

天道虫 (tentōmushi)

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by [wrenuu](#)

Summary

If he dies early, without surpassing childhood and not having any chance to build up good karma, being forced to pray and build stone towers to climb out of limbo into the Pure Lands, Madara knows the guardian deity Jizō Bosatsu would hide him in the sleeves of his robe. Kā-san won't have to imagine him lingering at the riverbed of purgatory, unable to cross the river, unable to gain salvation.

The tiny sculpture of Koyasu-sama, sitting undetectable in his pocket, lends him a quiet strength as he strolls outside the compound gates among the main storage for the Uchiha fighters for the first time. The legends say she gave birth to a healthy son while her house succumbed to flames. Madara thinks his own mother knows the scent of smoke too well.

Madara was born screaming.

Chapter 1: two hares. one hunter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

THE LADY-IN-WAITING SUWO

If I had made thy proffered arm
A pillow for my head
For but the moment's time,
In which A summer's dream had fled,
What would the world have said?

Madara was born screaming.

He was later told by his father that he fought his way out of the womb making Kā-san cry more than any of her children would, when he came into the world.

(She holds him to her heaving chest. He is crying and Naoko tries to hush him. Her son's face is flush from exertion and his lungs are powerful when he conveys his uneasiness.

There are freckles speckled across his torso, like the tiny spots of a bug's coat. She ignores the apprehension coming from the attendants and the midwife. The miko, sitting in the corner of the room, chants prayers and stays alert for the dangers of hungry ghosts attracted by her parturition blood.

Hers, she smiles at him as he clutches her finger. So small.

Her little *tentōmushi*.

Her heart feels like it's bursting.

Tomorrow, he will be my husband's child, It's a tight grip, and he doesn't let go, but tonight — tonight he is mine.)

It means that you're strong, Tarō remarked when he would come back dirty and weary from the borders. He always took a moment to hug Madara hard but carefully, as if he feared the child would fall apart from such gentle touch.

Madara was strong enough to be another one of the sons Tajima wished for. Just strong enough to barely survive the first months of living.

And, after that, with potential honed and sharpened, strong enough to hold a sword steadily while slicing a Senju's throat open.

He recalls, faintly, that Kā-san worried much when she fitted his first of many armor suits. The dō-maru was a deep crimson, made from boar leather and crafted iron. His mother was the one who braided the wool of the fabric, for good luck.

Red is the color of fighting, was written in one of the many old scrolls inhabiting the clan library. *Protection against evil, and a symbol of power.*

Madara carries a mamori-gatana snugly pressed into his right hip. Like Kurikara, the sword of Fudō, he hopes to convert his anger into salvation, to open his third eye, and to use wisdom to cut through ignorance.

If he dies early, without surpassing childhood and not having any chance to build up good karma, being forced to pray and build stone towers to climb out of limbo into the Pure Lands, Madara knows the guardian deity Jizō Bosatsu would hide him in the sleeves of his robe. Kā-san won't have to imagine him lingering at the riverbed of purgatory, unable to cross the river, unable to gain salvation.

The tiny sculpture of Koyasu-sama, sitting undetectable in his pocket, lends him a quiet strength as he strolls outside the compound gates among the main storage for the Uchiha fighters for the first time. The legends say she gave birth to a healthy son while her house succumbed to flames. Madara thinks his own mother knows the scent of smoke too well.

“May the Goodness of Mercy watch over their souls,” she prayed with shaking hands and trembling lips the night before their departure. He lets her kiss his cheeks and smother his ebony hair he's gotten from her until she is satisfied and his father calls them out sternly. Even then, Madara doesn't look back as he leaves her behind to carve himself into a man in the only way a shinobi can. Only, Kā-san fretted because she didn't know that his future was already inscribed on the stars.

(“I wish I'd written Murasaki-sensei's *The Tale of Genji*,” Kā-san voiced out loud while flipping through the book, “Because it is one of the most amazing love stories I've ever read.”

They were both resting on the engawa, the summer heat forcing them to seek coolness outside. She sat in seiza before the chabudai in a simple bright yukata, her hair tied up with a beautiful tortoiseshell comb. Madara was lying down upon a zabuton dozing in and out. He didn't have much interest in literature, but he knew to listen to his mother when she talked.

