

A JAPANESE POW'S STORY

Taken Captive



Ōoka Shōhei

TAKEN CAPTIVE

A Japanese POW's Story

Ōoka Shōhei

Translated from the Japanese and edited by
Wayne P. Lammers



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

New York • Chichester • Brisbane • Toronto • Singapore

This text is printed on acid-free paper.

English Language translation copyright © 1996 by Pacific Basin Institute
Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Originally Published in 1952 as *Furyoki*
copyright © 1952 by Harue Ōoka
A Pacific Basin Institute Book

Major funding for the English translation of Ōoka Shōhei's text was provided by the Japan Foundation, the Sumitomo Foundation, the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission, and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

All rights reserved. Published simultaneously in Canada.

Reproduction or translation of any part of this work beyond that permitted by Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act without the permission of the copyright owner is unlawful. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ōoka, Shōhei

[Furyoki. English]

Taken captive : a Japanese POW's story / Ōoka Shōhei : translated
from the Japanese and edited by Wayne P. Lammers.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-471-14285-9 (alk. paper)

I. Lammers, Wayne P. II. Title.

PL835.O5F813 1996

940.54'7273'092—dc20

[B]

95-35865

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Foreword

by Frank B. Gibney

Shortly after New Year's Day, 1944, a thirty-five-year-old literary critic named Ōoka Shōhei* was called to serve in the Japanese Imperial Army. His summons was typically terse and admitted no appeal. Upon reporting to a regimental depot in Tokyo, he was given rudimentary training and shipped off with a newly formed infantry battalion to join the garrison troops on the Japanese-occupied island of Mindoro, then nervously awaiting the expected American landing in the Philippines.

There were few more improbable soldiers. A graduate of Kyoto Imperial University but born and raised in Tokyo, Ōoka was part of a small but vigorous group of young intellectuals who were attracted to the study of European, in particular French, literature. By that time, he had translated several works by Stendhal. In fact, translating Stendhal's detached descriptions of nineteenth-century French battlefields was as close as Ōoka had come to experiencing the horrors of war.

To become a private soldier in the brutal Japanese army of those days was a sudden introduction to the real thing—and in Ōoka's case, under the most adverse possible conditions. Predictably, he was repelled by army life. In February, he wrote a caption for a photograph taken of him in uniform: "Second Class Private—and not very happy about it. I must try to keep my hatred for the military from turning into hatred for humankind."

On December 15, 1944, two U.S. regimental combat teams landed on Mindoro, as a prelude to the larger attack on Luzon. There were fewer than a thousand Japanese troops on the island at the time. They were unsupplied and unsupported, written off as expendable by General Yamashita Tomoyuki's headquarters. Ōoka's unit was soon scattered. Hundreds were killed by the advancing Americans. Those who were left, hungry and wounded, wandered through the hills in small groups, scavenging in the inhospitable jungle. Some offered last-ditch resistance. Others committed suicide, following the stated Japanese military doctrine that to be taken prisoner meant ultimate disgrace for a soldier and his family.

In the end, many were in fact taken prisoner as the fighting entered its final stages. Ōoka was one of these. After his capture, he was brought to an American prisoner-of-war camp on Leyte. There he remained until he was repatriated to Japan at the end of 1945.

* All Japanese names in this book are given in Japanese order, surname first.

This experience changed Ōoka's life. On returning home, he began to sort out what he had felt and thought—the reflections of a sophisticated and cosmopolitan observer thrown with his companions into a desperate, primitive struggle for life. *Taken Captive* (*Furyoki*) was published in separate parts between 1948 and 1951, and it established Ōoka's postwar reputation. In 1951, he published a second war book, the novel *Fires on the Plain* (*Nobi*), which won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature and was later made into a prize-winning film. Although he wrote other highly regarded books over the years, the war experience dominated his thinking. One of his last books, *A Record of the Battle of Leyte* (*Reite senki*), was characterized by the critic Katō Shūichi as “the finest work of war literature since the [medieval] *Heike Monogatari*.”

Although international and rather Western-oriented in his outlook—for example, he often makes use of Christian images and references—Ōoka adheres to the tradition of autobiographical fiction so beloved by Japanese intellectuals. Ōe Kenzaburō, Japan's 1994 Nobel Prize-winning author, is a great admirer of Ōoka, who died in 1988 at the age of seventy-nine after a lifetime of literary activity. Ōe ranks Ōoka with Japan's great early-twentieth-century novelist, Natsume Sōseki. In one of his essays, Ōe called on younger writers to learn as much as they could from Ōoka if they wished to bring literature to life.

