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Taniguchi, Hideko

Department of Multicultural Society, Faculty of Languages and Cultures, Kyushu University :  
Associate Professor : International Social Development

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Hideko Taniguchi

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## To Eat or Not To Eat: Fear and Safety in Yuichi Kimura's *One Stormy Night*

Hideko Taniguchi

### I

Yuichi Kimura's *Arashi no Yoru ni* series [*One Stormy Night* series] is one of the most popular picture books in Japan. The first book of this series, titled *One Stormy Night*, was published in 1994, and the seventh and the last book, titled *Mangetsu no Yoru ni* [*One Full-Moon Night*], was published in 2005. It is a tale of a wolf and a goat who make friends with each other under the mutual misunderstanding that the other is of the same species.

This paper explores how the wolf and the goat can make friends with each other, how the wolf manages to refrain from eating the goat, and how the author restores safety to the endangered relationship between the wolf and the goat, by focusing on the theme of the conflict between natural instinct and moral restriction.

### II

Fear and the desire for safety lead the wolf and the goat into making friends with each other. The following description of the stormy weather at the very beginning introduces the insecure, fearful setting of the story:

The wind howled and roared, and with every gust the rain, which felt more like hard, stinging pellets than rain, lashed down with a terrible force.

*(One Stormy Night, p. 2)*

A goat named Mei manages to take shelter from the heavy rain in a small tumbledown hut. Just in the same way, a wolf named Gabu makes his way into the hut. Both of them believe that they are of the same species, and they fall into a close conversation with each other. Because of the pitch-black darkness in the hut and of a nose cold each is suffering from, they cannot see or smell each other at all. This is why they do not realize that they are predator and prey.

They begin their conversation with a talk about the rough weather which makes them feel insecure and scared. The goat says, "Well, it's a relief to have somebody here with me."*(One Stormy Night, p. 10)* The wolf agrees with him, saying, "And I can say the same. Spendin a stormy night like this in a hut all alone—it'd put the shivers up anyone."*(One Stormy Night, p. 11)* Here their companionship changes their feeling: from the feeling of fear and insecurity into that of relief and safety.

They also talk about where they live, what they like to eat, and how they were brought up and taught

by their mother, etc. Their conversation conveys a double meaning. Believing that they are of the same species, they do not notice the double meaning underlying the words of their companion:

“Whereabouts do you live?” asked the goat.

“Over in Ravenous Ravine.”

“Ravenous Ravine?” The goat was shocked.

“Isn’t it dangerous in that part of the world?”

“Dangerous, you say? No. The sides of the valley are a bit steep, but I enjoy meself there well enough.”

Ravenous Ravine was a favorite haunt for packs of wolves.

“Really,” the goat said, impressed. “That’s brave of you. I’m from Breezy Hill myself.”

It was the wolf’s turn to be impressed. “Is that so now? Lucky you. Plenty of nice juicy grub to eat there, right?”

The wolf was, of course, referring to goats.

“Mm, it’s not bad.” And the goat laughed modestly.

At the moment, both their tummies rumbled, rather loudly.

“Come to think of it, I’m hungry,” said the wolf.

“Me too. Famished.”

(*One Stormy Night*, pp. 18-21)

There is a touch of dramatic irony in this conversation. It is true that the conversation reinforces their sense of relief and safety and deepens their mutual understanding, but it also hints at the fragility of their future relationship. Under the surface of their comfortable conversation and mutual understanding which make them feel relieved and secure, lurks the dark and frightening truth, which makes them feel frightened and insecure.

Their feeling of relief and safety is threatened with thunder and lightning, which are scary to both of them. When an enormous crash of thunder makes the whole hut shake, the wolf and the goat yell out in fright and grab each other.

“Sorry,” said the goat, trembling. “I’m not very good at handling this kind of thing.”

“Neither am I.” The wolf let out his breath. “This is scarin me out of me wits!”

“It’s amazing the way we feel alike about things,” said the goat.

“I was just thinking how we seem to hit it off.”

