keep writing while I am al

ive. I write so that I can live. I will live so that I can write. For me, writing is like primeval man imprinting the silhouette of his palm on the wall of a cave. Leaving behind his own claw marks on the earth. I am reaching a compromise with nature, who is killing me, by writing what flows from my heart now. I am not doing it for the sake of being discovered by human beings in times to come. To the end, I write for myself. Since I became a novelist, I have never written anything for my own sake. I have always kept the delight of others in mind. But now I am intent on writing for myself alone. Having someone read this afterward doesn't interest me in the sligh

Oh hell. A sudden wind just blew away several pieces of paper I had written on. Part of the proof that I was still alive. Is that how it is? I get it now. I thought that I was writing only for myself. But just part of what I wrote being blown away fills me with such a sense of loss. I guess I wanted someone to read this after all. I realize now that words exist for the sake of readers. They can't exist just for the person writing them. No matter how self-satisfied the writer, words are for readers, including the writer when he writes them. Really, I must have kno

wn this from the beginning. As a writer I always loved delighting my readers. I loved writing short and well-made stories, more than long ones. I loved imagining the surprised look on the reader's face on reading the unexpected conclusion. It would be fantastic if I could write a story like that while at the verge of death. But it's too late now. Why am I thinking of such a thing when I am on the last piece of paper? I can't write any smaller. Ah, Nami. You were the one who enjoyed my stories most of all. I'll write my favorite word here in the space left on this paper! Nami Na

I don't know how much longer I can write, but I don't want to die until I finish this work. I want to write as if I am sculpting my own soul with the tip of this pen. I have one thing to ask of the person who discovers us. Could you compile this work together with what I wrote on the earlier pieces of paper and publish it? I have filled up all of the paper with writing, but I still have space here.

I am writing this on Nami's body now.

My darling Nami. On this white body that devoted its love to me up to the end, I will write my final work. The words I write from here on are the last drops of my life.

I dedicate these words to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey, over here, over here."

The search party found the two victims the next day after the sun was quite high in the sky.

"What ... What happened?"

The two searchers shouted with surprise at the strange appearance of the two lying frozen amid the snow and frost.

The man was clutching several pieces of paper covered with tiny writing in one hand and was holding a pen in the other. The woman lying, completely naked, beneath the man's face-down body and her entire body was also covered with tiny writing.

"They're both dead, aren't they? ... Wait, just a minute ... What? The woman is still alive!"

The woman's eyelids were moving slightly. Before long she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue party! The woman is alive. But like this, I wonder why ..."

As the woman, her entire body covered with words, started slowly to sit up, she attempted to cover herself and looked down at the dead man's face.

The face of the man who had squeezed out the last drops of his life.

The woman stroked the man's hair and embraced him. Then she brought her lips, to which the color had returned, close to his and

Words Left Behind

By Inoue Masahiko

I can't make any more fires. The matches have run out. There is also no more food. Nami's body is becoming colder and colder. She has already stopped breathing. Now, I am writing these words on the back of the foil wrappers of chocolate bars. It's a good thing we didn't burn them. This waterproof pen still works. I never thought that I would die in the

mountains. I never thought that it was in my character. But this way of dying might actually suit me. I want to keep writing up to the moment I die. The problem is how much of this

scrap paper remains. As such, I must choose my words carefully. There is no meaning in pouring out my thoughts carelessly in writing like this. No, that's not right. What happens if I die while trying to choose my words carefully? What a waste it would be if I died and left these pieces of paper blank without any writing on them. I want to keep writing as long as I

am living. If the text stops midway, unfinished, I wonder if it will be because the paper ran out or because my life ran out. If the ink runs out, I will just use my blood instead. In any case, I must not let this pen stop writing. It feels as though I will die if the pen stops. It's so cold. I am cold and sleepy. I mustn't

fall asleep. I will write to live. I will live to write. Writing is the same for me as leaving hand prints on walls was for cavemen. It's about leaving traces of oneself on Earth. By writing my heart out now, I am coming to terms with nature, who is killing me. It is not really for the people who will read this later. Undoubtedly, I am writing this for myself. Ever since becoming an author, I have never written just for myself. I was always thinking about entertaining others. However, now I am writing solely for myself. I am not thinking about who is going to read this later at

What's this?!? A sudden blast of wind just sent several of my written pages flying away. A portion of the proof that I was alive. So it was like that. I understand now. I had thought that I was writing these words only for myself. But losing even just a part of them left such a feeling of void. I had wanted somebody to read these words later on

after all. That just taught me a lesson: words exist for the readers. They cannot exist solely for the person who is writing them. No matter how much self-satisfaction one gets from writing, text exists for the readers, which include its author after it is written. There is no doubt that I had actually

known this from the beginning. As an author, entertaining readers was something I liked to do. I enjoyed writing well-written short stories over long ones. I enjoyed imagining the surprised faces of the readers when they reached unanticipated endings. It would be great if I could write a story like that now, up to the moment I die. But it is too late. Thinking such things when I am already down to my last piece of paper... I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You were the one who enjoyed my stories the most. I will write my favorite word on the blank parts that remain on this paper for you. Nami Na

I don't know how long I can write for, but I want to finish just this piece of work before I die. I will infuse my spirit from the tip of this pen as I write. I have a favor to ask of those who find us. Could you please compile this piece of work along with the written pages from before into a book? I have already written all over the papers, but here, there is still space.

I am now writing on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. On this white body that devoted your love to me until the very last moment, I will inscribe my last piece of work. The words I mark here will be the last drops of my life.

I devote them all to Nami.

* * *

"I found them! Hey, they're here! They're here!"

It was the following day, well after the sun had risen, when the search and rescue team found the two stranded victims.

"This... Just what happened here?"

The eeriness of the two frozen bodies lying in the snow and frost caused them to gape in surprise.

