

## The Story of a Pet Dog

- As presented to Harube Ima -  
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I HAVE CONFIDENCE WITH dogs. I am confident that someday one will bite me. I will be bitten. In that, I am confident. Very well, until today, I have lived unharmed and never been bitten, but I have a queer inkling.

My friends, dogs are beasts. Don't they bring down horses and, on occasion, fight and vanquish lions? I may well be alone in subscribing to this, but look at the sharp fangs of a dog. They are not insignificant.

When on the streets, a dog plays innocent, humbles itself like it's unworthy of attention, and snoops around garbage cans, but is essentially a savage beast capable of bringing down a horse. You never know when its savage anger will burst out. A dog must always be chained and tied up. The slightest carelessness is not allowed.

Many pet owners in this world care for terrifying beasts. For the sole reason that they give the beast a few leftover scraps everyday, they have complete trust in the beast. "Supper, supper," they happily chime and approach the beast like it is a member of the family. They turn it into our dear three-year-old baby. They tug on the beast's ears and have a big laugh. I shudder and must close my eyes to that sight. I worry about what to do if without warning it barked and bit me.

I have to be careful. A beast that even the owner would have difficulty proving would not bite roams free and loiters on the roads. (As an owner, saying that he absolutely doesn't bite is nothing more than a stupid, kindhearted superstition. Given those horrifying fangs, he will bite. Saying that the beast would never ever bite cannot be proven scientifically.) What kind of person is that?

In late autumn of last year, at last, a friend of mine received this injury. He was a tragic victim. According to my friend's story, he was doing nothing as he strolled down an alley with his arms folded in his kimono. There was a dog sitting in the road. My friend was doing nothing as he passed near the dog. At that moment, the dog cast an evil sidelong glance at him. He passed without incident, then the dog barked and bit him on the right leg. This was a calamity. It happened in a flash.

My friend was stunned. Tears of regret boiled over. I wasn't surprised, I was convinced of his utter loneliness. If so, was there something to do? My friend dragged his throbbing leg to the hospital for treatment. He visited the hospital for the next twenty-one days. Three weeks. Although the wound on his leg healed, he had to get shots because of concern about the possibility of his body being invaded by the venom of the detestable disease of rabies. Nothing came of negotiations with the owner due to my friend's timidity.

He unflinchingly endured his misfortune and only sighed. In addition, the shots were not cheap. Excuse me for saying, but my friend didn't have those kinds of reserves. I have no doubt that all of it was painfully managed. This was a calamity. A catastrophe.

If he carelessly neglected to get those shots, he would suffer the ghastly disease of rabies. There would be the fever and the anguish. Eventually, he would come to resemble a dog, crawling around on all fours and barking like a dog.

As he received the shots, what kind of anxiety and uncertainty did my friend feel? Because he is a man with troubles and an able man of the world, he conscientiously went to the hospital everyday for three weeks, twenty-one days to receive his shots. He's healthy and working, but if it had been me, that dog would not be alive.

Because I'm a man with three or four times the spirit of revenge of a normal man, and a man who would unleash five or six times the brutality of the average man, instantly, that dog's

skull would be pulverized, its eyes gouged out, smashed, and spit out. And that would not be enough. I would poison each and every dog in the neighborhood.

While I haven't done anything, the rudeness of a sudden bark and bite would produce violent action. It is difficult to forgive the beast in any way. People cannot indulge this behavior because of the inconvenience to the beast. The punishment should be severe and with no mercy. Last autumn, when I heard about my friend's misfortune, my daily hatred toward dogs reached its peak. My brooding hatred blazed like a blue flame.

For the New Year I rented a thatched hut called an 8-3-1 tatami on the outskirts of the town of Kofu in Yamanashi Prefecture, to quietly live and busily write a bad novel. However, no matter where you went in this town of Kofu, there were dogs. Hordes of dogs loitered, or stretched out, or raced around, or barked baring their fangs on the roads. Even in the tiniest vacant lot, like a den for stray dogs, they were preoccupied with play fighting and wild wrestling. On the deserted streets at night, large packs formed like night prowlers and raced around every which way.

Their number was so large, you would think that each and every house in Kofu had at least two dogs. Originally, Yamanashi Prefecture was known as the home of a valuable breed of dogs. However, the kinds of dogs seen on the streets were never those purebreds. Most of them were shaggy red dogs. They were only unadoptable, silly mutts.

I have always resented dogs, but since my friend's misfortune, my feelings of hatred heightened, and I was ever vigilant. But these swarms of dogs without a care ran rampant in alleys everywhere or were coiled up napping. I was truly pained. If possible, I had the notion of walking the streets wearing leggings, arm guards, and a helmet. That would have been a strange sight, but was not allowed from the perspective of public morals. So I adopted other means.

I brooded over a plan. First, I researched dog psychology. I also know a little about people. From time to time, I could make the correct designation, but dog psychology is complicated. Human words are useful in the emotional exchange between dogs and people, but are the source of the initial uncertainty. If words are not useful, there is nothing other than mutual play and reading expressions. The motion of the tail is critical. However, watching this tail motion is complex and not easily read. I despaired. Then I devised an inept, clumsy measure. It was a pitiful desperate measure.

When I crossed paths with a dog, a smile would cover my face, and I would not display the least bit of hostility. Because they might not see my smile at night, I made the effort to innocently hum a nursery rhyme to announce that I'm a kind man. This had some effect. No dogs have leaped at me yet. However, letting my guard down was taboo. When passing a dog, no matter how scared I was, I never ran. While my broad, humble, toadying smile rose, I innocently turned my head and very slowly felt a nearly suffocating chill in my mind, like ten hairy caterpillars were crawling down my back, and I slowly passed by.

I was revolted by my fawning behavior. I remembered so much self-loathing I wanted to cry. I felt that if I didn't do this, I would instantly be bitten. Thus, every dog was met with an attempt at a pitiful greeting. If my hair grew a little too long, they may bark at me as some suspicious man. That would be bad, so I never skipped a trip to the barbershop. If I walked around with a walking stick, a dog may mistake it for a threatening weapon, and its rebellious spirit would be inflamed. Therefore, I threw it away forever. Evaluating a dog's psychology is hit-and-miss, and as I humored these dogs, an unforeseen phenomenon was revealed. Sadly, dogs liked me.