(*One Stormy Night*, pp. 40-41)

The feeling of relief and safety threatened by the thunder and the lightning is restored by the other’s presence and by their belief that they feel alike about things and have something in common. The sense of fear and insecurity provoked by the stormy weather leads them to have empathy and identification with each other. Their empathy and identification are reflected in such remarks as “It’s funny how similar we are.” (*One Stormy Night*, p. 32) and “we probly even look alike, too!” (*One Stormy Night*, p. 33) Now they are sure that they feel happier and safer being together, and naturally they decide to make friends with each other. The wolf concludes their unexpected encounter on the stormy night as

follows:

“With such a horrible storm, I thought tonight was gonna be the worst night of me life. But well, thanks to this, I’ve made friends with you. It hasn’t been so bad after all—in fact, it’s prob’ly the best night I ever had.”

(*One Stormy Night*, p. 42)

The fear and the insecurity they feel in the terrible, stormy, thunderous weather are replaced by the feeling of safety and happiness when they talk and find that they feel alike. Because of this empathy and identification, they come to think that they have found a soul mate.

Without realizing that they are a predator and his prey, they promise to meet in front of the hut the next day for lunch. “One Stormy Night” is a password they decide to give when they meet, so that they can recognize their friend.

The first story ends with the scene where the wolf and the goat part before dawn after the storm is over. The anonymous narrator says, “But what would happen when the two animals met again, in broad daylight, there at the foot of the hill?” (*One Stormy Night*, p. 48) The story has an open ending, and it evokes the reader’s suspense and invites various interpretations—Do they become friends even after they know they are natural enemies? Does the wolf eat the goat for lunch? and so on.

### III

When he published *One Stormy Night*, the author did not actually plan to write its sequels, but because of its widespread popularity, he decided to write sequels to tell what happens to their friendship and to give his conclusion to the conflict between appetite and friendship, or that of survival instinct and moral restriction<sup>1</sup>:

*Aru Hareta Hi ni* [*One Sunny Day*] (1996)

*Kumo no Kirema ni* [*Rift in the Clouds*] (1997)

*Kiri no Naka de* [*Veiled in a Fog*] (1999)

*Doshaburi no Hi ni* [*One Rainy Day*] (2000)

*Fubuki no Ashita* [*Another Snowstormy Day*] (2002)

*Mangetsu no Yoru ni* [*One Full-Moon Night*] (2005)

Let us move to the scene in the second book, *Aru Hareta Hi ni* [*One Sunny Day*], where the two animals meet and realize that they are a wolf and a goat. Even after each realizes the species of the other, they choose to remain friends, because they feel happier and safer together:

“I’ve always been scared stiff of wolves. I still can’t quite believe I made a date for lunch with the one animal I’m most frightened of.”

“Well, I’m wonderin what I’m doin too. I mean, it’s like I’ve made a date for lunch—*with* lunch!” The wolf caught himself. “Oops. Said something I shouldn’t have.”

“That’s all right. I know if you really wanted to gobble me up, you’d have done so just now, when

we met in front of the hut.”

“True. I might look like yer typical wolf, but for me, friendship comes first, before anything else.”

“Really? Me too. See? We’ve got so much in common. And we were both so frightened by the thunder last night.”

(*One Sunny Day*, pp. 5-6)

In this passage, typical images of wolves and goats are presented to remind the reader that they are natural enemies. Goats are scared of wolves and run away from them, and wolves regard goats as food and eat them. Nevertheless, the two animals feel that they are not a typical wolf or a typical goat. That is why they have made friends with each other.

The sense of safety and happiness they established in their companionship on the stormy night is not ruined even by the fact that they are a wolf and a goat. They even decide to put the highest priority not on survival instinct but on friendship. Both of them try to believe that the wolf will not have an appetite for his goat friend even when he is starving. They reinforce the sense of safety and happiness.

The above scene is followed by the scene in which they are climbing the hill to eat the packed lunch together at the hill top:

At that moment, he looked up, and there, right in front of his eyes, was the goat’s bottom.

And every time the goat jumped up to another rock along the path, his bottom waggled and bobbed.

And his tail, which looked as if it would make quite a tender, tasty morsel, swung to and fro, just as if it were enticing the wolf to try and take a snap at it.