Although loosely called a novel by Japanese critics, *Taken Captive* is heavily autobiographical, rooted as it is in Ōoka's own wartime experience. Yet he makes a conscious effort to see the plight and conduct of himself and his fellow prisoners as something of an allegory of the human condition. Following an idea common to the immediate postwar period, he envisions the prison camp as a microcosm of Japan itself, a nation in a sense taken prisoner after its defeat.

The book basically consists of two parts. The first concentrates on Ōoka's personal struggle and the reflections of a man who suddenly found himself a hunted fugitive. The latter part of the book, which deals with the behavioral quirks of people forced to live in confinement, brilliantly dissects the rootlessness of Japanese prisoners. Some comparisons can be made to James Clavell's novel *King Rat*, which pungently describes the conduct of British and American prisoners of war in a similar situation. For all that they rationalized their situation, most Japanese POWs had difficulty coming to terms with the idea that they incurred everlasting disgrace by being captured. Ōoka himself is not totally free of this concern, even though he denounces the militarist propaganda that held being taken prisoner as dishonorable.

I had considerable personal experience of these Japanese attitudes during my own service in World War II. As a navy intelligence officer spe-

cializing in prisoner-of-war interrogation, I found myself, so to speak, on the other side of the fence from Ōoka. Although I stopped only briefly in the Philippines, I did spend a great deal of time in Peleliu (1944) and Okinawa (1945), as well as at our base camp in Pearl Harbor, working with Japanese prisoners, most of them from army units like Ōoka's. Very few of them wanted their families to be advised of their capture; in fact, at the outset most gave us hastily assumed false names. Disillusionment with the war was pervasive. Many actively denounced the government of the military high command that had deceived them about wartime realities.

Yet, for the Japanese the normal discomfort of being a POW was intensified by their depression at having somehow broken with their comrades who had, according to custom, either died in battle or taken their own lives by way of compensation. Despite the good treatment they generally received, despite their sense of betrayal in a war founded on false premises, many continued to feel that their capture had sundered them from their tight island society. Their very alienation reflected the power of the massive groupthink that had thrown an ancient, cultured nation into a suicidal war.

Ōoka describes this in a masterful way. He also shows us how individuals can bear up under unspeakable hardships and then somehow put their lives back together for what at the time seemed like an appallingly bleak future.

His Japanese shows the hand of a great stylist as well as a talented observer. That it comes out so well in English is a tribute to Wayne Lammers, the translator. Translation from one European language to another is difficult enough. In the case of Japanese—so internally rich, yet so totally different from Western languages in its moods and manner of expression—the translator must often break down and reassemble the structure to convey both art and meaning. Bilingual since his school days in Japan, Dr. Lammers has taught Japanese in several American universities, and over the years he has produced a variety of translations whose ease and naturalness of expression belie the difficulty of doing them. As a classic of post-war Japanese literature, *Taken Captive* justly deserves its selection as the sixth book in the Library of Japan series. First appearing in 1992, these volumes represent an effort to offer the best of modern Japanese fiction and nonfiction to an English-speaking readership. They were developed under the aegis of the U.S.–Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Exchange (CULCON).

On behalf of the Pacific Basin Institute, I would like to thank the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, the Sumitomo Foundation, the Japan–U.S. Friendship Commission, and the Japan Foundation for their support in the translation and editing of *Taken Captive*.

Translator's Note

The chapters of this book originally appeared independently in nine different journals between February 1948 and January 1951. These separate pieces were then brought together and published as a unified book by Sōgensha in December 1952. The working text used for the present translation was the Shinchō Bunko paperback, first issued in 1967, based directly on the Sōgensha edition.

