

王晉康：轉生的巨人
The Reincarnated Giant
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1. Three News Releases

THIS YEAR, 2012, J-nation's media broadcast three heatedly debated news items, all of which had to do with Imagai Nashihiko, the head of the Western Steel Group. Of course, anything concerning someone of Mr Imagai's stature would inevitably become a hot news item. Mr Imagai was seventy-two years old, and was the richest man in J-nation. Before the country's economic bubble burst, he had even been at the top of the Forbes 500 list for many years. He personally owned more than one-sixth of the land in the entire country, making him an embodiment of wealth itself, and I suspect that even the legendarily wealthy King Solomon might well have been his inferior. Mr Imagai was ruthless and decisive, with a gaze like a knife and a penetrating understanding of people and events, revered throughout the country—and particularly within business circles—as the spiritual father of J-nation's financial world. Another famous tycoon, Harita Akio, worshiped the ground he walked on, calling him 'a great man who comes along only once every few centuries, like Tang dynasty China's Taizong emperor'. Then, Harita would sigh and add, 'Why should he be born, now that there is me?'¹

The first of the three news items concerned Mr Imagai's personal lawyer, Kiminao Ninzen, who was asked to petition the court for an 'uncontested, preemptive guarantee of rights' on Mr Imagai's behalf. This petition was truly bizarre, and may very well have been unprecedented in all the world's legal systems, because according to existing legal practices the right to sue presupposes that there be a counterpart who is alleged to have transgressed on the rights of

¹ This quote is a famous phrase from *Romance of Three Kingdoms* 三國演義. When the Wu general Zhou Yu 周瑜 dies, he exclaims: 'Now that there is Yu, why should Liang be born?' Liang is his rival, the Shu advisor Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮.

the litigant. It was, therefore, already a significant victory for Imagai's resourceful lawyer, Kiminao, to have convinced the court to acknowledge Imagai's petition:

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Mr Kiminao: On behalf of my client, I am petitioning the court for an 'uncontested, pre-emptive guarantee of rights'. My client has developed a cancerous tumour in his right arm and will have to have it amputated immediately, and he is considering having a new arm attached in its place. But after his arm is amputated, he will no longer be able to sign cheques in his original handwriting, and will lose, furthermore, an important symbol of his identity—which is to say, his fingerprints. In order to secure my client's rights, I therefore request that the court pre-emptively guarantee that he retain all his original rights even when he loses his arm and has the new one attached.

Judge: First of all, I'd like to express my condolences to your client for his illness. In a strict legal sense, however, a 'person' is understood as a holistic entity, and although the concept of 'personhood' lacks clear statutory provision, someone who loses an arm would clearly still retain all his original rights. On this point, it is simply not necessary to request a pre-emptive guarantee of rights. With respect to the issue of not being able to sign his cheques in his original handwriting, a few simple technical adjustments will suffice.

Mr Kiminao (laughs): No, it is not so simple. My client truly shows great foresight. From this seemingly inconsequential matter he has observed an enormous loophole in the contemporary legal system, which is precisely what your honour has just referred to: namely, the fact that the law is currently not able to provide a precise definition for the term 'person'. Suppose, for instance, that my client were to lose not only his right arm, but—and please forgive me for raising this unfortunate possibility—were to have a car accident in which he would lose both arms, his eyesight, and which would furthermore leave him disfigured, with damaged vocal cords and in need of an artificial heart. In other words, suppose that he were to lose all of the external characteristics that currently define him, to the point that even a genetic analysis might prove inconclusive, since his new limbs and organs would contain foreign DNA. It is possible, in fact, that only his magnificent brain would remain intact. Would you agree that, under these circumstances, he could still be regarded as the same respected Mr Imagai? Would he still retain all of the rights that Mr Imagai currently enjoys?

Judge: Of course. That goes without saying.

Mr Kiminao: Good! That is precisely my client's wish. He doesn't wish to change the nation's laws overnight, but instead simply wants to make a modest arrangement with respect to his own personal rights. In other words, my client

simply asks the court to pre-emptively recognize that, with respect to his body, his brain is the only determinant of his identity. This sort of arrangement may, in the end, prove to have been excessively prudent, but there is never any harm in being prudent.

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In the end, Kiminao Ninzen won the case and received from the court a formal certification of rights for his client. Although this 'uncontested, pre-emptive guarantee of rights' was, indeed, unprecedented, there was no disputing the analysis he had presented. Who wouldn't agree that a person's brain is his or her most fundamental organ? Furthermore, J-nation, after a contentious multi-year debate, had just passed a new law that made brain death, rather than cardiac death, the new standard for determining an individual's death.

Though there was much conjecture concerning Mr Imagai's motivations at the time, no one suspected that he was actually laying the legal groundwork for a historically unprecedented operation. I was the lead surgeon for the operation, but it was far from a simple amputation or arm transplant.

The second of the three news items concerned Mr Imagai's lawyer's advance purchase of an anencephalic foetus for his client. The reporter who reported this story remarked with consternation, 'This must be in preparation for Mr Imagai's arm transplant, but how can he, who is 1.67 metres tall, possibly be given an infant's arm?'

At the time, Mrs Yamaguchi was already twenty weeks pregnant, and ultrasounds and alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) tests had confirmed that the foetus was anencephalic. Mr Kiminao had placed informers at several dozen hospitals, and the day he received news of Mrs Yamaguchi's diagnosis he took me with him to see her. My job was to examine the foetus and confirm that, apart from lacking a fore-brain, all of its other organs were healthy. The results of my examination were very reassuring. The Yamaguchis were fisher-people in financial straits, which is the reason why Kiminao picked them. Meeting with the couple when they had not yet recovered from the shock of the diagnosis and were depressed and disconsolate, Mr Kiminao said to them earnestly,

'Please accept my condolences for your tragedy. I represent a good-hearted old gentleman, who would like to do something for you. You need not worry about your medical expenses, as the gentleman is willing to cover them for you.'

The couple thanked us politely, though they were clearly suspicious of this unsolicited generosity.

Mr Kiminao asked, 'Do you plan to have the foetus aborted?'

Mr Yamaguchi replied sadly, 'That is our only option. The doctor says that this sort of congenital disease is untreatable.'

'That is correct. Current medical technology has no cure. However, I have a suggestion that I would like you to consider. Would you perhaps be willing to allow this unfortunate child to live in someone else's body? Yes, I am speaking of organ transplant. The foetus's eyes, heart, liver, gall bladder, kidneys, pancreas, spleen, hands and feet, in fact its entire body could live healthily in someone else's. I believe that this might be of some comfort to you. Also, please rest assured, when conducting the organ transplants we will use only the most humane methods. We'll hire the best doctors and nurses to look after Mrs Yamaguchi until she safely delivers, and after delivery we'll use a heart-lung machine to keep the infant alive for at least half a year until we can confirm that there is no possibility of a cure, and only then will we begin the transplant procedure. In addition,' the lawyer added softly, 'you will receive considerable nutritional subsidies. You and I both know that organ selling is illegal, but the law does not forbid the family of a deceased patient from voluntarily donating the corpse, nor does it forbid a charitable individual from giving some nutritional subsidies to an unfortunate couple.'

A gleam of greed shone through Mr Yamaguchi's eyes: 'How much?'

Mr Kiminao replied, 'It depends on your needs.'

Mrs Yamaguchi tugged at her husband's sleeve, and he said hesitantly, 'Can I talk this over with my wife?'

'Of course. That goes without saying.'

After we stepped out of the hospital room, we could see through the half-open door Mr Yamaguchi and his wife conversing quietly. She seemed to be resisting, while her husband was trying to persuade her. We heard him say, 'The child will not survive anyway, so it is not a question of our callousness.' While they were talking, Kiminao simply gazed off into the distance with his hands clasped behind his back. In the end, Mrs Yamaguchi gave in, and when Mr Yamaguchi invited us back in he announced resolutely,

'Twenty million J dollars. Not a cent less.'

I knew that the starting price for these negotiations had originally been pegged at 80 million J dollars, and therefore Mr Yamaguchi's asking price was much too low. Mr Kiminao, however, replied calmly, 'That is too much. For a nutritional subsidy, this price is much too high. Mr Yamaguchi, you put me in a very awkward position.' Mr Yamaguchi opened his mouth to speak, but Kiminao cut him off with a wave of his hand and said, 'However, since I've already given my word, I will find a way to deal with this problem myself. I'll do my best to convince

my client, and I believe he will ultimately agree. As I've already mentioned, he is a very generous man. However, I must emphasize one point: you may subsequently learn who has received the infant's organs, but you must not, under any circumstances, disturb that person. There is a clause in your contract that spells this out very clearly, and if this clause is breached you will have to pay a penalty of double the amount. Please remember, my client is very benevolent, but also very principled, and there is nothing he likes less than incessant demands from greedy people.'

This calm threat clearly left a deep impression on the couple, and Mr Yamaguchi quickly nodded his assent, 'We definitely won't break our word. We will maintain absolute silence. You can rest assured of that.'