“Mm. I’d love to have a bite of *that*...” The wolf couldn’t stop his mouth watering at the sight. He gulped back his saliva.

The next moment, though, he shook his head.

“Oh dear! What a bad character I’ve got!” he muttered to himself. “To even think for a second that a friend was a tasty-lookin snack!”

And he gave himself several raps on the head with his paws for even thinking such a bad thought.

After that, he took care to keep his eyes fixed on the ground as he climbed up the path.

(*One Sunny Day*, pp. 17-19)

Here, the wolf begins to feel insecure about his own appetite for the flesh of his goat friend. Though he has determined to put the highest priority on friendship, he finds it difficult to restrict his life-sustaining instinct. Hereafter, the story revolves around the wolf’s dilemma in needing to choose between friendship and survival. It explores the theme of the conflict between survival instincts and moral restrictions, posing the question: How can a starving wolf refrain from eating a goat who is a friend?

#### IV

In the six sequels, there are several scenes which depict difficulties confronted by the wolf and the goat because of their unusual friendship. The friendship between a predator and his prey endangers

both the pack of wolves and the flock of goats. In order to survive, wolves need meat, and goats should keep away from wolves. That is why all the other wolves and goats accuse them of breaking the primary rule of the community, and the wolves chase them to kill them, after they leave the community they belong to.

I will focus on a few scenes, which reflect the author's stance on the conflict between survival instinct and moral restrictions. As in the above scene, the wolf manages to overcome his natural instinct with great effort several times. However, gradually he comes to feel insecure not only about his own appetite for the goat but also about his friendship with the goat. The highlight of his dilemma is in the following scene in *Fubuki no Ashita* [*Another Snowstormy Day*]:

Without looking at the goat, the wolf started to say,  
 "To tell the truth, I had a strange dream...."  
 "What was it like?"  
 "In that wonderful dream—I gorged meself on fatty goat meat.... It tasted very good...."  
 "What?"  
 "That's why I've come to think.... I might eat you anytime if we keep stayin together."  
 With glittering eyes, the wolf looked over the goat.  
 "Oof! Get away soon! Get away while I am takin a hold on meself..."

(*Another Snowstormy Day*, pp. 24-25)

This scene shows that the wolf has a strong sense of fear when he notices his irresistible appetite for the flesh of his goat friend. He is obsessed with his appetite for goat meat, which is his favorite food. The wolf's solution to his conflict between appetite and friendship is to leave the goat. That is the way he believes he can put the priority on friendship. However, the goat will not leave him because he trusts the wolf and he does not want to lose his friend. The wolf decides to live up to his trust. The goat's trust on the wolf restores their friendship and the sense of safety they feel being together.

In the following scene, both of them are starving and getting weak in a cave in the snowy mountain. In this life-threatening situation, the goat tries to sacrifice himself to the wolf:

"Don't I look like food in your eyes?"  
 "Huh? No, not at all. You're my friend. You never look like food to me."  
 The goat was right. But the goat said smiling,  
 "It's all right. It's terribly cold outside. Probably I won't survive. Then, you...should survive instead of me."  
 "What are you talkin about?"  
 "Surely, I'm happy to have met you. You're a friend worth dying for."  
 "I...I'm happy to have a friend kind enough to say so."

(*Another Snowstormy Day*, pp. 49-50)

When they are almost starving to death, the goat decides to sacrifice his life to the wolf, who is more likely to survive coldness in the snowstorm. In this extreme condition, the wolf, as well as the goat, gives priority to the other's life, not his own. Pretending to accept the goat's offer, the wolf gets out

of the cave and disappears into the snowstorm, saying to himself, “I can never eat him.” (*Another Snowstormy Day*, p. 54) There is a sharp contrast between the fear of threatening death from hunger they feel in the snowstorm and the sense of safety and happiness they feel about their friendship. In this critical situation, the two animals seem to overcome the moral conflict. To put friendship first, the wolf overcomes his instincts, while the goat trusts the wolf’s power of moral restriction.

## V

In the last passage of the whole story, the author poses his conclusion to the thematic problem of the conflict of survival instinct and moral restriction.