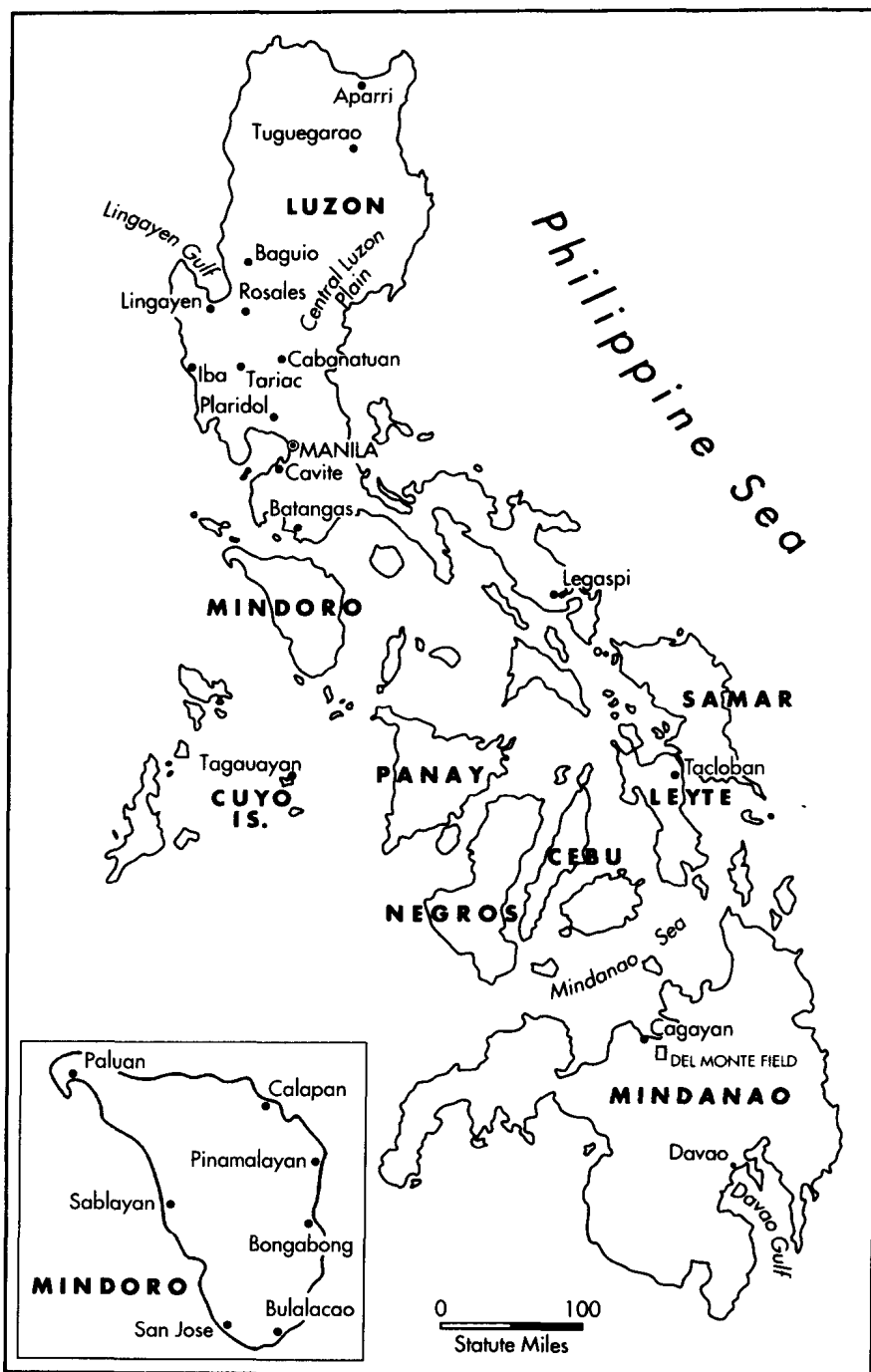
Though Ōoka made a number of corrections and minor alterations when producing the unified book, he chose for the most part to leave the chapters as they were, making no discernible effort to excise redundancies arising from the chapters' original publication as separate works. In the interest of faithfulness, I initially translated all such passages in full, but I found, as many other translators have before me, that the tolerable level of repetition in English is considerably below that in Japanese. I have therefore edited the English text to eliminate unnecessary duplication as well as to reconcile inconsistencies of fact and remove other vestiges of the individual chapters' original form. In conjunction with these alterations, I have also chosen to excise a small amount of material that related mainly to events during the Occupation period, when Ōoka was writing the work, rather than to his POW experience, feeling that for readers half a century later it would detract from the more universal and timeless themes Ōoka develops through his account of life in captivity. The result is a manuscript that reads like a single, integrated work and is approximately 7 to 8 percent shorter than my initial, more faithful English rendering. All editorial adjustments were based on the content of the original, and I do not believe the fundamental historical authenticity of Ōoka's account has been compromised in any way. Nevertheless, as always, students and scholars who wish to study Ōoka's work closely are advised to seek out the original text.