“It is not a short read,” she noted, amused, as if sensing the disinterest coming from him, “But, most good things in life require a bit of an effort don't you think, Madara-chan?”

He glared half heartedly, before crawling to her lap. Tajima was not around, so there was no harm in behaving as the child he was, even if only to humor her.

“It talks about the burden of self sacrifice,” she continues, absent minded, and starts to scratch his head as if petting a very big and sleepy cat, “About how some people give up their own happiness, their desires, for the joy of someone else who they can’t please.”

The shoji panels come alive with the sunlight filtered by the windows. Delicate paintings, meant to last forever.

“It doesn't seem like a good book,” It's his muffled comment. He hugs her middle and whiffs the trace of her comforting perfume.

“It's beautiful and terribly sad,” Kā-san uttered, and there was something fragile in her tone that he couldn't quite explain, “Because is about unrequited love.”)

In his room, the book sits inside his urushi lacquer, and it accumulates dust between its pages with the passing years.

Madara survives into adulthood. He is twelve and he's killed more men than he can count. He is now heir, and the title is given down from blood and tears and it weighs heavy on his shoulders. It's a legacy that he is not sure that can be held on for long enough to make a lasting impact.

Tarō and Eiji never reached ten. Saburō, he recalls from rushed whispers down the halls, never got to walk.

But, everything changed when he turned four.

Suddenly, after years of carrying the burdens and blessings of being the younger person inside the house for years, Madara becomes an older brother.

The baby's cries were meek from where he lay hungry in his cradle, but Kā-san's resounding silence was louder, still. Moreover, as he gazes down at the child's face, he mourns that he is the only sibling Izuna will ever be allowed to truly know.

He meets Hashirama for the first time after a week of exhausting fighting in the borders of *Hi no Kuni* — the rations were becoming more costly and hard to come by. Because of that, he has a sprained calf and one of his fingers is broken. Secure under the watchful eye of Kahaku-sama, the *kami* of the stream, Madara finds himself lounging in the Naka River's bank when he sees the other boy from his periphery.

He is tired. That's what he tells himself when he stays and talks despite the warnings on his mind. When he comes back a month later and spends time throwing rocks on the flowing water, becoming increasingly more used to seeing hair in the color of bark and hearing a laughter that seems overly loud echoing in the green of the woods.

That is the excuse he has for not plunging a *kunai* between familiar dark eyes and upturned chin. Even if they are not marred with rage and fury, the features are striking enough that he can't lie to himself and claim ignorance.

Every week his hands become more stained with the blood of Hashirama's kin. He sees in the boy's palms, too. Madara catches sight of unmistakable wire inside the other's pouch, and Hashirama is not Uchiha.

He knows.

(*Run, they read it at the same time. Leave now, it's a trap.*)

The boy is a Senju.

And, even then, tasting bitter ashes on his tongue, Madara always comes back the next day.

("Isn't all that anger so ugly?" Hashirama flashed a smile.

Madara's wicked throat closes tightly, *And isn't mine, too?*

He hums back in response.)

He likes to think he was reborn by the river — he's been running from the inevitable ever since. He escapes from his brother's brazen and knowing gaze, from his fathers scorching expectations, from the clan's mournful vengeance and suffering. Here, in a piece of land claimed by nobody, he is just Madara. Here, he doesn't have to straighten his head, nor strain his vision to see more than one can understand.

But, nothing lasts forever. It's been coming, and he knew change would arrive.

So, he fights like he's out of time. Every day he wakes up knowing he has to come back home alive. Madara fights like tomorrow won't happen.

Madara howls like a hound and has blood all over his teeth.

He meets his friend in battle and buries the voice that says that Taro should have been here in his place, if only he had the chance. There is no time to mourn in war, and they haven been feuding for far too long. If he can't think about it without breaking down, he won't give it the chance.

("...But, that's just wishful thinking," Madara murmurs as he adjusts his position, arm stretched into the air and legs taunt, "Because we're all too proud," he mimics the throw a few times, "To allow ourselves to be that vulnerable."