The man was clenching several pieces of paper covered in tiny writing in his fist, all the while holding a pen firmly in his other hand. The woman, who was underneath the

procumbent man, was completely naked and also completely covered, without any gaps whatsoever, in compact writing.

“So they both died... No, hold on. What a surprise! The woman is alive!”

The woman’s eyelids fluttered slightly. By and by, her eyes slowly opened.

“Call for first aid! The woman is alive. But, in this condition, why...”

The woman, her body entirely covered in words, slowly rose and gazed at the dead man who had tried to protect her.

She looked at the face of the man who had wrung out every last drop of his own life.

She held him as to stroke his hair and slowly moved her lips, whose color had returned, close to his lips and

Words Left behind

I can't get a fire going. All of the fuel's been burned. There's no food either. Nami's body just keeps getting colder. She stopped breathing a while ago. I'm writing this on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. Somehow, this gel pen still writes too. I never thought I'd die in the mountains. I didn't think I was the type. But it might be a suitable way to go after all. I want to keep writing right up until the end. The problem is that there are only so many scraps of paper left. I guess that means I should choose my words before writing. Recording my stream of consciousness like this is meaningless, right? No, that can't be. What happens if I die while searching for the right words? Dying and leaving a single piece of paper blank is a luxury I can't afford. I want to keep writing as long as I'm alive. The only things that could stop me now would be running out of paper or running out of life. If the ink runs out, I'll just use blood, simple as that. In any case, I can't let this pen stop moving. I feel like I'd die if I did. I'm that cold. Cold and tired. But I can't sleep. I write to live, and I'll live to write. For me, writing is like a primitive man leaving his handprint on a cave wall. It's leaving my marks on the earth. By writing my stream of consciousness, I am forging a truce with Mother Nature, even as she slowly kills me. It's not like I'm writing this expecting it to be discovered someday. It is completely and utterly for me. Ever since I became a writer, not once have I written a sentence for myself. I've always thought of entertaining my readers. But now, I'm writing for no one but myself. Expecting somebody to read this later on is

What could this mean? Half of the scraps of paper I'd written on were blown away by a gust of wind just now. All of those pieces that proved I once existed. Is that how it is? I think I get it now. I thought I was writing this for myself. But if even one piece of my writing is lost, a terrible emptiness takes hold of me. I really did want somebody to read this. The wind was reminding me that words are meant to be read. They can't just be for the enjoyment of the person writing them. Though they may originate from a simple desire for personal satisfaction, in the end, words exist for their readers, including the writer once he's laid down his pen. I really did understand that from the start. Speaking as an author, I enjoyed providing enjoyment for my readers. I liked writing short, well-done stories more than longer ones. I liked to imagine the reader's surprised faces at an unexpected ending. It would be great if I could keep

writing those kinds of stories up until the moment I die. But it's already too late. How can I be thinking of these things when I'm already on my last piece of paper? I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my stories most of all. Allow me to fill this remaining space with my favorite word. Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how far I will get, but I want to finish this piece before I die. As I write, I'll carve out my soul with the tip of this pen. And to the people who find us, I have a favor to ask. I wonder if you can't publish this work, along with the scraps of paper I've already written on, and make the whole into a book. I've used up all of the paper, but there's still space to write here.

I'm currently writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I will write my final work upon you, on this white flesh that offered up your love to me until the end. The words I am going to write will be the last drops of my life. I offer them up, in turn, to you.

"I found them! Over here! Over here!" The sun was well above the horizon when the search party found the two bodies the following day. "What... what the hell happened?" The man's hands were clenched tight around a pen and several scraps of paper overflowing with tiny, cramped writing. He was lying face down on top of the woman, who was completely naked and covered from head to toe in writing of the same hand. "They're both deceased.... wait, hold on.... I can't believe it. The woman's still alive!" Her eyelids trembled and slowly opened.

"Call the main group! The woman is alive. But how did she end up like this?"

Nami raised her letter-etched body into a sitting position and looked down at the face of the man who had covered her, a face wrung dry of every last drop of life.

She smoothed the man's hair before taking him in her arms. The color had just started to return to her lips. She lowered them now to hi

The Left-Behind Words

I can't light the fire anymore; the live coal sadly ran out. There's no food either. Even Nami's body is steadily growing cold. She's already stopped breathing. Now I'm writing on the foil wrapper of a chocolate bar; I'm glad it didn't burn. And my water resistant ink pen can still write. I didn't think I'd die in the

mountain. I hadn't expected things to go like this at all. But dying like this might suit the unexpected. I want to keep writing until I'm pretty much dead. The question is, how much longer will this scrap

of paper last? Considering, I wonder if I should I choose my words carefully before I write? Will writing exactly what comes to mind like this make no sense? No, that can't be. What happens if I die while choosing the right words? It will be the extravagant story of me, a man who dies and leaves behind a white paper, void of writing. While I still live, I want to

keep writing. When my sentence suddenly stops, my writing unfinished, I wonder, will it be because the paper's run out, or my life? When the ink runs dry, I'll have to use my blood. Anyway, this pen won't stop going. I have the feeling that when it does, I'll be dead. I'm so cold. Cold and tired. I have to

sleep. I'm writing to live. And I'm living to write. Writing for myself is like a caveman making cave drawings on the cave walls. All that will remain will be my own fingernail markings in the earth. Now, by writing what streams from my heart, I am coming to terms with the wilderness that's killing me. I'm not really doing this to be discovered by humanity from the distant future. To the very end, I'm writing for myself. I became a novelist and have never written only for myself, as I am now. I was constantly thinking about making other people enjoy themselves. But now I'm writing for no one but myself. And afterwards, I don't in the least expect that it'll be read by anyo