In acknowledging the many debts I have acquired in bringing this translation to completion, I would first like to express my gratitude to Frank Gibney and the Pacific Basin Institute, both for the opportunity to undertake the work and for their unflagging support of the project even when the initial publication plans had to be altered. For help on the manuscript itself, I am especially indebted to my wife Cheryl and fellow translator David Olson for reading through the entire work at different stages and offering me their invaluable editorial advice. I am grateful to Connie Prener, Hiroaki Sato, and Kyoko Selden for helping to cast light on a number of particularly troublesome references, and to Antoon Postma of Mindoro Island in the Philippines for advising me on the orthography of several obscure place

names. Subscribers of the Internet newsgroups and mailing lists *soc.culture.filipino*, *sci.lang.translation*, *MILHST-L*, and *honyaku* responded to a host of queries regarding the culture and geography of the Philippines, military terminology, subtleties of Japanese and English usage, and so forth, often going the second and third mile in their effort to aid a faceless stranger; they are too numerous to name individually, but their willingness to offer a hand, along with the technology that made it possible, proved to be a vital complement to the often limited local resources I had to draw on. And finally, I am grateful to Mary Ray Worley at Impressions Book and Journal Services, Inc. for her careful and perceptive editing.

In so many ways, large and small, the help extended by these individuals improved the translation beyond my own capabilities, and I thank them all. At the same time, I alone must bear the burden for any lingering errors or infelicities that remain.

—Wayne P. Lammers



The Philippines

Contents

Foreword *by Frank B. Gibney* ix

Translator's Note xiii

Map of the Philippines xv

1. **My Capture** 1
2. **San Jose Field Hospital** 34
3. **Rainy Tacloban** 47
4. **Sunny Palo** 73
5. **Living as POWs** 97
6. **Brothers in Arms** 132
7. **Seasons** 150
8. **Labor** 176
9. **August 10** 223
10. **New Prisoners and Old** 238
11. **Theatricals** 257
12. **Going Home** 279

Nishiya Company Chronicle 300

Index 321



My Capture

It is not from goodness of heart that you do not kill.

— Tannishō¹

On January 25, 1945, I was captured by American forces in the mountains of southern Mindoro in the Philippines.

The island of Mindoro, situated to the southwest of Luzon, is about half the size of our Shikoku. It had no military facilities to speak of, and the forces deployed there comprised but two companies of infantry nominally occupying and patrolling six strategic points along the coastline.

My unit had been assigned to patrol the southern and western portions of the island in August 1944, and my own platoon was stationed together with the company command at San Jose in the far southwest. Two other platoons were stationed respectively at Bulalacao in the southeast and Paluan in the northwest. The western coastline between San Jose and Paluan—which is to say, virtually the entire hundred-mile length of the island—remained open, and local guerrilla forces could freely obtain supplies from American submarines. Fortunately, they did not attack our San Jose post.

On December 15, 1944, an American task force of some sixty ships had landed near San Jose. We immediately retreated into the hills and cut across the island through the southern mountains to join up three days later with the Bulalacao platoon, now bivouacked on a ridge overlooking that town. American forces had not come ashore there, but the platoon had

¹ A Japanese Buddhist treatise from the thirteenth century.

heard the roar of the bombardment at San Jose and had taken refuge preemptively, bringing with them their food stores and radio gear. The food supply was quite ample—sufficient to last more than three months even after our numbers swelled to nearly two hundred with the arrival of some survivors from a seaplane base near San Jose, a group of marooned shipping engineers, and a number of noncombatants. This expanded company remained encamped at that location for some forty days, until an attack by American forces on January 24 sent us scattering in every direction.

U.S. warplanes flew back and forth in the skies overhead day in and day out, but the Americans were in no hurry to pursue us.

"Those bastards are obviously too lazy to come after us all the way out here," one of the noncoms said, as he supervised the construction of the crude huts that were to become our barracks. "And if they're not coming after us, why should we go out looking for trouble? The war'll probably be over pretty soon, anyway."