The foetus was delivered by Caesarean section at seven months (on account of the fact that anencephalic foetuses often die before they reach full term). As promised, the parents did indeed disappear after receiving their money. Regardless of how hot the news subsequently became, they apparently kept their word, since there was no further sign of them. We used a heart-lung machine to keep the infant alive for six months. You could say that this was to abide by the terms of the contract, but in reality this clause of the contract was nonsensical. Who, after all, has ever heard of an anencephalic infant being cured? There was not the least possibility of this. To tell the truth, we had planned from the beginning to carry out the organ transplant operation after six months, as the chance of success would be greater then.

At the end of the year, Mr Kiminao held a press conference in which he announced that Mr Imagai would undergo organ transplant surgery. This was the third piece of groundbreaking news. This announcement did not comport with the discretion with which this godfather of the financial world normally conducted his business. However, people would subsequently come to realize that he had his reasons for proceeding in this manner.

The reporters rushed forward, desperate for inside information, each hoping their coverage would make the front page. They were all very bewildered however: What organ is Mr Imagai going to receive? The previous report of Mr Imagai developing a malignant bone tumour in his right arm was clearly a misdiagnosis as, for nearly a year after these initial reports, he has remained perfectly healthy, continuing to use his distinctive florid handwriting to sign one enormous cheque after another. Some of the more astute reporters had already guessed that this was not even a misdiagnosis, but rather that the earlier announcement had simply been a smokescreen put up by Western Steel. What

organ, therefore, was the great Mr Imagai going to receive from the anencephalic infant?

Mr Imagai did not appear at the press conference because, at the time, he was actually in an operating room in the Neurological Surgery Clinic in Yamadai prefecture. I myself was in the disinfection area washing my hands, and was about to put on my green surgical scrubs and begin the operation. Apart from Mr Kiminao, Western Steel's director of general affairs, Nakasane Ichū was also at the press conference. Nakasane was one of Mr Imagai's most competent assistants, and for a month after the operation (which is the amount of time it takes for accelerated nerve regeneration), he would oversee the company's daily operations. Mr Imagai's personal assistant, Komatsu Yoshiko, also attended. The pretty Ms Komatsu Yoshiko was often referred to as Mr Imagai's 'sleep-in secretary', because everyone knew that the great Mr Imagai was also sexually very well endowed, and even at seventy-two he was still in full possession of his sexual prowess. His semi-public girlfriends numbered in the dozens, including movie stars, Olympic athletes, bar girls, college co-eds, and female politicians. Komatsu Yoshiko, however, was the most highly favoured of them all, and received 60 million J dollars a month (and remember that Mr Imagai only paid 20 million to purchase the anencephalic infant!). It was impossible for outsiders to know with certainty the exact reason why she was so highly favoured, but it was rumoured that she could use a very you-know-what technique to satisfy this old man's peculiar sexual appetites.

The media had never criticized Mr Imagai's promiscuity, which was probably due to the widespread attitude that it was perfectly natural for this alpha male, who owned one-sixth of the nation's land, to have more than one woman. In fact, some people even complimented him on his egalitarian style, given that when it came to potential lovers he didn't limit himself to high society.

As I watched Komatsu Yoshiko's showy demeanour on screen, however, I couldn't help suspecting that her 60-million-a-month salary was no longer secure, given that following this operation and for many years to come, Mr Imagai certainly won't be requiring her services.

None of Mr Imagai's family was present at the press conference. His wife had already passed away, and neither of his two sons made an appearance. I, of course, knew the reason for this: If this operation proved successful, the two unfortunate sons could no longer be able to look forward to inheriting the Western Steel empire. They must have been very unhappy with their father's decision, if not actually hating him for it. Mr Imagai, however, had already arranged to give each son a portion of his fortune, and they had already left the company to set up their own businesses, following different paths from their father.

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Capital Daily reporter: Could you tell us precisely which organ Mr Imagai will be receiving today? We already know that he didn't really have a tumour on his right arm.

Mr Kiminao (smiles): This is precisely why I have convened today's press conference. I am officially announcing that Mr Imagai will receive a full body transplant, including both legs, both arms, heart, liver, gall bladder, kidneys, pancreas, spleen, eyes, ears, tongue, nose, and torso. All organs but one—his brain.

KHN reporter (dumb-struck): You're saying ... that Mr Imagai is not actually having an organ transplant, but rather he is transplanting his own brain into the body of the anencephalic infant?

Mr Kiminao (solemnly): That is incorrect; you have mixed up subject and object. As everyone knows, an anencephalic infant cannot be viewed as an actual person. It doesn't have an identity, and in Christian nations priests don't perform mass for them when they die. My client's brain, on the other hand, is his only effective representative, the rights of which we had already pre-emptively requested the court to guarantee. For example, people often say that the sun rises from the East, but that is merely a figure of speech, and if you were to use rigorously scientific language you would have to say that the earth revolves toward the East, toward the sun. Similarly, if we use a rigorously legal language, we can only say that my client is receiving a new body today.

Jiji Press reporter: This sort of brain transplant is unprecedented. What is its likelihood of success?

Mr Kiminao (offering another correction): No, this is not a brain transplant, it is a body transplant. We are confident that the operation will be a success, and have been preparing for it for twenty years.

KHN reporter: I assume that when you filed for a pre-emptive certification of rights six months ago, it was in preparation for today's operation?

Mr Kiminao: You could certainly see it that way. Now, the operation is about to begin, and all of our honoured guests will observe the entire process. The operation, however, will not be displayed on a monitor, since that sort of observation has no legal standing. Instead, you will watch it live through the observation windows of the operating room. What you are about to witness is the brain belonging to my client, and to no one else, being transplanted into the cranium of the anencephalic infant. I will be obliged for your assistance in one thing, which is that after the operation everyone present sign a document of witness. Now, everyone please follow me to the observation room.

Mr Kiminao led the twenty-five reporters into the observation room, from which they could clearly observe the operating room through a large glass window. More than ten nurses had already completed the pre-op procedures, and the anencephalic infant was lying on an operating table, covered by a white sheet with only its deformed skull exposed. The heart-lung machine was still operating. Mr Imagai Nashihiko was sitting on another operating table, and today his normally stern face was smiling broadly as he waved to the reporters through the window. The KHN reporter was allowed to enter the operating room, representing the reporter pool. He put on surgical scrubs and, holding up a microphone, asked Mr Imagai to say a few words. Imagai serenely observed:

‘Today is a life-and-death gamble, so please pray for me. If I am able to leave this operating room with a new body and a new face, I hope no one will fail to recognize their old friend. As they say, you shouldn’t judge a book by its cover, nor a person by his face.’

His humour did not elicit any laughter. This is not because the reporters’ responses were slow, but rather because they were so in awe of him that they hardly dared even to smile in his presence. Imagai answered some questions from the reporters waiting outside with the microphone, and I, as the chief surgeon, also answered a few.

Then, the operation began. The infant’s heart-lung machine was removed, and the remnant of its cranium was opened up. After Mr Imagai was given general anesthesia, his own skull was also opened up. His brain was then carefully



removed and transferred to the infant’s cranium, where we used bio-compatible polypropylene tubes to bridge the brain to the infant’s optic nerve, spinal cord, and other extra-cranial nerves. This sort of bridge would help the nerves to regenerate faster, enabling them to establish permanent connections in less than a month, at which point Mr Imagai would ‘awaken’ in his new body.

Carrying out this extremely complicated procedure under the gaze of dozens of pairs of eyes, I couldn’t help but be somewhat

nervous. I had, however, carefully planned everything out. In fact, you could even say that I had been waiting for this operation my entire life. I had already spent twenty years preparing for it, and had carried out hundreds of successful experimental trials on animals. Failure was simply not an option. Apart from my professional honour and responsibilities as a world-renowned surgeon that rested on the success of the surgery, I, Dr Motose Zekū, would also stand to gain something more substantial—namely, a twenty per cent stake in Western Steel.

2. Human Grafting

AFTER GRADUATING from the renowned Capital Medical School twenty-two years ago, I completed my residency at the not-so-famous Neurological Surgery Clinic in Yamadai prefecture. Not long before the completion of my residency, I was presented with a very difficult case. The patient was a four-year-old girl who was suffering from a congenital deformity wherein a portion of her meningeal membrane, including her pituitary gland and hypothalamus, protruded into her mouth through a fissure in her cranium, such that if the membrane were to accidentally tear while she was eating, it would immediately precipitate a life-threatening emergency. After joint consultation by the residential specialists it was determined that she should be operated on immediately. The operation, however, would be extremely risky and our hospital didn't have enough experience, so several senior doctors suggested that the patient be transferred to another hospital. But I insisted that we accept the patient, and even offered to serve as the lead surgeon. The operation was a success, and overnight I, the twenty-five-year-old Motose Zekū, became a celebrity within J-nation's medical community.