What the hell! Several scraps of paper I've been writing on just got hurled away by a sudden gust of wind; some of the evidence that I have lived. Did that really happen? This explains a lot. I've been thinking about writing this piece only for myself. But if even part of what I've written disappears, I'll feel empty like this. Still, I did want someone to read this piece after I finished it. I've realized that the words exist for the reader. They can't exist solely for the writer. No matter how much I do it for self-satisfaction, the words are there for the reader to understand the time given to finish writing. I truly must have known this kind of thing from

the beginning. As a novelist, I liked making my readers enjoy themselves, which I did. I liked writing stories that could be short and sweet rather than long. I liked imagining the readers' faces when they were surprised. That surprise will be extreme if I continue to write this story till I'm at death's door. I'm onto the final scrap and I'm thinking this kind of thing. Already I can't write the letters any smaller than this. Ahh, Nami. You were the one who enjoyed my short stories the most, weren't you? In this paper's margin, you wrote for me the letters I liked the most. Nami Na

I don't know where I can write to, but I want to die only while finishing this. I would like to keep writing and intend to engrave my own soul from this pen tip. I have the wish that you please find us. I wonder if you will compile this work into a book for me, with each of the scraps that I wrote on earlier. All of the papers are densely written, but here, there is still space to write. I'm writing on Nami's body now.

Poor Nami. On this white flesh that offered me love until the very end, I jot down my final composition. After this, the words written down will be my final drop of life.

These words, I offer to Nami.

"I found them! Oii, over here, over here."

A search party discovered the two victims, the next day, as the sun rose high.

"This is... What the hell? What is this?"

They raised astonished voices at the two's strange position, stretched out within the snow and frost that had frozen solid.

The man was grasping tightly to several scraps of paper, closely-packed with tiny words. In the other hand, he firmly held a pen. The woman, who had come to be under the man's upside-down body, nude, had tiny, closely-packed words written in every nook and cranny over her entire body.

"Both of them are dead, right?... No, wait... Shit! The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids weakly moved. Before long, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue team! The woman's alive. But why is she in this sort of condition...."

When the fully word-written woman slowly awoke, she made sure to cover herself, then looked down at the dead man's face.

The man's own drip of life, his fully strained face.

The woman, when she lifted the man in her arms, sure to gently brush his hair, slowly put her lips, which had regained colour, to the lips of the ma

The Words Left

Can't build a fire anymore. No more live embers. No food. Nami's body grows colder by the second. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing these words on the back of the gold wrapper from a chocolate bar. Good thing we didn't burn it. My waterproof ink pen still works. Never thought I would die in the mounta

ins. Never thought I was that type. Then again, maybe this kind of death becomes me more than any other. I want to keep on writing until the moment I die. The problem is how many scraps of pa

per're left. If that's the case perhaps I should choose my words. Perhaps it's reckless to write stream of consciousness like this. No, it can't be. What if I died while still searching for the right word? It'd be just plain selfish of me now, to leave nothing but blank paper behind. I must write the whole rest of

my life. If I stop mid-sentence it must be because I ran out of paper or ran out of time on this earth, one or the other. If the ink runs out I'll use my blood. Anyway I can't let the pen stop. I have the feeling I'll die if I do. It's that cold. I'm cold and I'm sleepy. But I can't let myself

sleep. I will write to stay alive. I will stay alive to write! Writing for me is like leaving a handprint on the cave wall was for the caveman. I will leave my fingernail scratches on this world! Right now, by writing what flows from my heart I talk back to the forces of nature that would kill me. I do not write this because I wish those who come after to discover what I have written. I write for no one besides myself. As a novelist I have never written prose that was only for myself. I have always had to think of others. But now I write for myself and no other. I couldn't care in the least whether someone

Shit!!! A gust of wind just blew away several scraps of paper I wrote on! That was part of the proof that I've lived! Oh, I see. Now I get it. I thought I was just

writing this for myself. But if even one bit of my writing vanishes, it leaves me utterly empty. It seems I do, in fact, wish somebody to read these words. I'm reminded that writing exists for the person who reads. Not only for the person who writes. No matter how I might think I'm doing this for my personal satisfaction, when something has been written, it's for a reader. I must have known that

from the start. As a writer, I enjoyed entertaining my readers. I preferred to pen short, well-crafted stories instead of lengthy novels. I liked to imagine the readers' faces when they were caught up short by a surprise ending. If I could write *that* kind of story until the moment I died, that would be something. But it's too late. I'm down to my last scrap of paper and still thinking such nonsense. I really can't write any smaller than this . . . Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my writing more than any other person, that's for sure. Let me fill the last of my remaining scrap with the word I love best: Nami Na

I know not how much longer I can write, but this work I absolutely wish to finish before I die. I shall carve the likeness of my soul with the tip of this pen. To whomever should discover us here, I leave a request: Together with the scraps of paper I have just completed, please kindly edit and publish this work as a book. I have written through all of the paper I have, but in this space I can still write.

I write now on Nami's body.

Poor, poor Nami. On the white flesh of the one who gave her love for me to the end, I leave my final work. The words I record here shall be the last drops of my lifeblood.

I offer them to Nami.

* * *

"I found 'em! O-o-y, over here! Over here!"

Not until the next morning, when the sun had risen, did the searchers locate the two missing people.

"What the—what in *God's name* happened here?"

The rescuers swore aloud at the state of the bodies, which they had found lying in the snow, the frost already entombing them.

In one hand, the man gripped several scraps of paper completely covered with writing, and in his other hand he held a pen. He lay on his stomach. Beneath him lay a woman who was completely naked. Tiny words filled every square inch of her skin.

“Both of them are dead, aren’t they . . . No. No, wait! I can’t believe it. She’s alive!”

The woman’s eyelashes fluttered faintly. In a moment, she opened her eyes.

“Call the medics! She’s awake! But how on earth, in this state . . .”

The woman whose entire body bore words stood up slowly, then looked down at the face of the man who had died as if shielding her.

It was the face of a man who had wrung out his lifeblood.