His remark put in plain words the hope that many of us held silently in our hearts. That is to say, since it seemed quite apparent that the enemy regarded Mindoro merely as a stepping-stone to Luzon, so long as we stayed put in the hills, there was a good chance the fighting would leapfrog right over us and leave us untouched for the duration of the war, making our position one of the so-called forgotten fronts. For a small, isolated force like ours, cut off from any possibility of further supplies or reinforcements, this was our only hope for survival.

Unfortunately, it soon became impossible for us not to "go out looking for trouble": We received orders from the battalion command at Batangas on Luzon to report on enemy activities in the San Jose area. Detachments of a dozen or more men were sent by turns to scout the hills in back of San Jose for periods of a week or ten days. One of those detachments was discovered and fired upon by an American patrol.

Eventually, the full Bulalacao platoon moved to a ridge overlooking San Jose and began sending back daily reports of what they had observed through their telescopes. We then relayed the information to battalion headquarters. The lookouts frequently spied convoys of several dozen vessels bearing northward past San Jose, and they saw squadrons of massive bombers taking off from newly constructed airstrips. The bay where we had previously anchored our boats to fish was now crisscrossed by the foamy wakes of American outboards.

At the beginning of the new year, battalion headquarters sent word that 150 commandos were being dispatched to Mindoro. As luck would have it, though, American troops landed at several points along the island's east coast on the very day the commandos were scheduled to arrive, and we were unable to make contact with the boat transporting the special unit.

To be sure, the news of their impending arrival was not entirely welcome, for it inevitably meant that several of our own number would have to accompany them as guides—a virtual suicide mission. We had no illusions about the success of 150 commandos against an American force brought to shore in a task force of sixty warships.

Subsequent orders took us back down to Bulalacao to meet the promised shock troops, but again to no avail. We looted the abandoned homes and took captive a local man unfortunate enough to have come back at the wrong moment to retrieve his belongings. In this way we recklessly went on multiplying cause for the local population to wish us eradicated.

Despite the utter hopelessness of our situation, we, the enlisted men, remained quite undisturbed. The company was made up entirely of reservists called into active duty in early 1944 and sent to the front directly from three months of boot camp, so we were too green to genuinely understand how dire the situation had become. Yet, even if we had understood the true nature of our situation, it would have done us no good to spend the days paralyzed in fear of impending attack by an impossibly superior foe, so perhaps you could say our ignorance was a blessing. The great majority of my cohorts were, like myself, over thirty, and we had no desire to force a speedy resolution of our predicament.

To begin with, life in the hills was not so uncomfortable. The dry season had begun, so we did not have to contend with rain, and even during the worst of the daytime heat, it remained cool in the shade. It was the perfect sort of weather for camping out with nothing but the shirts on our backs; we faced no immediate shortage of rations; and since each squad had its own separate hut, discipline was quite naturally relaxed, freeing us from the stiff decorum that normally dominates military life. We cooked our meals with water drawn from a nearby stream, just as we might have done on a camping trip back home, and we bartered with the friendly Mangyans nearby to obtain potatoes, bananas, and tobacco in exchange for red fabric and aluminum coins. (These highlanders, darker skinned and belonging to an altogether different tribe from the Tagalog people who lived down by the sea, were completely indifferent to the war.) Now and then we descended from the hills to shoot a free-roaming carabao and feast on its meat.

Trouble arrived, however, from an unexpected quarter: malaria.

Mindoro was said to harbor the most virulent strains of malaria in the Philippines, but by taking the appropriate precautions, we had never had more than a handful of cases during our occupation of San Jose. Unfortunately, the medical officer had left behind our supply of quinine when we fled into the mountains, and the disease spread rapidly through our ranks after that. By the time the American forces attacked on January 24, fewer

than thirty men remained with the legs to fight. During the final two weeks of that period, malaria claimed an average of three men a day.

The stricken went quietly to their deaths. Their loss of spirit was swift and complete, standing in eerie contrast to the easygoing mood that otherwise prevailed.

Our commanding officer, a first lieutenant, made daily rounds of the squad huts. As he came to each hut, he would stand somberly in the doorway, gazing in on the ailing soldiers crowding the floor.