He lets it go at the last second and the stone sails in a perfect curve. "I mean, who knows, maybe they don't hate you as much as you think."

There is a surprised smile on his face as it skips four, five times, until it disappears inside the river.

"Maybe," Hashirama repeats, not as dejected as before.)

Madara does everything he can to survive until he can rest. Until he won't have to count pairs of smashed scarlet eyes with viscera dripping from the unfocused stare of another fallen brother. Until he won't have to attend more than twenty seven cremation rituals a month. Recently, the names have become tangled with one another and he can't even blame it on his slowly decreasing sight.

He eats grief and wields it like a weapon.

The first jutsu Madara learned is the one he uses most often. His fingers were clumsy when he attempted to draw fire from his throat as a child. Now, his hands are nimble and practiced as he alights the pyres with the ease born from repetition.

What a gruesome turn, he frowns as the smell of burning flesh makes itself known in the surrounding air amidst sobbing and wailing.

His lips are chapped and his tongue is parched. He believes, foolishly, that he has no more tears to shed.

He was proven wrong a year later.

Madara is twenty six and he feels much older.

There is nothing he loves more than Izuna, he tells himself. He breathes and beats for his brother, and that is why his chest feels so empty when he stares at the cold body laying on the tatami of the familiar wooden floors of their home.

(“I can see everything from here,” he declares while the wind caresses the clouds above. “I know for certain that I got the superior vision,” Madara brags, “Feel like having a contest?”

“Are you that confident in your eyes?” The boy beside him questions.

“Of course! After all, I have the *shar*—” he pauses, and bites the inside of his mouth until he tastes something other than panic.

Hashirama stares at him. “What’s the problem?”

He swallows down at nothing before managing a croak of an answer. “If I really was that good, then my brothers wouldn’t have...” Madara looks straight ahead at the large mountains that formed the scenery before continuing, “What good is the-” He recalls the sight of what used to be Eiji’s face and almost throws up.

He stops, and doesn’t try to speak again.

Hashirama glares at the grass they are sitting on before he whispers, every word carefully chosen.

“So,” he starts with no short amount of resignation, “All your brothers are—”

“I’ve got one younger brother.” Madara interrupts him before he can finish.

“And I’m gonna protect him at any and all costs.”

If he wills enough, Madara could fool himself and see a barely there rise and fall of Izuna’s chest and imagine that he is just sleeping. As kids, Izuna would usually sleep in, and Madara always found ways to watch him rest as a toddler. They are both grown now. He softly brushes ebony hair across the stony features of the only immediate blood tie he had left and stares and stares until the image of the haunting empty sockets is stamped into his brain.

(His optic nerves are alight with needles and he never felt pain so acute before. He sees with clarity, the dark line of Izuna’s brows, the soft contour of his neck. The lack of pulse thrumming on his veins.)

Madara calls his name and waits for an answer. “Izuna,” he mumbles, as if anticipating for his brother to jump from his stretched position. He waits.

“Izuna,” he beseeched, almost giving in to the urge to shake his shoulders.

“Izuna, Izuna, Izun-”

He doesn’t hear a response.

(“Why do we chisel the family’s characters in the marble plaque?” Madara asks Tajima during the obon of his eight years, after they stop in front of the hakaishi and trace with their eyes the names inked down on the itatoba wood behind the tombstone, one by one.

Uchiha Noburō

Uchiha Suzu

Uchiha Koichi

Uchiha Daisuke

Uchiha Saburō

Uchiha Nao-

“It’s important to remember,” his father affirms calmly while crouching towards the monument. The man takes out from the vase the dead flowers from their last visit and Madara promptly hands him the fresh ones his aunt picked the day before.

Calendula, iris, and gentian.

He helps the boy lighten the candles and the incense sticks, but pours himself the water and the sake into the cup by the altar.

“If you tuck the name of a loved one under your tongue too long without speaking it, they are forgotten. It would be akin to killing them a second time.” Tajima explains gravely, as he

rises, followed by a quick prayer. His father stares at the tomb for a few seconds before he shakes his head and purses his lips. Next, he turns Madara and raises a hand to grip at the child's upper arm.