Shortly thereafter, Mr Imagai Nashihiko expressed his desire to meet me through the agency of his lawyer. I was immensely flattered by this invitation, because to be favoured by the nation's richest tycoon surely meant that wealth and status awaited me. Furthermore, I was particularly curious about this tycoon who owned a sixth of the nation's land, and therefore wanted to observe first-hand what he was really like. As for why he had wanted to meet me, I didn't really understand at the time. His empire was built on the leisure industry, steel, and railways, rather than on medicine or biotechnology. Furthermore he couldn't possibly want me to be his personal physician, since my specialty as a neurosurgeon was much too specialized for a personal physician. I had mixed feelings; while I hoped that this would be an opportunity for advancement, I couldn't help but feel hesitant. Everyone knew Imagai's famous motto: Don't employ talent, employ

mediocrity. He ruled his business as an emperor would his empire, and like all emperors, he did not appreciate maverick underlings. Imagai followed the dictum of the Chinese philosopher Xunzi, who viewed human nature as inherently evil. Accordingly, he viewed all new employees with a skeptical eye until their loyalty was proven through performance. This kind of master was not easy to get along with.

Mr Imagai was of average height, and dressed very simply. Even his leather shoes were worn out. But he had a very sharp gaze, an imposing mien, and a naturally imperious air. His assistants, including his second in command, General Affairs Head Nakasane Ichū, all showed him the greatest respect. He invited me to sit down, and immediately got to the point:

‘Mr Motose, I know you are an extraordinarily talented doctor. I am now fifty-two years old, and should begin planning for my old age. Please tell me your views on aging and mortality. Can they be avoided?’

I replied cautiously, ‘There are many different schools of thought on this. One reliable view is the “programmable” model, which holds that an organism’s aging process and subsequent death is determined by its genes. For instance, a human cell will die after dividing fifty times, which in turn brings on the death of the body itself. But reproductive and cancer cells are able to extend their lives by “resetting” their internal clocks, hence they do not die. If one could only find a way to alter this natural programming, death would not necessarily be unavoidable.’

‘How, then, could one reset all one’s cells? I know fruit trees can accomplish this through grafting. For instance, if a black plum tree is grafted onto a wild peach tree, the young peach would reset the plum’s internal clock to zero, so if the plum were to be repeatedly grafted generation after generation, it would effectively become immortal. Can humans be grafted?’

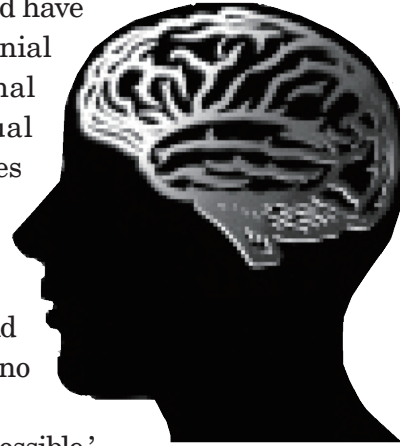
For a moment, I didn’t understand, ‘What do you mean by human grafting? How could it be done?’

‘I mean grafting a brain. If a brain is accepted by a new body, and if the brain accepts the body’s genetic commands, then the brain’s internal clock will be reset to zero, even as the patient retains his original consciousness.’ He saw my startled expression, and said calmly, ‘Don’t reject this out of hand. Please give it some careful consideration before you decide.’

This was a very bold idea. I considered it very carefully, and eventually replied, ‘Your suggestion is ahead of its time, but in theory it is feasible. The transplanted brain cells could very possibly be reset to zero by the new host body. The actual surgery, however, would be extraordinarily difficult. There have been successful cases of head transplants in primates, but it would be much more difficult to

transplant a brain only. The transplanted brain would have to be grafted onto the host body's myriad extracranial nerves and connective tissues, including the spinal column, the optic nerves, auditory nerves, lingual nerves, and facial nerves. Moreover, the difficulties of regenerating the central nervous system would remain.'

'I am aware of these difficulties. I just want you to say whether or not there is any hope of success? And within the next twenty or thirty years? Money is no object.'



I hesitated for a long time: 'I wouldn't say it's not possible.'

Mr Imagai replied decisively, 'Then we should definitely try. I would like to hire you to supervise this venture. What do you think? I am aware of your talent and your courage, and beyond that you would enjoy the world's most generous financial support. Take hold of this opportunity and try to achieve this breakthrough while I'm still alive. As for your remuneration,' he gazed at me intently, 'there are two arrangements that you can choose from. You can either take a fixed salary at five times what you are currently receiving, irrespective of whether or not your research is successful. Alternatively, you can continue receiving the relatively low salary that you have now, but after you succeed you will receive a twenty per cent stake in Western Steel.' He added, 'As for determining whether or not the operation is successful, we could agree that as long as I survive for at least a year following the surgery, the operation will be deemed a success.'

A twenty per cent stake in Western Steel! This would make me one of the richest men in the world overnight. I'm not a very greedy person, but it would be absurd to claim that the prospect of billions of J dollars did not have considerable appeal. I gazed at him in astonishment, hardly daring to believe my ears. He said impassively, 'It would not bother me at all to give you a twenty per cent stake in the company. If I am able to live forever, I wouldn't need to pay the government the seventy per cent estate tax that would be owed upon my death, so I would still be saving approximately fifty per cent of my overall net worth. As you know, the law here is that if someone's personal worth exceeds 2 billion J dollars, everything above that amount is taxed at a rate of seventy per cent.' Mr Imagai said coldly, 'This is a typical robber baron law, it's even more shameless than outright theft.'

He asked me, 'What do you think of my proposals? I personally hope that you

accept the second one, because,' he looked at me again with a piercing gaze, as though he could see right through me, 'there are perhaps some people who are not greedy for money, but only when the reward matches the result will they exert their maximum effort.'

He dangled this juicy bait in front of me, callously appealing to my innermost greed, not leaving me even a trace of a fig leaf to hide behind. For an instant, the awe that I normally felt toward him was tinged with hatred. I hesitated for a moment, then swallowed hard and said,

'OK, I accept your offer, and I'd like to take the second arrangement.'

He looked as though he had known all along that I would respond the way I did. He nodded calmly and said, 'Very good. I like your attitude, and am confident we will work very well together.'

3. A Prematurely Wise Infant

IN THE AUTUMN OF 2012, a seventy-two-year-old infant was born. His first cry announced the success of my twenty years of labour (as well as the efforts of more than 10,000 researchers who worked under me). Upon hearing the cry, I thought happily that my twenty per cent stake in Western Steel was almost in hand.

Strictly speaking, however, this cry did not belong to Mr Imagai, but rather it was an instinctive response on the part of his 'host' (which is to say, the anencephalic infant). As Mr Imagai's brain gradually connected to the nervous system of his host, he gained more and more control over his new body, and within a month he had already completely 'emerged' from the infant's body. I found myself confronted, therefore, with a bizarre beast with the body of a seven-month-old infant (if we include the six months he had lived prior to the operation) with delicate limbs that waved about, very tender and sensitive skin, a fat little bottom ... and an enormous head. Although Mr Imagai's seventy-two-year-old brain had already shrunk somewhat, the infant's original skull was still too small to hold it, and therefore I had to surgically create a larger one.

A large head with the facial features clustered in the lower portion of the face is precisely the typical appearance of an infant. This enormous cranium, therefore, made Mr Imagai look even more infant-like, and people couldn't help feeling affectionate toward him. But anyone who peered into his eyes wouldn't feel that way. His gaze was still that of an old devil, sharp as a knife and capable of figuratively stripping one bare and leaving one shivering in naked terror.

Now, he looked at me with this ice-cold gaze, and uttered his first words: 'Motosé, it appears you already have your twenty per cent stake in hand.'

His voice sounded infantile, but his tone was mature and sardonic. I found this stark contrast very disconcerting. I couldn't help being shamed into anger, because this 'infant' who had just learned to speak had instantly unveiled the greed buried deep within me. I replied sarcastically,

'Thank you for remembering your promise. I was originally going to run some tests on your consciousness, but now it looks as though that won't be necessary. From your tone of voice, it is clear that it is indeed Mr Imagai in front of me. This much cannot be doubted.'