The sergeant commanding my own squad bitterly assailed the lieutenant for failing to immediately order a headlong dash to the northern end of the island, where we could have crossed over to Luzon, as soon as the American forces had landed. We would never have been ordered by battalion headquarters to report on enemy activities, he grouched, nor would we have been immobilized by an outbreak of malaria, if the lieutenant had not kept us dawdling around in these mountains.

It was the voice of noncom egotism. Underlying his position was the myopic presumption that the island of Luzon remained, and would continue to remain, an invulnerable safety zone. The lieutenant, on the other hand, was a seasoned veteran who had seen action at Nomonhan,² and his view of the fate of Japanese forces in the Philippines could hardly have been so sanguine.

The young lieutenant had gained his rank by way of the reserve officer training corps. He was only twenty-seven, but he had a taciturn, mournful air that made him look no less than thirty. Never once did he speak of what he had seen or experienced at Nomonhan, but I daresay it showed in the expression of his eyes, of his face. Sometimes I even thought I could smell the stench of his dead comrades still clinging to his person.

"A garrison must think of its post as its final resting place," he often repeated, and I cannot believe that he was merely mouthing a commonplace.

The lieutenant took no special precautions to keep our position concealed from the Americans. Contrary to the usual custom, he paid the guides who had shown us the way through the mountains from San Jose with food and allowed them to return home. A note of resignation manifested itself in everything he did or said. His movements were languidly deliberate, and his occasional smile appeared weakly on his lips, as though he had just barely managed to squeeze it from between his teeth.

In a way, he seemed to yearn for death. On punitive expeditions conducted during our occupation of San Jose, he always fought in the vanguard,

2 On the border between Outer Mongolia and Manchuria where, in a 1939 clash, Soviet troops routed a division of Japan's Guandong Army.

making no effort to shield himself from danger. He had been cast in the mold of the sensitive commander—the kind who accepted the dictates of the war as his highest calling, yet felt a deep sense of personal responsibility when it came to passing those dictates on to his subordinates. As a rule, men like him find it difficult to justify what they ask of their subordinates with anything other than their own deaths.

When the Americans finally attacked our mountain encampment, the lieutenant strode forward alone to survey the American positions and became the first to die, taking the direct hit of a mortar shell. It was no doubt exactly the way he had wished to go.

I identified closely with this young CO and was privately very fond of him. Though in a considerably different sense from him, I, too, lived in the face of my own certain death.

I had long since given up believing in a Japanese victory. I held nothing but contempt for the General Staff who had dragged our country into such a hopeless fight. Yet, since I had not had the courage to take any action toward preventing that fight, I did not feel I could claim any right, at so late a stage, to protest the fate to which they had consigned me. This reasoning, which placed a single powerless citizen on an equal footing with the massive organization by which an entire nation exercises its violent power, seemed almost comical to me; and yet, had I not taken such a view, I could not have kept from laughing at the absurdity of the predicament in which I found myself, traveling rapidly toward a meaningless death.

All the same, this reasoning did nothing to efface the disemboweling wretchedness I experienced as my comrades and I, herded aboard like a cargo of slaves, stood on the deck of a transport ship in Moji and peered down at the red and green lights of toylike ferries plying the waters below while waiting for the ship to get us under way on our voyage to death.

Until the day we shipped out for the front, I had lightheartedly resigned myself to joining my own fate to my country's, wherever that might lead, and I had scoffed alike at the wartime opportunists so full of lies and the defeatists with their fruitless dissents. The moment I boarded that transport, however, I was struck utterly dumb by the looming figure of Death sitting squarely before me.

At thirty-five, I could not yet say I had lived a full life, and there were farewells to be said, loved ones with whom I found it indeed painful to part. But the act of boarding the transport ineluctably pushed all that behind me. The future held nothing but death, which we humans can envision only as absolute nothingness; yet, if I could be transported to that nothingness as easily as I had been brought aboard that ship, then what possible good would fretting do? I reminded myself of this again and again. Even so, the idea of death continually returned to assault my consciousness in everything

I did as I went about my daily activities. Eventually I realized it was not the nature of death that troubled me; it was simply living with my own certain extinction so close at hand.