"You live only as long as the last person who remembers you, son. So, if you speak their name, they shall never die."

How much of Izuna is left inside this mound of flesh? Surely, some part of the little boy who used to make him trip on his heels must remain in there. Madara stares at the body until he sees it with his lids closed.

Certainly, there must be something inside of Madara's skin other than this unbearable silence. Definitely, there is someone other than the lonely creature that inhabits this haunted house.

He won't ever forget the sight of Izuna's gaunt limbs or the putrid stench of decay that finally urged him to move from beside his resting place on the ground, hours later. Madara stays silent and vigilant for the longest time he can allow himself to be.

When he gets up, thighs aching, his face is surprisingly dry.

Later, after a restless sleep, he wakes up with damp cheeks and still in turmoil. Madara walks out of the door the next morning as if his mind isn't crumbling and as if the world didn't end the night before.

Madara doesn't hesitate when he gives to Hashirama the leadership of a village they both fought to create. Loss is a companion he acknowledges plenty. It's ironic that the silly dream he couldn't believe, back then, somehow became reality when he now lives in a constant nightmare.

(Was the price worthy of the prize?

He punches the ground, and it remains unmoved. His hands are wrecked and the muscles of arms are throbbing, purple and blue.

No, he bellows until his voice is nothing but a rasp of frail yearning, and it won't ever be.)

Madara is the only remnant of the main family's line. The last firstborn. All of his brothers and cousins have died in battle or fallen from illness. His father is long gone and he can't seem to remember his mother's face.

Izuna's absence is also his presence. Madara sees him everywhere, and how couldn't he? He misses him more than anything, and it drives him insane.

Madara shuts his eyes when he looks at the sun and tries to reign in the sorrow that plagues humankind. He tries and tries to get rid of this hole on his chest, but he can't, no matter how much it hurts.

Madara is constantly grieving. He mourns everyday what could have been and what he couldn't save.

Still, he goes to his new home and stays in the recently built Uchiha District in Konoha.

His Village. Their Village.

Hashirama's Village.

(What would Taro think? Would he be proud? Would he swear at Madara in disgust if he could see him kiss their enemy on the cheek?)

He's not Hokage and that shouldn't have been surprising, but he finds it numbing, anyways. Is it meaningful that he wasn't even considered as a choice despite the importance of his role in crafting the newborn peace? Will any Uchiha ever be given one in a Senju's infested board with all the pieces stacked against them?

Still, he trusts Hashirama. And, because it is necessary and required, he stands beside his brother's killer and shakes his hand.

Izuna watches from his eyes as he betrays him one last time.

(The eye taken from thy brother is eternal.)

There is nobody he holds love for beside the memories of a childhood free from the harsh reality of their world. Nobody who cares anymore. Or, that is what he claims.

He walks away.

(What a terrible thing that was freedom. How many ugly paths it granted him.

He could go anywhere he wanted. The Land of Iron, matted with snow, in the North. The Land of Tea, bustling of traveling goods from all around the map. The deserts of the Land of Wind, golden and deadly in equal measure.

Anywhere he wanted, just not home.)

It's no wonder he didn't believe Hashirama would stab him in the back. Madara trusts him until his last breath, up until the moment the blade pierces his heart.

He is thankful that the last act of mercy bestowed upon him, even if unintentional, was to be shielded from Hashirama's expression when he thrust his sword into Madara's chest. He doesn't want to know what his former friend feels as he smells the metallic tang of the blood pouring out of his body.

Would he be terrified or elated? Would he shed a tear for him later?

Madara thinks he'd rather go blind than see what is behind him.

(Hashirama stares in bitterness and detachment as gore begins trickling down the corner of the steel. His hand was firm, and his aim sure.

He didn't miss.)

Meanwhile, even among the complicated bundle simmering in his gut, there is pride, an honor to die by the hand of a god.

Madara is exhausted.

There were many unresolved responsibilities tied to himself, to his title. The duty to protect, the hardship of being great. It might be that this, actually, was the thing that attracted him to the other clan head. Not his kindness — even if it managed to soothe many of his edges — but power. Hashirama is stronger than him, and relief is what finally fills him as he lets his knees buckle.