Having been employed by Mr Imagai for the past twenty years, I was already intimately acquainted with him, and I knew him to be dictatorial, harsh and mean. Everyone who worked for him was completely subservient, and even if he spit in their faces they would only smile then wait until he had left before wiping themselves off. Even the highly positioned Mr Nakasane was like this, though it is possible that Kiminao may have been slightly different. My position, however, was somewhat special—I had control over Mr Imagai's mortality and therefore didn't need to be so servile. I remained respectful, but now this respect was tinged with hatred. When he addressed me too caustically (and he rarely failed to use such a tone), I would respond with sarcasm. Later, I discovered that he actually liked this—he liked having someone who was willing to stab back at him. Perhaps he had heard too much flattery, to the point that he had finally gotten sick of it. Therefore, when he heard my sarcasm, he laughed out loud, screeching like an owl. He announced imperiously,

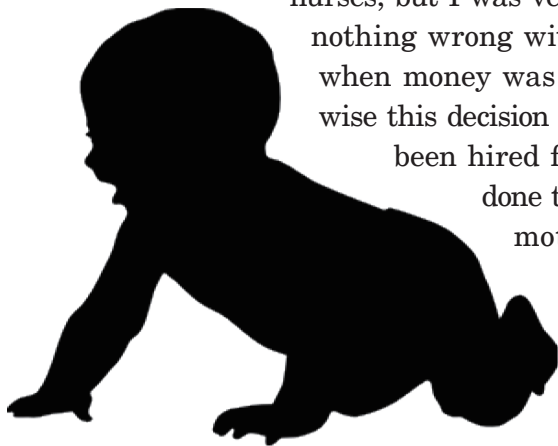
'I'm hungry! I want milk!'

During the month prior to Mr Imagai's awakening, we used an intravenous drip to keep him alive, but a wet nurse had long been ready and waiting. In fact, we had arranged to have three. Of course, an infant doesn't need that many wet

nurses, but I was very cautious and figured that there was nothing wrong with being overly prepared, particularly when money was not an object. I quickly realized how wise this decision had been. The three wet nurses had all been hired from remote rural areas. This was not

done to save money, but rather because urban mothers nowadays often find that they don't have enough milk. When the first

wet nurse entered, she was clearly startled by the sight of the infant's enormous head. But she didn't say a word, and instead proceeded to hold



Mr Imagai up to her chest while lifting her blouse. She had very full breasts, and they were already leaking milk that gave off a sweet aroma. Imagai sized up the breasts, then nodded to me with satisfaction as he grabbed one and greedily started to nurse. I could clearly hear him eagerly swallowing. He quickly finished both breasts, and started to cry angrily (this was another instinctive reaction of the host body). Then, the crying abruptly broke off, and was replaced by a harsh command:

‘I want more. Bring me another!’

The wet nurse did not know that the infant in her arms could already speak, much less did she expect that he would speak in such a tone. She stared at him in shock, but I quickly waved her out and called in the second nurse, and after her, the third. Mr Imagai actually made his way through six separate breasts before he was finally satiated. Then, Nurse Kurihara held him, and patted him on the back till he let out a contented burp and said,

‘I want to get back to work. Tell Nakasane Ichū to come see me.’

Mr Nakasane immediately came over with five underlings, and they proceeded to brief Mr Imagai on Western Steel’s developments over the preceding month. Mr Imagai sat in the nurse’s arms continually issuing instructions in a decisive manner as he listened to the reports. The sight of six grown men standing respectfully in front of a large-headed infant was truly remarkable.

However, I didn’t have time to appreciate the scene. I ordered my underlings to immediately go find several more wet nurses. Based on the appetite Mr Imagai had just shown, I estimated that three nurses would soon fail to suffice. Confirmation of my decision was not long in coming, as Mr Imagai’s appetite quickly soared, vastly exceeding everyone’s expectations. By the seventh day he needed ten wet nurses, two weeks later he needed twenty-five, and a month later the number grew to 100. His growth was even more astonishing, and if you stood next to him as he nursed, you could almost see his body’s inexorable growth.

The nurses’ remuneration had also been arranged by Mr Imagai prior to his ‘reincarnation’. The terms of their employment were similar to my own, in that they were allowed to choose between two payment options. One option involved a high fixed salary, while the other offered instead a low salary with a bonus of 20 million J dollars a year later. Most of the nurses chose the second option, since for these poor women the lure of 20 million J dollars was virtually irresistible. However, most of them were ultimately unable to collect their bonuses, since they typically ended up fleeing after only a month or two. There were two reasons for this. First, this large infant (by this point he was already as big as a ten-

year-old boy) was simply too greedy, and would often continue nursing until he started drawing blood, thereby causing the nurses excruciating pain. The second reason was harder to explain. When Mr Imagai grabbed the nurses' breasts as he was nursing, his eyes too were busy at work. There was a trace of evil in his gaze, which was definitely unlike the way a normal infant would view its mother's 'nursies' (breasts). I had actually noticed this look early on, but hadn't told anyone. I knew that in this infant's body, Imagai's well-developed male instincts were already awakened, and that he probably regarded the wet nurses as the full-breasted Ms Komatsu Yoshiko.

All I could do was strive to increase our supply of wet nurses. Originally, Mr Imagai had insisted that I only recruit domestically, since he wanted to guarantee that he would only be consuming 'pure milk from the people of the rising sun'. But by this point we already needed 1,000 wet nurses, and it proved impossible to assemble that large a corps of nurses drawing solely from domestic sources. After my repeated entreaties, Imagai finally agreed to loosen his criteria and permitted me to recruit from the third world.

I quickly found the requisite number of wet nurses, and told Mr Imagai that most of the new recruits had opted for the first compensation option. I explained that these unenlightened women were all rather short-sighted, and that they only regarded as real money that which they could pocket immediately. I claimed to have no choice but to abide by their requests, though in reality I had secretly persuaded them to take this option, since I couldn't bear to see them fleeing empty-handed.

Of course, there were always some nurses who didn't believe my good intentions and insisted on receiving the second compensation option. When I found myself secretly pitying them, I couldn't help wondering whether I was any smarter? Perhaps there was no basis for comparison, since I had, after all, basically already succeeded, and my twenty per cent stake in Western Steel was virtually in hand. However, I couldn't be sure that Kiminao was not secretly pitying me, just as I was secretly pitying the wet nurses. He, after all, was working for a fixed salary.

We left the hospital and moved into the Prince Hotel owned by the Imagai dynasty. The hotel was closed to outside business, because the need to provide room and board for 1,000 wet nurses had exhausted its capacity. Every day, a continuous procession of nurses marched in and out of Mr Imagai's room, like images on a revolving lantern. This chain of nurses seemed interminable, and the daily consumption of 1,000 nurses' 2,000 breasts was a truly enormous undertaking. Imagai continued to grow at an amazing rate, and within three

months he was already 1.7 metres tall. His growth could no longer be described with terms like ‘felt like’ and ‘was like’, and now, if you stood next to him while he nursed you could actually see his body inflating like a balloon. I was awed by the sight, and wondered what other being could have such exceptional vitality combined with such a strong desire for possession? Without a doubt, the directives for this growth came from Imagai’s brain, and not from his corporeal ‘host’. To think that the anencephalic infant’s body could, upon receiving instructions from Imagai’s brain, become so powerful was something absolutely incredible. No one else in the world could have accomplished this, and therefore you cannot but bow down before this exceptional man.

Today, Mr Kiminao and Mr Nakasane hurried over with some bad news. Kiminao reported that domestic public opinion had gradually become antagonistic, and many people had come to believe that it is unconscionable for a tycoon to avoid his obligations to pay estate tax by abusing science and repeatedly replacing his body so as to maintain his position in the world. The public therefore was urging relevant governmental departments to take appropriate action, but legal experts reported that the law had no authority over this matter since it could not strip Mr Imagai of his rights, given that his brain was in fact still alive, not to mention the fact that he had filed a petition pre-emptively guaranteeing his right to be represented by his brain. As Kiminao and Nakasane discussed these matters, Mr Imagai did not stop nursing. He merely watched them out of the corner of his eye, then said coldly,

‘As long as the law has no authority over me, public opinion is not worth squat!’

Kiminao looked at Nakasane, who said anxiously, ‘Public opinion should not be under-estimated. There are some powerful figures with considerable political influence already severing their ties to Western Steel, including even ... the prime minister, who has always had a special relationship with us.’

Imagai didn’t stop nursing, but after a while said calmly, ‘Then we should turn public opinion around. This is very easy. Find several of our reporters, and have them write stories around the “infant”, in order to stir up society’s maternal instincts.’

Kiminao at once began to nod repeatedly, appearing to recognize the brilliance of this suggestion right away. He and Nakasane briefly discussed the details of how to carry it out, then stood up and prepared to leave. At this point I took the opportunity to offer a suggestion:

‘Mr Imagai, the expense of 1,000 wet nurses is too great. You already have the

body of a fifteen-year-old, and a mouth full of teeth. Why don't you try eating solid food?'

Before Kiminao and Nakasane had a chance to express an opinion on this matter, Imagai responded furiously, 'You want to deprive me of my right to breast milk? Don't forget, no matter how big my body might be, I am still only two months old, and it is my sacred right to feed on breast milk. I want to nurse for at least a year before weaning.' He added coldly, 'Don't worry about your shares—the cost of 1,000 wet nurses won't make a dent in my fortune.'

I was left speechless. How I wanted to spit in this monster's face and stalk off. However, I couldn't help thinking about the shares that were soon to be mine. I was annoyed to discover that after Mr Imagai's transfer to his new body, his temper had deteriorated, to the point that he now acted like a spoiled child. Mr Kiminao turned to me and smoothly changed the subject:

'I'm sure Mr Imagai realizes that your suggestion was well meant, and I hope you will not take offence. But the topic of weaning need not be raised again. Mr Imagai's health remains our foremost consideration.'

