



Tales from a Mountain Cave: Stories from Japan's Northeast

Hisashi Inoue , Angus Turvill (Translation)

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About Hisashi Inoue:

'One of the towering figures of contemporary Japan'

Nobel Prize-winning author, Kenzaburo Oe

About Tales from a Mountain Cave:

'Wonderful. I was so taken in by each tale in this magnificent collection that I found myself gasping out loud.' Haikugirl

'Surprising and funny. A real page-turner.' The Journal

'A stunning collection.' Nihon Distractions

'Colorful, charming, and highly entertaining.' Contemporary Japanese Literature.

'The real power of this volume to do good in a region still striving to return to normality is its ability to enchant and intrigue — reminding us how much more there is to Tohoku than its recent, very public suffering. This deftly translated, entertaining, yet often poignant volume showcases the region's rich cultural heritage. It feels like a promise that a community that has survived so much will survive this latest disaster.'

The Japan Times

As a young man Inoue lived in Kamaishi, on the coast of North East Japan, an area that was to be devastated by the tsunami of 2011. This book reflects the author's own experience of Kamaishi, its contemporary history, and the long traditions of story-telling in the region. Ebullient, funny, sad and kind, this is one of the first of Inoue's books to be available in English. Tales from a Mountain Cave is a translation of Shinshaku Tono Monogatari.

Tales from a Mountain Cave: Stories from Japan's Northeast Details

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From Reader Review Tales from a Mountain Cave: Stories from Japan's Northeast for online ebook

Daniel Simmons says

An earthy and delightful collection of folk tales, alternately mysterious and sad and laugh-out-loud funny.
(Bonus: all royalties and translation fees for this book go toward post-tsunami relief efforts in Iwate.)

Claire says

This was a very weird and wonderful book. I picked it up at Marylebone library because I'm always interested in books in translation.

This book comprises stories within a story so was easy to pick up and put down. They reminded me of Grimm's fairytales, but the Japanese equivalent. Most of them were humorous and there was usually some kind of lesson to be learned. If you're interested in Japanese culture or folklore you will enjoy this. I loved the supernatural elements, although the sexual content shocked me at first.

An extremely memorable read.

Michael says

A real pleasure to read this. The work of a skilled storyteller.

Tonje says

I loved the little short stories (there are nine), that can be read each on their own, but that together make up a fascinating little story of its own. Each story feature a little piece of Japanese folklore, which is fascinating in itself, but it was the ending that really got me. It was all tied together so beautifully when I got to the end that I was almost a bit amazed (I might be easy to amaze, I don't know).

I won this in a Goodreads giveaway, but would probably have picked it up somehow being interested in Japanese culture (also, who doesn't love folklore? It is always so interesting), and here folklore was so beautifully mixed in with a more modern narrative that I felt like I could believe anything Inubuse had told me, I guess I am easy to fool haha. I also feel inspired to read Kunio Yanagita's "Tono Monogatari" after this, with Inoue's book having taken a lot of inspiration from this work (though having made a distinct work of his own, as the translator Angus Turvill says in the introduction).

Anyone interested in folklore, Japanese culture, or just fancy a good and entertaining read, should pick this up, definitely! (It also helps that the royalties from the sales of this book will be donated to post-tsunami community support projects in Kamaishi, where the story is set, as Kamaishi was devastated by the tsunami in 2011)

(I'm very sorry if this is not very review-like, I've never done one before ^^;;)

Heather says

First Reads winner! Interesting stories, with creative details. I especially liked how the end wraps everything together. I just wish that the sexual content had been toned down. I definitely would not recommend this for kids, and not for many of my friends, either.

Strong PG-13.

Jia Chan says

This book reminds me of the classic Chinese stories ???? (Liao Zhai Zhi Yi) that I used to read when I was a kid. It has similar themes like human greed, lust, selfishness, sacrifice, mistrust mixed with elements of fox and other animal spirits and ghosts etc. Individual chapters are short stories that tell the encounters of Inubuse (one of the protagonist in this novella) in his earlier life. There seemed to be a moral lessons to be learnt from each of the chapters which let the readers to think about.

Overall, it was an entertaining read, but I much prefer the expansive work of the more classic Chinese equivalent.

Mariana Pereira says

This small little book was a pleasant surprise for me, as I thought (by reading the title) that it was a collection of small stories unrelated to each other, told by a non-fiction kind of narrator. As it turns out these are several stories told within another base story (the one where the narrator talks to Inubuse).

I appreciated the scenarios that all these little stories gave to the mind of the reader. The landscapes sounded beautiful and the stories were very entertaining with a touch of fantasy/supernatural on them. I also loved that they would end with loose ends or with unexplained facts and that every time the narrator made assumptions (often supernatural assumptions that were hinted along the story) Inubuse never admitted them, he just said things like "maybe, maybe not".

The writing was very good too, and with a touch of humor in it.

The end came out as unexpected to me. A bit sad but also amazing in its own way.

My favorite quote lies in the very beginning of the book, and found it hilarious, specially when compared with the previous paragraph!:"All these stories were heard from an old man called Takachi Inubuse, who lives near Tono. Inubuse is a good talker, but there is something highly dubious about him, and I myself have a tendency to exaggerate, so nothing in this book can be relied upon at all."

Overall, I enjoyed this book quite a bit, and if you are into short stories (usually I prefer the long ones) you should definitely give this one a try!

I received this book for free under the Goodreads Giveaway project.