Since he was last held by Tajima's arms and his mother's hands, he longs for the simple comfort in the idea of someone taking over. When he was young that was never a thought of shouldering the pain of leadership. If not Taro, Eiji would've held it together.

Then, they both died, and couldn't do it for him anymore. The damned fan holds him by the back of his neck.

He finds out Hashirama won't, either. Not the way he wants to. Even if it is by force.

(What more could he have given? What a hefty price for a man's fruitless dream.)

He is beaten to the ground and the rain licks his face. Madara is comfortable there and he doesn't fight to get up.

Was it the Senju who cursed his clan, he mulls as he sinks down into the welcoming waters, Or was it something the Uchiha did to protect themselves?

Nevertheless, Madara curses his kin, slowly drowning and lungs failing to draw air. Curses his family to hate as strongly as they love. *Let it be a warning*, he ruminates, *Let me be a tale of caution for when an Uchiha wants something, more of it than exists. Let it be known that there is no recovery from this kind of devotion.*

After all, it is not ideals nor power that is inherited through generations — only hatred. You don't only inherit the sins, you nurture them, and keep them alive.

Madara's love for Hashirama is like a simmering fire he was tempted enough to touch. Warm and bright, burning. He loved like a rotten dog taught to bite, like a beast. Drooling, painting and vile.

Yes, passion can be violence, and it's always answered with cruelty.

Hashirama is the only remnant of a life already departed because care is too late to be a saving grace. Maybe, loving Madara was like kissing a knife, cold and unyielding. Unpleasant. He loves like a monster, something not worthy of loving back.

Perhaps, his worst sin was destroying and betraying himself for nothing. Madara is killed by what he loves. His relationships are all forged by loss, and it shows. At the same time, he is hungry and wants to devour the world.

And desire, after all, is a kind of death.

When he becomes engulfed in the water, down and deep with only the distorted rays of light as company, Madara recoils and feels something breaking inside himself with the realization that he won't ever be laid to rest in side the clan's kofun, the old graveyard occupied by generations of his family. He will rot here, eaten by fish and staring up at a future he is no longer a part of.

Alone, again.

It's sardonic, in the way all death tends to be. He never thought he would escape the battlefield, his destiny always to die there. He still does, and he still dies, if not in the way he imagined. Madara dies gently, from the scathing touch of a friend.

(“It’s beautiful and terribly sad,” he hears her saying for the second time, and it’s a comfort to see her again. He drinks her face, the parlor of her skin, the curve of her lips, the soft lake of understanding that is violent when it’s reflected inside of himself. “Because it’s about unrequited love.”)

How unfortunate it is to be destined to fail. But, wasn't it beautiful because it was doomed from the start?

Was it not a miracle that he lived to see peace when all the others, before and after him, never reached further than the cup of youth?

The pictures of his brothers will always be there in the cemetery, rusted from iron oxide — waiting for someone who will never arrive.

There would be no red paint to protect his body from evil and no kami to claim his wretched soul.

Madara is thirty five when he dies from a death by water.

It was the day of the serpent, the first such day in the Third Month.

The day when a man who has worries goes down and washes them away, said one of his men, admirably informed, it would seem, in all the annual observances.

Wishing to have a look at the seashore, Genji set forth.

Genji thought he could see something of himself in the rather large doll being cast off to sea, bearing away sins and tribulations.

The bright, open seashore showed him to wonderful advantage. The sea stretched placid into measureless distances. He thought of all that had happened to him, and all that was still to come.

Genji decided that he could no longer stay at Suma.

If strength manifests itself in weakness, Madara questions if he ever was strong to begin with.

Chapter End Notes

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wonderful and amazing betas, neuteredcatboy and pixel_and_pixels. You guys literally saved me! They were so nice and knowledgeable, and it was a great time editing this with you.

Also, this fic wouldn't have come to life without the incredible commentary from narutoenjoyer5000 on Tumblr. It was you that basically co-parented this baby. I got so many ideas from your blog, it isn't even funny. Surprise, it's a boy!