The woman embraced the man, caressing his hair. With lips to which the color had returned, she brought her lips to his and

Words Left Behind

I can't make a fire anymore. The coals have all burned out. There isn't any food. And Nami's body is growing colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing these words on the inside of a silver chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This pen, with its water-resistant ink, still writes. I never thought I'd die on a mountain. I didn't think I was that kind of person. But this might be an oddly fitting death for me. I want to keep writing until the moment I die. The problem now is how many scraps of paper there are left. I suppose that means I should choose my words carefully. Maybe writing stream of consciousness like this is pointless. No. What happens if I die while I'm picking out the right word? For me, right now, dying and leaving behind only a blank sheet with nothing written on it is a luxury I can't afford. As long as I'm alive, I want to keep writing. If the text breaks while I still have more to write it means that either the paper or my life has run out. If the ink runs out, I'm ready to use blood. Nothing will stop this pen from racing. I feel as though if this pen stops, I'll die. That's how cold it is. I'm cold and sleepy. I can't fall asleep. I'm writing to live. I will live to write. Writing, for me, is like primitive man leaving handprints on the walls of caves. Leaving the tracks of my nails in the dirt. I'm pouring my heart into writing right now to make a deal with Nature, the thing that is killing me. This is not for people in the far distant future to discover. I am only writing for myself. Since becoming a novelist, I've never written a piece that was just for me. I always thought about how to entertain others. But now I am writing for myself, only for myself. I have no intention of having anyone else read this. Not the slightest.

This is terrible! A sudden gust of wind just blew away several scraps of paper I'd written on. A portion of the proof that I lived, gone. I see. This has made me realize something. I thought I had been writing this just for myself. But when even a small piece of what I've written disappears, I feel so empty. I did want someone to read this someday after all. I have been made to understand that words exist for someone to read them. It isn't possible for them to exist solely for the writer. No matter how much I might write for my own satisfaction, the moment it's on the page, it exists for the reader, myself included. The truth is, I am certain I knew this in the beginning. As a novelist, I liked entertaining my readers. More than writing long works, I enjoyed writing shorter, well-crafted stories. I enjoyed imagining the reader's expression and gasp of surprise when they reached an end they didn't expect. It would have been so wonderful if I'd been able to write a story like that in the moments before my death. But it's too late now. To think I'd arrive at that idea when I'm on my last scrap of paper. I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Nami. You enjoyed my novels more than anyone else. I'm going to write the word I loved most of all in all the space left on this paper. Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami

Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Nami Na

I don't know how long I'll be able to keep writing, but I want to finish this work before I die. With the tip of this pen, I intend to engrave my soul in this writing. To whomever may find us--I beg a favor. I wonder if you would take this work, along with the writing I did on scraps of paper earlier, and publish them together as a book. I've used up all the paper, but there is still space to write here.

I am currently writing on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. Until the very end, she gave me her love, and now I set down my final work on her snow white flesh. The words I record here are the last drops of my life essence.

I give these words to Nami.

"I found them! Hey! Here! Over here!"

The search team found the two victims the next day, after the sun had already risen high in the sky.

"This is... What on earth happened here?"

They lay amid snow and frost frozen completely solid, and their strangeness caused cries of surprise.

The man clenched a number of scraps of paper completely crammed full of tiny writing in one hand, and the other held tightly to a pen. The woman lying under the man's prone body was, unbelievably, completely nude and covered, entirely and without gap, in, yes, tiny, cramped writing.

"Looks like they've both passed. No... wait. That's a surprise. The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids fluttered ever so slightly. Then, slowly, her eyes opened.

"Call in the rescue team! The woman's alive. But, in these conditions, how..."

The woman, her body covered in words, rose slowly and looked down at the face of the man who died trying to protect her.

Down into the face of the man who had wrung out every last drop of his life.

The woman brushed her hand over the man's hair, as though caressing it, and embraced him. Her lips, once more flushed with color, drew nearer to his--closer and clo

The Message He Left

Can't build a fire any more. Out of kindling. Nothing left to eat. Nami's body's getting colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing this on the back of foil wrappings from chocolate bars. Good thing we didn't burn them. Waterproof ink pen's still working. Never saw my

self dying up on some mountain. Didn't think I was the type. But it just might turn out to be more my style than I realized. I plan to keep writing up until the very end. Trouble is I'm not sure how

many scraps of paper I have left. Guess I should choose my words more carefully. Keeping up this stream of consciousness is futile. Then again, no point in dropping dead while I'm wondering what to write. It'd be a terrible waste to die leaving blank paper behind, so as long as I'm alive I'm going to keep

writing. If I break off suddenly in mid-sentence, would it be the paper or my life that ran out? If the ink goes I'll just use blood. Whatever happens, this pen's not going to stop moving. If I stop writing I'll surely die. That's how cold I am. Cold and tired. But I ca

n't fall asleep. I'm writing to survive. I'll survive so I can write. Like a caveman leaving his palm print on a rock wall, I'm leaving my own mark on the earth. By putting down my thoughts and feelings in words I've reached an understanding with Mother Nature, even as she's poised to kill me. I'm not writing this for the future of mankind to discover; it's entirely for me. Not once since becoming a novelist, have I written a single sentence just for myself. I've always been concerned with pleasing other people. So now I'm devoting myself entirely to writing for me. I don't care whether anyone reads what

I don't believe it, a sudden gust of wind just blew away a bunch of my papers. A part of my written testament to my existence. Oh, I see. I get it now. I thought I was writing for myself, but this empty feeling at the loss of just a few pages – clearly I *was* hoping for someone else to read it after I'm gone. This has been a learning experience; writing exists for the sake of the reader. It can never exist purely for the writer's own benefit. It doesn't matter how gratifying it is for me as a writer to put pen to paper, the words belong to my readers (of whom I'm one.) Today's the first time I truly under

[illegible]

Not sure how far I'll get, but I'm going to do my utmost to finish this piece before I die. I mean to transcribe my very soul through the tip of this pen. To the person who finds us, I have one request: could you take this work, together with the bits of paper, and publish it for me? I've used up all the paper, but I have a new canvas. I'm writing this on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. In one final offering of love, that alabaster flesh has become the medium for my ultimate creation. The words I write now are the last drops of my being.