The wolf and the goat climbed up the hill.  
 A refreshing wind stroked them tenderly.  
 The moon shed a transparent light on them.  
 “See? We are seeing the moon together again.”  
 “Yeah. It’s the best night I ever had.”  
 Their silhouettes overlapped the rising full moon.  
 The silhouettes reflected on the moon are not those of a goat or a wolf but of two nameless creatures.  
 The moon rises high up in the sky in silence.

(*One Full-Moon Night*, pp. 60-64)

In the last volume of the series, *Mangetsu no Yoru ni* [*One Full-Moon Night*], the goat and the wolf, settled in the safe and secure circumstances, manage to restore their friendship after much difficulty. When the goat meets the wolf again in a green, fertile forest over the mountain where they parted, the wolf cannot recognize his friend and even tries to eat him, because he has lost his memory due to an avalanche he encountered in the snowy mountain. Out of his unreserved trust in the wolf and their friendship, the goat tries very hard to remind the wolf that they are good friends. At last, the words “one stormy night” awaken the wolf’s memory, and their friendship is restored. As the narrator emphasizes, they are not a predator and his prey but loyal friends. The author’s conclusion is that, as well as the power of friendship, the wolf’s strength of moral restriction and the goat’s sincere trust in his friend are a key to solving the problem of conflict between appetite and friendship. He suggests that friendship and moral restriction can overcome survival instinct.

Finally, I’d like to make a brief comment on another solution to a similar dilemma presented in the American animated movie *Madagascar* (2005). A zoo lion named Alex is sent to Madagascar with his animal friends. In the wilderness in Africa he finds his survival instinct beginning to show for the first time in his life. That is because in order to survive in Africa, unlike in a city zoo in which he was served prepared steaks, he has to hunt for animals to get flesh. He suffers from the conflict between appetite and friendship, and the friendship between him and a zebra, Marty, is threatened by his appetite for the flesh. Like the wolf in *One Stormy Night*, he is also frightened at his irresistible appetite for his friend, and he decides to leave their friends for fear of eating the zebra, which isolates the lion from the other friends and causes insecurity in both of them. With the warm help of his friends, the lion finally

manages to restrict his appetite for the zebra, and as a result he is starving. His starvation is satisfied by sushi prepared by his penguin friends. Sushi suits the lion's taste, and he can eat it instead of the flesh of the zebra. Here, sushi for the lion is employed as a *deus ex machina*, or a god out of the machine, to solve the conflict between survival instinct and moral restriction. This may seem to be an easy and childish solution to the serious problem of a moral dilemma, but it is not. Sushi functions as an outer restraint which prevents the lion's hunting instinct and appetite for the zebra from coming out and dominating him.<sup>2</sup> The idea of an outer restraint cannot be seen in *One Stormy Night*. This might reflect the ethical view widely accepted in Japan that the inborn nature of human beings is good.

- \* This paper is based on my presentation at the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennial Congress of International Research Society for Children's Literature in 2011.
- \* The English translations of *One Stormy Night* and *One Sunny Day* in this paper are Lucy North's. See Yuichi Kimura, *One Stormy Night* [*Arashi no Yoru ni*], Lucy North (trans.) (Kodansha International, 2003) and Yuichi Kimura, *One Sunny Day* [*Aru Hareta Hi ni*], Lucy North (trans.) (Kodansha International, 2003).
- \* The English translations of *Another Snowstormy Day* [*Fubuki no Ashita*] and *One Full-Moon Night* [*Mangetsu no Yoru ni*] in this paper are my own.

### Notes

1. The author has published three additional episodes as well. See Yuichi Kimura, *Shiroi Yami no Hate de* [*The End of the White Darkness*] (Kodansha, 2004), *Hitoribocchi no Gabu* [*Lonely Gabu*] (Kodansha, 2011), and *Mei wa Nannimo Kowaku nai* [*Mei's Scared of Nothing*] (Kodansha, 2011).
2. The idea of an outer restraint is also seen in such novels as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.

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*Madagascar*, animation film, written by Tom McGrath, Eric Darnell, Billy Frolick, and Mark Burton,

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Yuichi Kimura's Web Site at <http://www.kimura-yuichi.com/>