To end this note, please continue for the second chapter to see the Glossary. You won't be disappointed. It's basically a in depth dive on all the cultural terms and reasons for the choices I made regarding the plot.

The second work of this series will be about Hashirama's POV. I'm working on it!

This series was/ will be primarily written for HashiMada Week 2024 Monday prompt, Mutual Destruction but it also fits the other event prompts:

Saturday: Historical AU

Happy HashiMada Week!

Lastly, let me know what you enjoyed of this! I love to hear your thoughts!

Chapter 2: Glossary

- **Tentomushi** (天道虫) or (テントウムシ) - English Translation: **Ladybug**. Each kanji literally represents sky (where gods exist), path and bug, respectively. It comes from their behavior to climb up to the end of a branch, or any stick-shaped thing, before they fly (towards the sun). People thought they were showing the way to the sun, or sun god, *tento* (天道).

The title refers to the name of our protagonist. It is of Japanese origin and has different meanings depending on the specific characters used to write it. One common interpretation is that "Madara" (斑) means "speckled" or "mottled" in Japanese. It can also mean "impure" or "mutt". We can see in the manga that his father is an Uchiha, but his mother is unknown. Due to this, his name could indicate that she is not, in fact, an Uchiha. Or, both of his parents are Uchiha, but one is not full-blooded.

In the movie 'Bullet Train', Elder (Hiroyuki Sanada) explains "Ladybug" to Brad Pitt, saying the bug which his nickname derives from is not unlucky. It captures all the bad luck in the world under its shell to protect the rest of the world. I think it's how Madara would see himself - a martyr.

- **The Lady-In-Waiting Suwo** - The authoress was the daughter of Tsugunaka Taira, the Governor of the Province of Suwo, and a lady-in-waiting at the Court of the Emperor Goreizei, who reigned A.D. 1046-1068. She was present one day at a long and tedious court function, and, feeling very tired and sleepy, she called to a servant for a pillow; a nobleman on the other side of the screen, the First Adviser of State Tadaie, gallantly offered her his arm, with a request that she would rest her head there, and she replied with this verse. She intended him to understand that, though she was willing to accept him as her husband for life, she feared that his attachment would last no longer than a fleeting summer-night's dream.

- **'two hares. one hunter.'** - 二兎を追う者は一兎をも得ず (*Nito o oumono wa itto o mo ezu*) - English Translation: "He who runs after two hares will catch neither."

This expression is used to warn people who are greedy or want to focus on too many things simultaneously. It is often difficult to achieve success if you are not focused on what you are trying to do.

To me, it can also relate to the fact that some birds lay two eggs: "to insure against failure of the first egg to hatch. If both hatch, the second chick is redundant to the parents, and a

potentially lethal competitor to the first-hatched progeny.”

I also thought of Izuna and Tobirama, with all the intricacies of being the only brothers they had left, one had to die before the other, and death had to choose.

- The **engawa** (縁側) are hallway-like strips that surround a suite of rooms in a traditional Japanese house. They are usually sandwiched in between the shoji (screen doors made of wood and paper that divide rooms from the engawa) and the amado (wooden storm shutters that divide the engawa from outside), and connect the interiors with the outside.

- **Dō-maru** (胴丸), or "body wrap", is a type of chest armor (dou or dō) that was worn by the samurai class of feudal Japan.

- **Mamori-gatana** - Small Samurai began practicing the basics of fencing with wooden swords at the age of 3, being given a real weapon, a mamorigatana sword for self-defense, between the ages of 5 and 7.

- **Fudō Myo** also known as Acala (Achala अचल; "immovable" one) is a "Guardian Deity", primarily revered in Vajrayana Buddhism in Japan, China, India and elsewhere.

With this sword of wisdom, Acala cuts through deluded and ignorant minds and with the rope he binds those who are ruled by their violent passions and emotions. He leads them onto the correct path of self control.

He is also considered the god of fire; sitting among the flames, Fudo Myo symbolizes fortitude. Despite the formidable appearance, Fudo Myo is a defender and an assistant in achieving goals. His statues are often placed near waterfalls or deep in the mountains, in caves.