I dedicate this piece to Nami.

“Hey, over here! Over here! I’ve found them!”

The search party came across the two missing people later the next day, when the sun had risen high in the sky.

“What the... What the hell happened here?” There was amazement at the bizarre appearance of the two bodies frozen rigid by the frost and snow.

In one hand, the man was clutching some scraps of paper, completely filled with tiny handwriting. The other hand was curled tightly around a pen. The man lay face down on top of the body of the woman. She was completely naked, and incredibly, covered from head to toe with the same tiny handwriting.

Looks like they're both dead.No, hold on! I don't believe it... The woman's alive!"

Her eyelids fluttered ever so slightly. Then slowly, she opened her eyes.

“Call for help! The woman’s alive. But in this state, how could she possibly...?”

The woman covered in writing slowly raised herself and gazed down at the face of the man who had sheltered her with his own body. The man who had wrung out every last drop of his own life.

She reached down and stroked his head, then took him in her arms, and, with the color returning to her lips, she leaned in towards hi

Words Left Behind

I can't make a fire anymore. The charcoal is gone. There isn't any food either. Naomi's body is getting colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm writing these words on the inside of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. The waterproof ink pen still works. I didn't think I'd die on a

mountain. That didn't seem like me. But, surprisingly, it might be a suitable way to die for me. I want to keep writing until I'm on the verge of death. The question is how many scraps of paper are

left over. In that case perhaps I should choose my words carefully. Writing in a stream of consciousness way like this doesn't make sense. No, that's not right. If I die while thinking about what to say what's the point in that? Dying with blank white paper left over would be a luxury for me right now. While I'm alive I want to write

freely. If the text is interrupted mid-thought that will mean that either the paper or my life force were used up. If the ink runs out I'll use blood. In any case I have to keep moving the pen. I feel like I'll die if I stop writing. It's that cold. I'm cold and sleepy. I won't

sleep. I will write to live. I will live to write. For me, writing is like how primitive men left imprints of the palms of their hands on cave walls. It's leaving one's scratchings on the earth. By writing what's in my heart right now I'm making a compromise with the natural world that is killing me. It's not like I'm doing this so that it will be discovered by mankind in the distant future. I'm writing entirely for myself. Since becoming a novelist I've never written something just for myself. I've always thought about what other people would enjoy. But right now I'm determined to write for myself. I'm not the least bit interested in whether someone will read

this later. Some of the scraps of paper I wrote on were blown away in the gust of wind just now. A piece of the evidence of my existence. Oh, so that's how it is. I get it now. I'd thought I was writing for myself. But I have such a feeling of emptiness because a piece of my writing is gone. I'd wanted someone to read this later after all. This has made me realize that writing exists for people to read. It can't just exist for the writer. No matter how much self-satisfaction one feels, writing is for readers, including oneself after one has finished writing. There's no doubt that I knew that from

the beginning. As a novelist I liked to entertain readers. I liked well-written short stories better than long ones. I liked to imagine readers' astonished expressions at an unexpected ending. It would be great if I could write such stories until I were on the verge of death. But to think of such things while I'm on my last piece of paper. I can't write any smaller than this. Oh, Naomi. You're the one who enjoyed my stories the most. Let me write the word I like most in the margins of this paper.

[illegible]

I don't know how much more I can write but I just want to finish this piece and then die. I will write with the intention of engraving my soul with the tip of this pen. I have a request for the people who find us. Will you please combine the other scraps of paper with this one and compile them into a book? I've used up all of the paper but I have another space I can write on.

I am now writing this on Naomi's body.

Poor Naomi. I'm writing this last work on the white flesh that offered up its love to me until the very end. The words I'm writing from this point on are the very last drops of my life force.

I dedicate those words to Naomi.

"I found them! Hey! They're here, they're here!"

The search party found the two victims the next day after the sun had risen high in the sky.

"This is...What in the world happened?"

Their astonished voices rang out when they came across the bizarre state of the two lying in the frozen solid snow and frost.

In one hand the man was clutching several scraps of paper that were chock-full of words and in the other a tightly gripped pen. Below the man, who was lying face-down, the woman was completely naked and her entire body was covered in tiny writing.

“Both of them are dead. No, wait. Astonishing. The woman is still alive!”

The woman's eyelids were fluttering faintly. Before long, they opened slowly.

“Call the relief squad! The woman is alive. But why in the world in this state...”

The woman with writing all over her body slowly got up and looked down at the face of the dead man who had protected her.

The face of the man who had squeezed out every last drop of his life.

Gathering him into her arms to caress his hair, she slowly brought her lips, whose color had returned, closer to those of the man

The Words That Remained

Can't get a fire going anymore. There's nothing left to start a fire with. No food left either. Nami's body is just getting colder and colder. She hasn't been breathing for a while. I'm writing these lines now on the backs of the foil off the chocolate bars. At least I didn't burn these. The pen with the waterproof ink still writes. I never thought I would die in the mountai

ns. I didn't think that was the kind of person I am. But I suppose it might be an oddly appropriate way for me to die. I would like to keep writing until the bitter end. The only question is how many scra

ps of paper I have left. In that case maybe I should be choosing my words more carefully. Maybe it's pointless to keep writing the way I am now, wherever my thoughts drift. But that can't be right. What if I were to die while I was still trying to find the right words? Such an extravagant thought for me to have now, of leaving any blank and unwritten paper behind when I die. Yes, as long as I'm still alive I would like to keep wri

ting. And if something happens and the sentences break off while I still have more to write, I wonder if it will be because the paper is gone or because my life is? If the ink runs out it will be blood I have to use next. But whatever happens I must not stop this pen. If I stop, I think I might really die. That's how cold I am. Cold and sleepy. I mustn't sl

eep. I'll write so I can live. I'll make myself live so I can write. For me the act of writing is the same thing as it was for our prehistoric ancestors when they imprinted the marks of their fists on a cave wall. It's the act of scoring one's clawmarks indelibly into the earth. By writing down each drift of my thoughts now I am negotiating my peace with the natural world that is killing me. Not so that this can be discovered by any future human beings. What I write now is only for me. In all this time since I became a writer I never once wrote anything just for myself. Always I was thinking about pleasing someone else. But now I write entirely and only for myself. Whether it will ever be read by someone later has nothing whatsoever