Mr Kiminao is very talented, and he effortlessly turned public opinion around. His solution was very simple—namely, to strategically release a dozen photographs of Mr Imagai's new existence, photos that we had previously kept in strict confidence. They were labelled:

- A large-headed infant is born;
- He nurses sweetly;
- The wet nurses watch him tenderly;
- And so forth.

All of these photographs concealed Imagai's icy glare, and gave the impression that he was nothing more than a weak and helpless infant, an ingratiating little fellow. Who, on seeing these images, could possibly bear Imagai any ill-will? Who could continue to regard him as a financial predator intent on devouring billions in tax revenues?

Seeing the positive response to these photographs, Mr Kiminao continued releasing similar images, in chronological order:

- Today, little Imagai grew eleven millimetres!
 - Look at the 1.2 metre tall two-month-old (excluding the six months that the anencephalic infant had been alive)!
 - The nursing infant is already taller than his wet nurse!
 - Observe little Imagai's appetite: 1,000 wet nurses take turns nursing him!
- These photographs were hilarious, and after they were released they naturally

influenced Mr Imagai's 'awe-inspiring' reputation. I thought that no one would ever again fear him like a god. In fact, it was precisely this 'hilariousness' that effectively neutralized the public enmity toward him. When the public saw these photographs, after laughing uproariously, they couldn't help but regard him as their own child.

I, however, committed an inexcusable technical mistake. As the little Imagai was eating ravenously and growing by leaps and bounds, I was so amazed at his extraordinary vitality and desire for possession that it didn't even occur to me to consider whether he might exceed his growth limit. I thought that even though he was growing at an astounding rate, he was merely advancing on and compressing the growth a normal person would experience, and I assumed that once he reached a certain height, such as around two metres, he would stop. At most, I thought he would not exceed two and a half metres, which is humanity's height limit. All living things have their own growth limit, a secret code inscribed by God into their genes, and in the millions of years of its operation, this limit has never failed. But I hadn't anticipated that Mr Imagai would be even more powerful than God.

When Mr Imagai's height began to approach two metres, I belatedly tested his pituitary gland and skeletal growth. When the results came in, I anxiously came to the nursing room and asked the wet nurses to step out for a moment. Then I reported guiltily,

'Mr Imagai, I think we have a problem.'

Mr Imagai looked very annoyed at having been interrupted from his nursing, and replied with a frown, 'Out with it! And, remember, I don't want to hear useless excuses.'

I forced a smile: 'First, the good news. Your neurological exam reveals that everything is excellent—exceeding even my most optimistic expectations. The original cranial cavity has already been filled with regenerated nerve tissue, and the 'brown' tissue (as a brain ages, it accumulates waste) has been greatly reduced, almost all reabsorbed by the body. I can state with certainty that your seventy-two-year-old brain has already accepted the infant's body's commands, thereby effectively "resetting" your internal clock.'

Imagai nodded, 'Good, as I expected. The money I paid you has not been wasted.'

'However, I also have some bad news. The results of another test reveal that your body has forgotten its command to stop growing once it reaches a certain size, and as a result you may very well continue growing without limit.'

I explained how the commands normally control a body's growth, such as how the epiphyseal plates of the spine and bones ordinarily shut down once someone reaches a certain age, meaning that the person's height will also stop increasing. And also how a body's cells are normally controlled by a certain 'restrain on contact' command, such that when the surrounding cells start crowding each other, they will automatically stop dividing—the only exception being cancer cells. But now, Mr Imagai's body had forgotten all of these self-regulating commands, and was continuing to grow unchecked. I concluded, 'It is very strange, but somehow your brain has managed to alter God's commands. I'm afraid I never anticipated this possibility.'

Imagai replied casually, 'What's wrong with that? I think I own enough land to hold my body, regardless of whether I am two metres tall or a hundred. No matter how tall I grow, I will never go hungry.' Over the preceding few days he had already become quite overweight, and consequently kept gasping for air when he spoke. Panting, he continued, 'Perhaps a 100-metre-tall body would be justly suited to my vast wealth. I'm not afraid of becoming a living Bamiyan Buddha.'

I laughed bitterly. 'No, it is not that simple. You should know that the strength of any animal's skeletal structure is proportional to the square of its height, while its weight is proportional to the cube of its height. That is to say, your weight will eventually outstrip the strength of your skeletal structure, which is why there are inherent limits to how large animals may grow. The largest terrestrial animal, for instance, is currently the African elephant, which can weigh up to six or seven tonnes. African elephants, however, never lie down until they topple over after dying—because if they did, their internal organs would be crushed by their weight. The largest terrestrial animals that ever lived, meanwhile, were the sauropods, which could weigh up to 100 tonnes. This is also the weight limit for terrestrial animals.' I added in concern, 'Mr Imagai, from your current growth trajectory, it is entirely possible that you may grow to be larger than a sauropod, in which case your own weight will eventually cause your body to collapse.'

Once he realized the seriousness of the matter, he was silent for a moment. Then he said coldly, 'It's your responsibility to figure out what to do. I'm not paying you this much money to have you simply come and show me a grim face.'

I had no defence, and merely retorted softly, 'But all of my trials on animals were successful. You yourself know that in all of the trials, the transplanted brains were reset and rejuvenated, while the growth rate of the host body remained normal and within its normal growth limit. I suspect that your

condition is a result of your particular character. Perhaps your desire for possession is simply too strong—so strong as to have exceeded God’s commands. I have already tried using drugs to control this, but with no apparent effect.’

Imagai was furious. ‘I won’t change my nature simply because of your ineptitude. Stop telling me nonsense about gods, and go figure out a solution.’ He added caustically, ‘I know you will work hard on this, since you still want your twenty per cent stake in Western Steel.’

On this particular day I didn’t dare talk back to him, because I truly was in the wrong. I said guiltily, ‘I will do my best. But if it turns out that there really is no solution, you will have no choice but to live temporarily in water. The maximum weight limit on animals can increase substantially if they are in water, since its buoyancy can help support their weight. Whales, for instance, are among the biggest animals that have ever lived, and the weight of blue whales can reach 180 tonnes, which is more than even the sauropods. Once we have transferred you to water, I will find a solution as quickly as possible.’

4. Sudden Greatness

FOUR MONTHS LATER, I still had not come up with a means of controlling his growth process, but by this point Imagai had reached six metres. I had workers convert a three-storey-high hall into a bedroom, since he was already too large to cram into conventional rooms. This solution, however, was only temporary, and I needed to quickly come up with another, given that within a few days he would be so large that there would be no way of getting him out the front door. Imagai’s appetite and growth rate had shown no signs of diminishing. A thousand wet nurses came and went through the passage on the third floor that led to the hall, where they leaned against the railing to nurse Mr Imagai, who stood on the first floor—the scene rather like a giraffe eating leaves from trees.

I hesitated for a few days before finally making the hard decision to move him to water. Of course, the most convenient thing would have been to move him to a lake, but unfortunately, although Mr Imagai owned one-sixth of the country’s land, that vast territory—indeed, the whole country—didn’t contain a lake large enough to hold him (because we also had to take into consideration his future growth). At that point I truly regretted that our ancestors had not had the foresight to lay claim to Lake Baikal or the Great Lakes. In the end, we decided to take him to the ocean, and more specifically the area around Australia’s Norfolk Islands. It was fairly warm there, and the water quality was excellent. Australia was also a close ally, and therefore everything could be managed.

We leased a 10,000-tonne freighter and transformed it into an enormous richly decorated bedroom, the ceiling of which could be pulled away for loading purposes. I exhorted the workers to work around the clock, because Mr Imagai's growth was bearing down on me and we didn't have a second to spare. After seven days, all the preparations were complete. We leased the country's biggest fifty-six-wheel, 900-tonne flatbed freight truck to transport him to the harbour, and then used an 800-tonne crane to lower him into the freighter. We then closed the roof and transported him to his destination, where we used another 500-tonne ship-mounted crane to lift him back out. After seeing him safely lowered into the ocean, I finally let out a long sigh of relief.

His body fat percentage was quite high and, together with the fact that the relative density of the salty ocean water was also quite high, he didn't even need to swim but simply floated effortlessly in the water. He immediately liked his new environment, because after he entered the water his breathing at once became more relaxed as the pressure on his internal organs was eliminated. This mountain-sized creature floated comfortably in the calm ocean water, shifting his position periodically, sometimes on his back, and sometimes on his side, all very relaxed.

A J-nation destroyer cruised around nearby, and a team of twenty frogmen in black wetsuits patrolled the surrounding waters to protect him. The destroyer and frogmen were leased by the day from J-nation's military at enormous expense. Although Imagai had a very close relationship with the prime minister and the head of defence, they didn't dare let him use the military for free. I circled around him several times in a motorboat, and seeing his enormous body, I couldn't help thinking that he was, without a doubt, the largest and greatest person that had ever lived—and there was no end in sight to the process of him becoming even greater.