In fact, the proximity of death brought with it elements of pleasure. The vibrant colors of the Philippine sunrises and sunsets, of the islands' palm and flame trees, were a delight to behold. Though my eyes saw the shadow of death in every direction, they also feasted greedily on the tropical landscape in which the flora so overpowered the fauna. I thanked the fates for bringing me into the midst of such a lushness of life in the time before my death. After we retreated into the mountains, the palm trees were missing, and the teeming, luxuriant growth of the lowlands was replaced by the more temperate landscape of the highlands, but to me it seemed only the more beautiful. I became convinced that the ever-increasing pleasure I experienced in the embrace of nature was a certain sign that my time was drawing near.

Yet, once we had lost our only route of escape and my brothers in arms began dying one after the other, a peculiar transformation came over me: I suddenly believed in the possibility of my survival. The 99 percent certainty of death was abruptly swept aside in my mind. I found myself imagining instead a medley of ways by which I might actually ensure my survival, and I determined to pursue them. At the very least I would exercise all due care in everything I did. It seemed senseless to do otherwise.

Clearly, the deepening shadows of death that surrounded me had triggered an inborn determination to survive. What our instincts compel us to do in the face of extremity is always highly pragmatic; the schemes they make us dream up, on the other hand, are typically quite preposterous.

I had one particular friend whom I shall call S. He was my own age, and like myself a married man with children. His father sat on the board of directors of a large fisheries firm, but S had "had it up to here" (as he put it) with the self-serving egotism of the capitalists on the home islands, and he dreamed of going to the front to fight as a common soldier instead of becoming an agent of the capitalists' greed. During our training back in Japan, he had concealed the likelihood of his being sent to the front from his father, who had high connections in the military—thereby deliberately severing all chance of remaining safely in Japan. Once he had actually seen conditions in the war zone, however, his dreams were shattered. Finding the manner in which our forces were conducting the war utterly witless, he declared it would be a pure and simple waste to die on such a battlefield.

His words came as a revelation to me. Suddenly I could see the patent self-deception in proudly insisting to myself that I had chosen this path of death at my own volition. To die helplessly in these faraway mountains as the victim of some foolishly conceived war plan was indeed a "pure and simple waste" and nothing more.

We developed a plan for escape together. Since there could be no doubt that the Americans would eventually force us from our refuge, we would somehow make our way through enemy positions to the island's west coast. There we would commandeer a sailboat and, catching the prevailing winds, steer a course that skirted the string of islands leading to Borneo (sailing techniques I had learned on trips to the beach would come in handy at this point). When I questioned whether Borneo would be safe and suggested instead that we cut across the South China Sea to Indochina, S convinced me that our limited food supply and navigational skills required us to settle for the next best plan.

If we could not obtain a sailboat, we would return to the mountains and subsist on roots and whatever else we could forage while we waited for the war to end. Recalling some of the details of *Robinson Crusoe*, which we had both read as young boys, we got some tribesmen to show us how to start a fire with bamboo.

The plan was a sheer fantasy, but not for a moment did we doubt that it would succeed.

Even as three more of our comrades continued to die each day, we rehearsed our survival plan over and over, like a pair of cheerful grave diggers. (And, in fact, we did dig graves.) We contemplated, too, the threat of malaria, our most immediate enemy at the time, and we adopted the only means at our disposal for staving off the disease: striving our utmost to maintain what reserves of strength we had. We voraciously devoured any rice gruel left uneaten by the sick, and we did not hesitate even to eat spilled rice we had retrieved from the ground.

Though we thought we had prepared ourselves for every eventuality, we had failed to consider the possibility that the Americans would arrive at the precise moment when the disease had struck the two of us. Almost as if by appointment, S and I both came down with fevers on January 16. My temperature stayed relentlessly at 104 degrees, rendering me completely unable to stand on the second day and slurring my speech on the third. S's symptoms were milder, but his temperature, too, remained above 102 degrees.

I now faced my first genuine battle. "Take up your arms," I commanded my heart. I was not particularly robust in physique, but I knew that I had a relatively high resistance to disease. Observing my symptoms carefully, I devised my own strategy for treatment. Since the onset of my fever had led immediately to diarrhea, I decided to avoid all unnecessary stress on my digestive system—this was how I reasoned at the time—by not eating anything. I felt confident that I had enough reserves of energy to go without food for a week or two without it affecting my constitutional strength.

In the mountains, the medics had invented a truly bizarre prescription for malaria: no water. Though I had blindly followed their instructions before, this time I abandoned my docility. Objecting strenuously, I presented argu-