- **Jizo** also affectionately called “O-Jizo-san” or “O-Jizo-sama” are the patron deity of children and travelers.

Jizo protects the souls of children who have passed away and of unborn babies. According to Japanese belief, when a child dies before their parents do, they are not able to cross the river to the afterlife and so time is spent making stone towers as an act of penance. Devils knock down these stone towers and this is when O-Jizo-san appears to save them and look after them as a guardian in replacement of their parents.

- **Koyasu or Kannon** protects children and facilitates safe, easy, successful childbirth. Koyasu-sama is another name for Konohana Sakkuya Hime, Goddess of Mount Fuji, God or Goddess of Mercy & Compassion.

- The **Tale of Genji**, also known as Genji Monogatari is a classic work of Japanese literature written by the noblewoman, poet, and lady-in-waiting Murasaki Shikibu around the peak of the Heian period, in the early 11th century.

- **Tarō**, derived from the Japanese word for "First Son," carries a sense of primacy and leadership within the family. It symbolizes responsibility and authority, often associated with the eldest son in Japanese households.

- **Kofun** (古墳, from Sino-Japanese "ancient grave") are megalithic tombs or tumuli in Northeast Asia.

- **Obon** is the period when the spirits of your ancestors return from the world. The offerings prepared at this time are meant to hope that the ancestors can reach their homes safely, or to offer memorial services and hospitality at home after a long absence.

- **Hakaishi**, tombstone (墓石, hakaishi) is the entire family's marker.

- **Tatoba**, bamboo sticks that accompany headstones in Japanese cemeteries. They bear the posthumous Buddhist names of the dead.

- **'And desire, after all, is a kind of death'**, The idea that desire is a kind of death, or that desires cannot continue to exist once their object is realized, is known as the death-of-desire thesis. This thesis suggests that an agent cannot desire something if they believe they already have it.

- In Japanese folklore, rituals of **"drowning death"** can also be found. The Hinamatsuri (Doll's Day) on March 3rd is one of the five major folk festivals in Japan, and "exiling doll figurines" is a unique custom during this festival. People put dolls and offerings into the river and let them drift downstream, hoping to rid themselves of their own misfortunes and impurities through this ritual (Li, 1996). The Tale of Genji- Suma of the Heian period also describes the Doll's Day: On the first day of March, which happened to fall on the Day of the

Snake (Sexagenary cycle), Prince Genji persuaded Murasaki to go to the seaside to perform a purification ceremony, inviting passing Onmyoji (yin-and-yang master) and place the human shape doll on a boat, and float it into the sea (Shirane, 2008). Placing the doll on a small boat and floating it into the sea may be the embryonic form of Doll's Day.

In Japanese Buddhist beliefs, drowning death is directly linked to the Pure Land of Bliss and becomes the direction of devout believers. "Sun Visualization" is one of the sixteen methods of visualization to reach the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha and is derived from The Sutra In Which The Buddha Speaks Of Contemplation On Immeasurable Life Buddha. This method involves observing the setting sun to determine the direction of the Pure Land or visualizing the light of the Pure Land. (Quinter, 2021) In the novel, when the father reads a passage from Shinobu Origuchi's novel The Book of the Dead (1939), he misreads "ki#" (endless body of water) as "/* A" (dense forest) (Mark & Boehm, 2015). Combined with a discussion by Japanese folklorist Orimoto Nobuo on the "sun visualization" of Buddhist beliefs, it can be understood:

The souls of many devout believers long for the sea to the west and sink into the depths of the ocean... believing that passing through the waves of the sea will eventually reach the Pure Land. In devout belief, Sun visualisation can reach the eastern gate of Pure Land; it can be said to pursue a water depth of Buddhist ecstasy. (Reiji Andō, 2011).

In the Buddhist belief of sun visualization, the Pure Land of Bliss is depicted as existing in a world submerged in water.

- 'If strength manifests itself in weakness, Madara questions if he ever was strong to begin with.'

"*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" is a quote from the Bible, (2 Corinthians 12:9–10). In this verse, the apostle Paul expresses that he is content with his weaknesses and hardships because of Christ, or "[...] power is at its best in weakness."

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