How can this be happening? Some of the scraps of paper that I've already written on were swept away in that last gust of wind. Those small parts of the proof that I lived, swept away. Is this how it is, then? Now I understand. I thought I was writing these lines for my own sake. But I feel such emptiness when even a single part of what I've written vanishes. Obviously I did want someone to read these lines later. And I'm being admonished that words in themselves exist for the sake of the ones who read them. They are incapable of existing solely for the sake of the writer. No matter how much pure self-satisfaction there might be in it, the written word really belongs to its readers, starting with the self once the writing is done. Isn't that something I understood from

the start, though? As a writer I've always liked to please my readers. I always preferred to write a short, well-crafted story over a longer one. I liked to imagine the surprise on my readers' faces over each unexpected ending. Of course it would be best of all if I could write such a story up until the bitter end. But it's already too late. What good does it do to think of it now that I've reached the last scrap of paper? I can't write words any smaller than I already am. Oh, Nami. You were always the one who rewarded my stories with most pleasure when you read them. Nami, here in the margins I'm going to let myself to write the one word that I loved best. NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNa miNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNa

I don't know how much longer I can carry on writing, but I wish that I could at least complete this one work before I die. I intend to write as if I were engraving the very shape of my soul with the tip of this pen. I have one request to make of the ones who find us. Would you edit this work together with the scraps of paper I wrote on earlier, and publish it for me? I've already filled the papers with all the words they can hold, but here at least there is still space to write.

I'm writing this, finally, on Nami's body.

Poor Nami. I will compose my last work here on her white skin, the woman who loved me until the last. The next words I compose will be the very last drops of my life.

I dedicate every word to Nami.

* * *

"We found them! Hey! Over here, over here!"

It was well after sunrise on the following day when the rescue party discovered the two missing climbers.

"They're... What on earth happened to them?"

The rescuers cried out in surprise at the uncanny sight of the two people sprawled in the thick-frozen crust of frost and snow.

The male climber was clutching a handful of scraps of paper, all of which were closely inscribed with a swarm of minute words, while in his other hand he firmly held the pen. Beneath his facedown body the woman lay, stark naked, and she too was perfectly inscribed over every surface of her body with the same minute, swarming words.

"They're both deceased. Wait...no...oh, my God. The woman's still alive!"

The woman's eyelids moved almost imperceptibly. At length, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the medical team! The woman is alive. But in these conditions, how...?"

The woman covered in words stood up slowly, attempting to shield herself as she gazed down at the dead man's face.

Down at the face of the man who had wrung the last drops of life from himself.

She raised the man up in an embrace, smoothing his hair gently as she did so, and slowly moved her lips with their regained color closer to the man's own li

Words Left Behind

It's no longer possible to make a fire. The kindling is exhausted. And there's nothing left to eat. Nami's body is getting colder and colder. She's already stopped breathing. I'm now writing this on the back of a silver foil chocolate wrapper. Good that we didn't burn it. The waterproof ink pen still works. I never thought I would die on a mountain. Never thought myself the type. Still, in a strange way it's probably a fitting way to die. I want to go on writing to the point of death. How many scraps of paper are left? That's the problem. Should I choose my words carefully then? Maybe it's meaningless to go on writing like this as my consciousness ebbs? No, definitely not. What will happen, I wonder, if I die in the process of choosing words? Given my current predicament it's extravagant of me to be worried about leaving behind a blank piece of paper when I die.

As long as I'm alive I want to go on writing. If my words break off before I finish, it will mean one of two things—my paper or my life has been exhausted. If I run out of ink I am prepared to write in blood. In any case, I must not stop moving my pen. If my pen were to stop I would feel like I was dying. That's how cold it is. I am chilled and drowsy. I must not sleep. I write to stay alive. I stay alive to write. For me, my writing now is like a primitive man leaving the imprint of a hand on the wall of a cave. Like leaving fingernail marks on the ground. By documenting the flow of my mind I am coming to terms with the natural forces that are killing me. It's not that I particularly want my writing discovered for posterity.

I am writing for myself, to the bitter end. I have never written like this just for myself since I became a novelist. I was always intent on entertaining people. Now, though, I am writing single-mindedly for my own sake. Do I desire that someone read my writing later? Not in the...

God no! A gust of wind suddenly blew away several scraps of paper I had written on. Some evidence that I was alive. Is that what it was? It's clear now. I thought I was writing all this just for me. Yet losing just a portion of what I wrote made me feel so empty. I guess I did want someone to read my writing later. This makes me realize that written words exist for readers. They cannot exist for the writer alone. However much it is done for one's own satisfaction, a piece of writings exists for readers, including the writer too after the work is complete.

[illegible]

I don't know how much further I can go on writing, but I really want to finish this piece before I die. I want to go on writing as if the tip of my pen were inscribing my soul. I have a favor to ask of the people who discover us. Could you edit this work, along with

what I wrote earlier on the strips of paper, and make it into a book. I've used up all the paper now, but there is still some space to write here.

I'm writing this on Nami's body now.

Poor Nami! I am writing my final work on the white flesh that to the very end devoted its love to me. The words I will put down hereafter will be my final drops of life.

I dedicate these words to Nami.

* *

"I found them! Hey, over here, over here."

It was the following day when the search party discovered the bodies, the sun already high in the sky.

"This is.... What on earth happened?"

They voiced surprise at the extraordinary sight of the two figures lying down amidst the hard-frozen snow and frost.