It had been ten months since Mr Imagai was 'transplanted' into his new body, but if you counted the six months that the anencephalic infant had been alive before the transplant, he was now already sixteen months old. Yet, he still insisted on nursing, and was determined to maintain his sacred right as an infant and drink breast milk for at least one year. But by this point his appetite had already exceeded the capacity of 1,000 wet nurses, and besides, it would have been too much trouble to have had all these nurses follow him into the ocean. In selecting this particular region, however, I had already come up with an excellent solution to the problem—namely, to have him drink whale milk. A mother whale can produce 450 litres of nutritious milk a day, and furthermore it was completely free. I wouldn't even need to worry about the number of wet nurses. As the

southern Pacific alone had several thousand blue whales, there would be more than enough wet nurses.

I happened to know that in Australia there was a 'whale professor' who had just retired. This old fellow treated the whales like old pals, and could summon an entire pod using an artificial whale whistle. Kiminao managed to track him down and, deploying all his formidable negotiating skills, managed to convince him to cooperate with us, on the condition that we donate a large sum of money to global whale conservation efforts. But we came out even, given that this amounted to the equivalent of what we were already spending on our 1,000 wet nurses.

What was more of a challenge, however, was convincing Imagai to accept whale milk instead of human breast milk. Before setting out, I discussed this with Kiminao. Kiminao was worried, but I already had a plan. I knew that although Mr Imagai could be extremely stubborn, when confronted with matters of life and death he tended to be quite realistic. For example, when it turned out that there were not enough wet nurses to be found in our own country, he gave up his insistence on ethnic purity and agreed to use women from the third world. This time was no different. I patiently explained why we had to use whale milk, and noted that whale milk is so nutritious that a whale calf can gain up to ninety kilograms a day. Having already grown accustomed to drinking breast milk, Mr Imagai was naturally not very happy about this arrangement, and he glared at me darkly for a long time before finally assenting.

A motorboat came toward us, with the grey-haired whale professor standing proudly in it, using whale songs to summon the pod behind him. We could barely hear his songs, which, at twenty hertz are near the limit of the range of human hearing. Behind him were more than twenty plumes of water shooting into the sky, one after the other. They rose almost ten metres high, and were accompanied by enormous roars. As the whales approached, it became evident that it was a pod of blue whales, around forty in all, with light-coloured speckles on their navy or grey-coloured bodies. About seventeen to eighteen females were in lactation, each followed by several calves. The professor sent out another call, and a mother whale obediently swam over to Mr Imagai's side and curiously gazed at this huge nursling with her small eyes. Blue whales are astonishingly large, and it is said that fifty men can stand on one whale's tongue. A blue whale's heart is as large as a car, and its arteries are so large that a human infant could crawl through them. But today the human race had no reason to feel inferior before them; we now had an outstanding representative who could match them in size.

The professor waved his hand, and one of the frogmen swam over and affixed a

sucker to one of the whale's teats. I don't know how the whale professor managed to convince the whale to go nurse a surrogate offspring belonging to another species, but somehow the whale waited patiently. The sucker was connected to a tube as thick as a fireman's hose, which in turn was connected to a rubber nipple that Imagai grabbed and began to suck ravenously. We hadn't brought the 1,000 wet nurses along on this journey, and he had had only bottled cow's milk to drink, so he was famished. The tubing was transparent, and you could see the white milk rushing through it and into his huge dark mouth. This female whale's teats were soon sucked dry but Imagai, who was still hungry for milk, was reluctant to relinquish the nipple and instead continued to suck ravenously. The flow of white milk in the tubing slowed, even as it started to carry traces of blood. The whale twisted its body in pain, kicking up furious waves with its tail. The whale professor and I both noticed this, and quickly sent the frogman to disconnect the sucker. The whale quickly escaped, as though it had just been granted a reprieve.

The whale professor was beside himself with rage, and began cursing furiously, adamantly refusing to let the frogmen touch any of the other whales. He had been convinced to cooperate with us in part because of the massive sum we had promised to donate to global whale conservation, and in part because of his adventurous personality—he said that it would certainly be very interesting to see a whale nurse a human. But he had never expected that the human would be so greedy that he would injure his whale 'sisters'. The professor continued to curse and, ignoring my pleadings, insisted on leading his whales away. I was at a loss as to what to do. I smiled bitterly at Mr Imagai, but since his authority had no purchase over this 'whale blood-brother', he wisely quieted down and didn't say a word. At this crucial moment, it was again his lawyer, Kiminao, who came up with a solution. He approached in a skiff, pulled up alongside the professor's motorboat, and proceeded to angrily upbraid him:

'Professor, how can you be so cruel to a child? Yes, it is true that he sucked too greedily, but he was simply hungry. He hadn't had any decent milk the entire trip out here, and therefore was absolutely famished. Regardless of his size, he's still only ten months old. He's just a child, he doesn't understand anything. How could he know that he should be so restrained in drinking his milk? Can you in good conscience just leave and let him starve to death?'

The professor was placated by this stern chastising. Although he was still furious, he nevertheless halted his efforts to depart. The lawyer immediately adopted a more pleasant tone, and said, 'Professor, don't be childish about this. As long as we explain the situation to him, he definitely won't be as greedy next time. Let's try again, OK?'

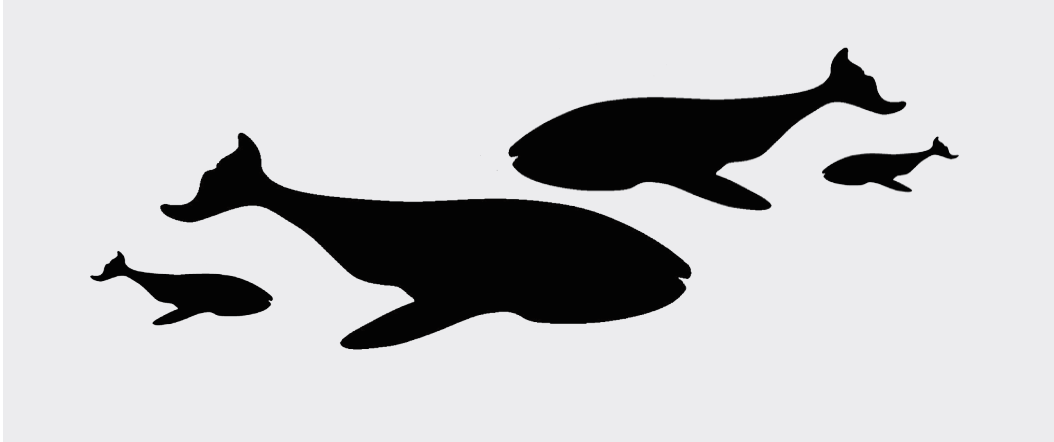
I was also on the boat with Kiminao as he was speaking, and was very worried that Imagai would say or do something that would let the professor know that he wasn't actually a naive nursling. Even if Imagai didn't speak or do anything at all, if the professor were to catch a glimpse of his cold and calculating eyes, he would immediately see right through the lawyer's false claims. Fortunately, however, we were in the open ocean and Imagai was several dozen metres away, and consequently the professor couldn't see the look in his eyes. He hesitated for a long time, but finally acceded. He, however, asked us to first guarantee that no further harm would come to his whales, to which we immediately agreed.

The skiff then went alongside Imagai, and Kiminao, stern faced and angry, said in a low voice, 'Why did you have to be so greedy? There are seventeen or eighteen female whales here, you think you'll go hungry? Next time you need to have more restraint, or even I won't be able to fix things!'

Imagai had never heard the lawyer speak to him in such a tone of disrespect. He glared back angrily, making Kiminao reflexively look away. But, as I said, when it came to matters of life and death, Mr Imagai was very realistic. He knew that although what Kiminao said was unpleasant to hear, it nevertheless needed to be obeyed. Therefore, he silently acceded, whereupon another whale wet nurse was sent over, and Imagai once again started sucking greedily, but without making the same mistake as before.

A month passed, and the whales gradually came to love this big surrogate offspring. Every day more than a dozen whales would punctually come over and nurse him until he was sated, and it got to the point where they would come even if the professor wasn't present. After the whales finished nursing, they would often hang out around him for a long time, calling in low voices as though they were trying to converse with him. The whale calves grew quite accustomed to their surrogate brother, and would use their snouts to play with him. However, Imagai did not have any interest in this sort of thing, and when he wasn't nursing he would hasten to take care of the many reports from home. It occurred to me that these calves were really very generous, since whenever it was one of the mother whales' turns to nurse Imagai, her own calf had to go hungry. Despite this, they seemed to bear no resentment toward this enormous milk-snatching little brother.