The man was clutching several fragments of paper containing tightly packed, minutely written text, his other hand firmly gripping a pen. Amazingly, the woman, lying beneath the prostrate man, was completely naked, every inch of her body covered with writing in the same small, tightly packed style.

"They're both dead I suppose! No, wait! I'll be damned... The woman's still kicking!"

The woman's eyelids were moving faintly. And after some time she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the relief party! The woman is alive. But, in these conditions. How could she..."

The woman, her whole body covered in writing, slowly raised herself, then looked down at the face of the dead man, frozen in the position he took to shelter her.

At the face of the man who had wrung out every last drop of his life force.

The woman lifted the man up in her arms, to caress his hair, then gently, towards the lips of the man, her lips, their color now restored...

Letters Left Behind by Masahiko Inoue

I can no longer even make a fire. The embers have gone out. There is no food. Naomi's body is gradually getting colder. She has already stopped breathing. Right now I am writing this passage on the back of a chocolate wrapper. I'm glad I didn't burn it. This waterproof pen can still write. I didn't think I would die in the mountains.

I didn't think I was that kind of person. But it may turn out to be an unexpectedly fitting death. I want to keep writing up until the moment I die. The problem is how much paper is left.

Then I should probably choose my words before I write. It may be meaningless to keep writing in this rambling train-of-thought style. Or no, it's not. What would happen if I died while choosing my words? The idea of dying and leaving behind a blank paper with nothing written on it is a luxury to me right now. I want to keep writing freely while I'm alive.

If it should happen that my sentence is cut off while I continue to write, it will probably be because either my paper has run out or my life has run out. If my ink runs out I will use blood. At any rate I must not stop the movement of my pen. I feel that if my pen stops I will die. It is that cold. So cold I am sleepy. I must not sleep.

I write so I may live. I will live to write. For me, writing is the same as primitive peoples leaving the imprints of their hands on the cave walls. It is a way to leave one's mark on this vast earth. By letting my heart flow through in my words now I am striking a balance with the nature that is killing me. It's not really for the sake of being discovered by future generations. I am writing for myself to the very end. I haven't written anything solely for myself like this since I became a novelist. I was always thinking about what people would enjoy. But now I am honestly writing only for myself. I'm not thinking in the slightest about someone later reading it and

How could this be? Just now a gust of wind sent a few slips of the paper I'd been using flying away. A piece of the proof that I was alive. So that's how it was. Now I understand. I thought I was writing this passage only for myself. But having even a piece of my writing disappear forever leaves me feeling this empty inside. I must have wanted my writing to be read by someone after all. I have been made to realize that letters are things that exist for the sake of the reader. They cannot exist only for the writer. Writing exists for the reader, including the person writing it at the time, no matter how much the writing is intended for self-satisfaction. Really, I must have understood this from the very beginning.

I liked bringing people enjoyment as a novelist. I liked writing short, well-formed stories rather than long ones. I liked imagining the surprised face of the reader upon reaching an unexpected twist ending. It would be wonderful if I could write that sort of story right up until I die. But now it's too late. To think of that only as I reach the last piece of paper. I cannot write these letters any smaller. Oh, Naomi. You were the one who enjoyed my novels the most. In the empty spaces of this paper, allow me to write my favorite letters of all.
Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi
Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Naomi Na-
I don't know how much I can write, but I want to write at least this work before I die. I will write on, engraving my soul with the point of this pen. I have a request for the people who

find us. I wonder if I might have this work, along with the previous fragments, compiled into a book? I have filled up all of the paper, but here, there is still some space left to write.

Now, I am writing this on Naomi's body.

Poor Naomi. I will lay down my final work on that white body which, to the very end, has offered me such love. The letters I write down from here on are the final drops of my life-force.

And, I dedicate those letters, to Naomi.

"I found them! Hey, over here, over here."

When the search party found the two victims, it was a few days later, and the sun had climbed high in the sky.

"What the... What on earth happened here?"

They raised a startled cry upon seeing the unusual state of the two bodies lying encased in snow and ice.

The man was clutching several scraps of paper that were filled with cramped, detailed letters, and in the other hand he gripped a pen. The woman lying beneath the man's prone body was, for some reason, stark naked and also covered all over with cramped, detailed letters.

"The two of them both passed away, huh. ...No, hold on. ...What a surprise. The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids were faintly moving. Finally, she slowly opened her eyes.

"Call the rescue party! The woman's alive. But, in this condition, why..."

The woman with writing all over slowly sat herself up, and looked down on the face of the man who died as though trying to shelter her.

The face of the man who squeezed out every last drop of his life energy.

The woman held the man closely and stroked his hair, and with lips that had regained their color, she slowly approaches the man's lips -

Words Left Behind - By Inoue Masahiko

I can't keep the fire burning any longer. The embers have already burnt out.

Nothing is left to eat.

Nami's body will only get colder and colder, her breathing has already stopped.

I write this on the back of chocolate wrapping paper. It's a good thing I didn't burn it.

My waterproof pen is still working.

I never thought I'd die on a mountain, I didn't think it was in my character. Dying like this might actually suit me after all though.

I want to keep writing until my last dying breath. The only problem now is how many scraps of paper remain.

With that in mind, maybe it's better to choose my words before writing them?

Is writing whatever pops into my mind like this completely pointless?

No.

What if I die while obsessing over my choice of words?

At this point, leaving behind clean blank paper is a luxury I can't afford.

While I'm alive, keep on writing.

Should the words stop flowing before I finish, it will be because either my paper; or my life, has run out.

If the ink in my pen runs out, I'll write with my blood.

I can't stop writing under any circumstances.

I feel like I'll slip away if my pen stops moving.

It's cold. I'm tired.

I mustn't fall asleep.

I'm writing to stay alive. To write, I'll keep living.

Writing is to me the same as the first man marking their hand print on the wall of caves. The same as leaving marks of your nails in the dirt.

By writing what runs through my mind, I make peace with my death.

I do this not so that it may be found by people in the future. I write purely for myself.