With the help of these wet nurses with such strong maternal instincts, together with their nutritious milk, Mr Imagai achieved greatness even more rapidly. By now he was already twice as big as the mother whales themselves—



and you mustn't forget that those were blue whales that were more than thirty metres in length—making him the biggest creature that the world had ever seen. According to my calculations, by this point he was already sixty metres tall and weighed more than 300 tonnes. His head was like a mountain, his nostrils like the caves of Ali Baba, and each of his body hairs was thicker than a rat's tail. I decided to wait a little longer, until I had some free time, before submitting this as a new Guinness world record for the biggest and most massive animal that had ever lived.

When first deciding to transfer Imagai to the open ocean, there remained the difficult problem of safety. There were sharks and killer whales in these waters, and they would undoubtedly be very interested in this big chunk of flesh. Therefore, we hired a warship and a team of frogmen to patrol the waters around the clock. Eventually, however, we discovered that this was not necessary. Sharks and killer whales did indeed approach, but they merely circled around Imagai at a safe distance and then quietly slunk away, not daring to have any designs on him. Were they intimidated by his great size? I suspect not. When the first killer whale paid a visit, Imagai was not yet as large as the blue whales, and the fierce killer whale has no qualms about attacking even blue whales and giant squid. It was only afterward that I realized that Mr Imagai had unwittingly set up a system of self-defence. Having such an insatiable appetite, he naturally also produced enormous amounts of excreta, to the point that the sea water surrounding him had become quite noxious, driving away all sea creatures in the vicinity. Eventually, there was not a single living creature within a radius of ten nautical miles, giving him a defensive perimeter that was even more effective than the imperial army's Sankō Sakusen, or Three

Alls Policy.² We remained on the ship, while a nauseatingly intense smell of ammonia assaulted our noses. Only the mother whales still continued to approach and nurse him, not disgusted by him at all, solid proof of the fact that motherly love conquers all.

5. Joys and Sorrows of a First Birthday

ANOTHER TWELVE DAYS, and it would be Imagai's first birthday (not including the six months that the anencephalic infant had lived before the transplant). This was a day worth celebrating—for both Mr Imagai and myself. On this day, I would become a twenty per cent stakeholder in Western Steel, which would immediately put me at the top of the Forbes 500 list. I would become a god of the neurosurgical world, and history would commemorate the brain transplant technique I had developed.

We began preparing for the celebration. Needless to say, we couldn't publicly announce this as a first birthday. Imagai's legal age was seventy-three, and if we were to openly acknowledge that he was only a year old, he would no longer be able to avoid paying estate taxes. We had already spent several hundreds of billions on this endeavour, and weren't about to commit that sort of stupid mistake. On the other hand, it's true that Imagai's new body was in fact only a year old, and we therefore devoted considerable attention to deciding what precisely to call this celebration. Nakasane came up with a name that he thought sounded pleasing—First Spirit Transference Year. Kiminao, however, pointed out that it is only after people die and are buried that you can speak of their spirit being transferred. After further discussion, we decided that we had no choice but to call it something along the lines of a 'first anniversary of the operation'. This didn't sound at all impressive and Imagai was very displeased with it, but since no one was able to come up with anything better he ultimately had to agree.

Given that it was not easy for Imagai to travel because of his enormous body, we had little choice but to hold the celebration right here in the middle of the ocean. Many important political figures were expected. The prime minister would certainly attend, as Mr Imagai had long had a close relationship with him, and had donated massive sums dozens of times to his political campaigns, and when

² Based on the narrative found in Chinese history textbooks, the Japanese imperial army's Sankō Sakusen, or Three Alls Policy, was carried out during the Japanese invasion of China from 1937 to 1945. The purpose of this policy was to wipe out the resistance, which is to say the communists. 'Three Alls' means 'burning all, killing all, and robbing all'.

the prime minister convened meetings of his party faction, he always held them in the Prince Hotel owned by Imagai's empire. Because recent public opinion had not been very favourable, the prime minister had been trying to distance himself from Imagai. By now, however, the controversy had already begun to pass and the prime minister didn't need to continue maintaining his distance. He would, furthermore, be accompanied by a large group of representatives from the government and both houses of parliament. Imagai's two sons naturally couldn't come, because if they did and were faced with their one-year-old father, it would be extremely awkward. I wish to note, however, that Ms Komatsu Yoshiko, whom I had theretofore looked down upon, was actually quite gracious. During this past year, Mr Imagai had not needed her special services, and had therefore cut her 60 million J dollars monthly salary to the point that she had no choice but to find another sugar daddy to help cover her living expenses. She nevertheless still missed Mr Imagai such that she was willing to come attend this celebration at her own expense. I wondered, however, how she might react when she saw this gargantuan one-year-old.

Imagai had remained naked ever since we transferred him to the ocean. The reason for this was very simple: if he were to wear clothes, they would need to be larger than theatre curtains, and it would have been simply too difficult to put them on and take them off. Besides, the water wasn't cold, and Imagai was able to do perfectly well without clothes. But this time was different, since he couldn't very well have his penis hanging out when he hugged the prime minister on such a dignified occasion. We discussed the matter, and eventually decided to make him a special bib that would cover his chest and genitals. His rear would still be exposed, but since he had grown accustomed to floating face-up in the water, the bib would be just sufficient to provide him with some modicum of respectability if he retained the same posture during the ceremony—though, needless to say, even to provide this minimal amount of coverage the bib would need to be astonishingly large.

The stench from Mr Imagai was becoming increasingly unbearable. We ourselves had been there for so long that we had gotten used to it, but visiting dignitaries definitely would not be able to handle it. We also came up with a solution wherein we would relocate Mr Imagai to a different area of the ocean for the day of the ceremony, then use helicopters to help disperse the smell by sprinkling perfume in the area.

There was yet one major concern: Imagai had finally agreed to wean himself as of the following day. After the ceremony, the whale wet nurses would bid him farewell and a specially-outfitted culinary ship built under the supervision of Mr

Nakasane would anchor nearby. The ship would be equipped with fifty cooks and automated cooking equipment, and every day they would be able to produce thirty tonnes of sushi or other food, which would be sufficient to satisfy Mr Imagai's appetite.

All preparations having been made, all we had to do was wait for the day of the ceremony.

It had already been three months since Mr Imagai had been transferred to the ocean, and we were very fortunate that, during this period, the weather had remained generally calm. Kiminao laughed and said that this was because Mr Imagai was blessed with good fortune. No one expected, therefore, that a storm would suddenly develop two days before the anniversary celebration. Actually, it was two storms: a political storm, followed by a meteorological one.

To begin with, we received the tragic news unexpectedly from home that the police had discovered Mr Nakasane dead in his apartment, having committed suicide. It turned out that the police had long been secretly investigating Western Steel's financial irregularities, including its concealment of the true proportion of shares held, its release of falsified financial statements, as well as its secret manipulation of its stock price. Two days earlier, the police had summoned Nakasane and confronted him with evidence that was so damning that he had no choice but to confess to everything. Undoubtedly feeling too humiliated to face his master, he proceeded to take his own life that same night.

Just as the news of Nakasane's suicide arrived, our patch of the ocean experienced its first storm since our arrival. Dark clouds hovered over us, the sky grew dark, and the wind blew up enormous waves four to five metres high. The destroyer rocked violently in the waves and the frogmen who should have been patrolling the waters had to retreat temporarily to the safety of the ship. Mr Imagai, however, was not affected by the storm, and remained perfectly at ease floating in the ocean. His enormous body flattened out the waves, and the wind merely rocked him gently back and forth. During those days, we had gotten into the habit of calling his body 'Imagai Island' and he even became our safe harbour; the little skiff that I was riding on now was tied to his little toe.

Thunder echoed through the sky, but the sound was vastly inferior to Imagai's own roaring. With his enormous mouth, his enormous vocal cords and with the resonance provided by his even more enormous chest, his angry curses stirred up distinctively shaped waves that were even fiercer than the ones produced by the storm itself.

'Good-for-nothings! Incompetent jackasses! You can't even resolve minor

matters like these? Western Steel has been handling things this way for decades, and it's no different from how most other consortia handle them. It was only during the short period of time when he was serving as acting director that problems occurred!

In my view, his fury was not unreasonable. If Imagai had maintained his position at the helm of the company, I'm confident that he could have easily dealt with this situation using his finesse and his prestige, but Mr Nakasane's ability and prestige were both significantly inferior to Imagai's. Imagai's fury, meanwhile, compromised my respect for him, since, as everyone knows, anger is generally an expression of ineptitude. I thought regretfully that it looked as though the body of the anencephalic infant was beginning to have a negative influence on Imagai, making him act increasingly juvenile.

Imagai roared at me, telling me to send for Kiminao immediately. The lawyer had returned home a couple of days earlier to receive the prime minister and other distinguished guests, and then to escort them back to see Imagai. I was sure, however, that once Kiminao arrived home he would have heard the bad news, and he therefore should have notified Imagai at the first opportunity. Why, then, was there still no news from him? I used a maritime telephone to contact Kiminao, and a young woman who identified herself as a nurse answered the phone. It turned out that when Kiminao heard the news, he suffered a stroke and fell into a coma from which he had still not awakened. I piloted my skiff up to Imagai's ear and, shouting over the storm, notified him of this development. He became even more furious:

'That old fox! He merely wants to escape a sinking ship!'