I, the person who since becoming a novelist never once wrote for himself.

I only ever thought of pleasing people.

Yet, here I am, writing solely for myself.

With a gust of wind, several pages of my writing have blown away.

A piece of evidence of my existence.

That's what it was.

Now I realise.

I thought I had been writing solely for myself.

But losing just a piece of what I've written leaves me as empty as this.

I did actually want this to be read by someone after all.

I've been made to realise that writing exists for the reader. It cannot possibly exist only for the writer.

No matter how self-serving a motive with which it is written, the moment it is finished it exists for the reader, of which the writer themselves becomes one when it is completed.

No doubt this was understood in the beginning.

As a novelist, I loved to bring joy to my readers.

More than long stories, I loved the short, well-written ones.

I loved imagining the surprise of readers as they read an unexpected ending to a story.

Until my last gasp, being able to write those kinds of stories is my ultimate.

Alas, it's too late.

Realizing this just as I reach my last page...

I can't write the letters any smaller.

Ahhh, Nami.

You were the one who enjoyed my books the most, weren't you.

With the last blank scrap of paper, I'll write my favourite word.

NamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNamiNa
miNamiNamiNamiNamiNa

I don't know for how much longer I can keep writing, but I want to at least finish this piece before I die.

From the tip of my pen, I shall carve out my soul as I write.

I have a favour to ask of the person who finds us.

I wonder if you'd be able to edit and publish what I have written here into a book?

It looks like I've exhausted the last of my paper, there's still some space to write here though.

I'm now writing this on Nami's body.

Poor, poor Nami. Until the end, you offer me your white flesh. On it, I write my final piece.

What I write now is the final drop of my life.

I dedicate this piece, to Nami.

"I've found them! Hey! Over here, over here!"

Two members of the search party found the bodies the following day, after the sun had hit its peak.

"What... What the hell happened here?"

The two lie frozen solid in the snow and frost, side-by-side.

In one hand the man clutches a handful of pages covered in writing. The other hand clenched tightly around a pen.

Lying underneath the face-down man is a woman, bare-naked. Tiny words evenly covering across her entire body.

"Looks like they're both already gone doesn't it".

"No... wait! She moved didn't she? The woman's alive!"

The woman's eyelids faintly move. Before long, they slowly open.

"Get the medical team! The woman's alive! But in this state... how?"

As the woman, covered in writing, slowly rises, she looks down at the face of the man who died protecting her.

The man who forced out every last drop of his life.

#067

She strokes his hair and embraces him, with the colour in her lips returning she moves towards his li

●井上雅彦

一九六〇年、東京・新宿生まれ。八一年、徳間書店のミステリ専門誌「ルパン」誌上の都筑道夫選ショートショートコンテストにて怪奇掌篇「消防車が遅れて」が最優秀賞。八三年、星新一ショートショートコンテスト'83にて「よけいなものが」が優秀作となり、以降、怪奇幻想短篇を専門的に執筆。

短篇集に「異形博覧会」「恐怖館主人」「怪物晚餐会」、ショートショート集に「1001秒の恐怖映画」がある。九七年より、書下しアンソロジー「異形コレクション」を企画・監修。同シリーズは、九九年、第一九回日本SF大賞特別賞を受賞。

残されていた文字

もう焚火^{ふまひ}をすることもできない。火種が尽きてしまったのだ。食料もない。奈美の体もどんどん冷たくなっていく。すでに息をしていない。今この文章をチョコレートの銀紙の裏に書いている。燃さなくてよかった。耐水性インクのペンはまだ書ける。山で死ぬとは思わなか

った。そんな柄じゃないと思っていた。だが意外と似合う死にかたかも知れない。死ぬまぎわまで書き続けたい。問題は紙きれがど

れほど残ってるかだ。それなら言葉を選んで書くべきだろうか。こうして意識の流れるまま書いていくのは無意味なことだろうか。いや違う。言葉を選んでいるうちに死んでしまったらどうなるのだ。何も書いていない白い紙を残して死ぬなど今の俺には贅沢^{ぜいたく}な話だ。

どこまで書けるかわからないが、この作品だけは書きあげてから死にたい。このペン先から自分の魂を刻みつけるつもりで書いていこうと思う。私たちを発見してくださった方にお願ひがある。先に書いた紙片とともに、この作品を編集して本にしていただけないだろうか。紙はすべて書きつぶしてしまつたが、ここにならまだ書けるスペースがある。

自分は今、奈美の体にこれを書いている。

可哀そうな奈美。最後まで私に愛を捧げてくれたその白い肉体に、私は最後の作品を記す。これから記す文字は、私の生命の最後の滴なのだ。

私は、その文字を、奈美に捧げる。

* * *

「見つけたぞ！ おおい、ここだ、ここだ」

捜索隊が二人の遭難者を発見したのは、その翌日、陽も高く昇つてからのことであつた。

「これは……。いったい、何があつたんだ」

彼らは、がちがちに凍りついた雪や霜の中に横たわる二人の異常な様に驚きの声をあげた。

男のほうは、細かい文字のびつしり書きこまれた紙片を幾枚も握りしめ、もう片方の手にはペンをしっかりと持つている。男の俯せの体の下になつてゐる女は、なんと全裸で、全身いたるところにくまなく、やはり細かい文字をびつしりと書かれてゐる。

「二人とも死亡しているな。……いや、待てよ。……驚いたな。女のほうは生きているぞ！」

女の目蓋が、かすかに動いているのだ。やがて、ゆつくりと眼を開ける。

「救護班を呼べ！ 女は生きてゐる。しかし、こんな状態で、どうして……」

全身に文字を書かれた女は、ゆつくりと起きあがると、自分をかばうようにして死んでゐる男の顔を見下ろした。

自分の生命の滴を、すべて絞りつくした男の顔を。

女は、男の髪を撫でるようにして彼を抱きあげると、色をとりもどした唇を、ゆつくりと男の唇に近づ