I was initially very displeased with his slander of Kiminao. Just think of Kiminao, who was so anxious and upset about Western Steel that he had a sudden stroke, and it is not clear even now whether or not he will survive. But now that I think about it with a cooler head, it was also possible that Imagai might have been right. Kiminao, back home, had a better grasp of the current crisis than we did, and simply wasn't willing to wade into those troubled waters. As a lawyer, however, it would have been far too unprofessional of him to have simply run away from the crisis, which would have led him to lose all professional credibility. With this stroke, however, people would become sympathetic and stop criticizing him. Yes, perhaps this is what had happened. Imagai and Kiminao had been working together for the past forty years, so he must have understood his lawyer better than I.

The storm raged all night, but by the next morning the wind and waves had died down a little. A seaplane flew over and circled a couple of times around

Imagai's head before landing, with difficulty, in the ocean nearby. I wondered whether it was Kiminao coming to rejoin us despite his illness? I quickly went over in my skiff, but it turned out that it was the J-nation imperial police, coming to arrest Imagai. It seemed to me that these police must have been real bumpkins and never watched the news, since they appeared to have no idea how great the criminal whom they were coming to arrest was. They piloted a skiff up to 'Imagai Island' and, dumbfounded, craned their necks to gaze up at the mountainous body. Needless to say, their seaplane would never hold the gargantuan creature in front of them, not even one of his feet. All they could do, therefore, was to read the arrest warrant aloud, ordering Mr Imagai to remain in the area and wait until the police returned with a freighter. Then they awkwardly reboarded the plane and flew away.

I immediately used the maritime phone to call up my family. It turned out that the current actions against Western Steel were not so simple: crippled by a disastrous domestic economy, the government could no longer afford to ignore the rampant corruption that ran through the financial sector, and therefore decided to make an example of Western Steel. The prime minister's spokesman had already announced that the PM had no connection whatsoever with Western Steel, explaining that he used to hold his political faction meetings in Western Steel's Prince Hotel simply on account of the hotel's high quality service, and not because of any personal connections.

When I remembered that this same prime minister had almost attended the anniversary celebrations, I came to truly appreciate the meaning of the phrase *political animal*.

But I didn't have time to worry about these trivia, since I was confronted with an even more immediate problem. We had originally planned to have Mr Imagai wean the next day, but for some reason the culinary ship never arrived, even though the whales had stopped coming a day early. Given that the whales don't read the paper, watch television, or listen to the radio, there was obviously no way they could have known about Imagai's political difficulties, so their unannounced departure could not have been due to any snobbishness on their part. Perhaps this was the doing of the whale professor? Perhaps he didn't want his whales to continue nourishing someone whose misdeeds have been exposed, and therefore secretly told them to depart? I didn't know, and at this point I didn't have the energy to investigate. At any rate, the immediate result of these developments was that Imagai didn't have anything to eat. At first he was so furious that he momentarily forgot about his hunger, but it was soon so great that it even surpassed his anger at his political difficulties, and by noon he was in a towering

rage. He cursed furiously,

‘Bastards! Derelicts! Quick, go fix me something to eat! If I don’t get enough for lunch, I’m going to take it out of your remuneration.’

His threats were needless, as I was already frantic. I repeatedly called the culinary ship and the whale professor but neither of them answered. I therefore had no choice but to ask Mr Imagai to forsake his ‘sacred right to mother’s milk’ a day early and immediately switch over to normal food. As I’ve mentioned before, Imagai was realistic in regard to such major events and, after cursing me some more, he agreed. I quickly returned to the destroyer, and asked them for all the food they had on board. I then used the skiff to ferry the food over to ‘Imagai Island’ and asked a sailor by the name of Sakagawa to unload the food right into Imagai’s cavernous mouth. After ferrying three boatfuls of food, I finally managed to blunt Imagai’s hunger. By that point Sakagawa and I were so exhausted that we had lost our own appetites. From receiving the news of Nakasane’s suicide the previous morning until now, I hadn’t slept for one second. I was therefore exhausted, and promptly fell asleep curled up on the deck of the boat.

I slept till dinner, until Mr Imagai’s roars and the seaman’s shaking woke me up. Sakagawa asked in horror, ‘Mr Motose, why has the warship that was protecting us left?’ I forced my eyes open and looked off into the distance. Under the vast skies, there remained only the turbid waves rising and falling against the horizon. There was no trace of the ship. It suddenly occurred to me that the contract between Western Steel and the navy ended today and, besides, I had already ransacked all of the food from the ship. From both a legal and a logical point of view, therefore, it was perfectly understandable that they had left. But from our perspective it was exceedingly callous for them to depart like this without notice. Perhaps they, too, had had enough of Imagai’s surliness and couldn’t wait to get away.

Imagai continued to bellow, demanding his dinner. This was a contractual obligation from which I couldn’t extricate myself, and it was also his sacred right as a one-year-old child, so he paid no attention to the world collapsing around him. But I was already at my wits’ end. Sakagawa was the only other crew member on the skiff with me, and we scarcely had any food or fresh water left. Neither did we have any fishing equipment, and even if we had, it still wouldn’t have done any good, because even if we were to catch a few fish, they wouldn’t be enough to fill the cracks between Imagai’s teeth. I pondered this for a while, and then told my loyal Sakagawa, ‘You should pilot the boat as fast as you can to the nearest of the Norfolk Islands, and do whatever is necessary to find some food and fresh water for tomorrow. I will contact home again, and make follow-up arrangements. You

should go alone and return as soon as you can. I must remain here; this is my responsibility, and I cannot forsake it.'

I left the skiff and climbed up his calf onto 'Imagai Island'. Sakagawa threw me our last two bags of compressed biscuit and a few bottles of water, and then set off, the sound of his motor gradually fading away in the night. The food and fresh water were enough to last me one day, but I couldn't consume them myself, and instead had to go to feed that insatiable mouth—even though, to him, such a tiny amount of food amounted to virtually nothing.

There were no trees or boulders to support me on the human island, but there were body hairs everywhere, each as thick as a rat's tail, and consequently it was not hard to clamber up. I grabbed a few of his hairs, and carefully proceeded forward, all the time worrying that I would tumble off the convex surface of his rotund body. From his calf, I proceeded to his thigh, and then on to his torso and chest, until finally I was standing near his Adam's apple. I stood up and raised the food high, barely managing to get it into his mouth. I said guiltily,

'Mr Imagai, we only have this tiny bit of food and water today. But if you can bear it just for one night, we'll bring more tomorrow.'

Imagai was already so famished that he didn't have the energy to be angry. In fact, he didn't even have energy enough to speak. After swallowing the food, he closed his eyes and lay there limply without moving, like a corpse. I didn't bother him any more, and instead lay down in the depression under his clavicle, closed my eyes and dozed off. I felt bad for him. Over the past year I had come to a deep understanding of his appetite, so I profoundly sympathized with him. For him, to miss a meal is truly the most barbarous punishment imaginable. I was terrified by the thought of this gargantuan eating machine surviving for at least another seventy or eighty years (and this is assuming that he didn't have another reincarnation). How many natural resources would need to be shovelled into this enormous mouth over the next seventy or eighty years, only to be transformed into excrement? Needless to say, however, though his wealth had been significantly diminished as a result of the current scandal, he would still have more than enough to satisfy his enormous appetite.

At this point I couldn't help but think of my twenty per cent stake in Western Steel. The assets of the Western Steel Group had shrunk, and the shares would probably no longer be enough to place me on the Forbes 500 list, but they would certainly still be sufficient to make me a very rich man. I would be able to send my son to an expensive private university, buy my wife name-brand clothes and cosmetics, and provide my entire family with top-quality medical care. I had dedicated myself to working for Imagai for the past couple of decades, and

consequently had spent very little time with my wife and son. I felt I truly owed them, and if I could offer them even this shrunken fortune, I would be satisfied. This perspective, however, was merely what I created to comfort myself in my despair.

I glanced down at my waterproof watch, and saw that it was already 12:05 a.m. The ‘survive for one year’ condition in my contract had finally been satisfied. That is to say, even if Mr Imagai were to starve to death right now, the shares would still be rightfully mine. Of course, it was somewhat immoral to think this way, and I certainly had no intention of letting him starve to death. The contract had finally come to term, and I certainly wouldn’t agree to extend it. I had already had enough of this job and of Mr Imagai. Before leaving, however, I would certainly make all appropriate arrangements. This was part of my conscience as a doctor.

I had already spent an entire day without food or water. I was feeling sharp hunger pangs, and my throat was now so dry that it felt like it was burning up. I couldn’t sleep, and by the time the sun was about to come up I found myself in a daze, and felt my body slowly levitating. I struggled to open my eyes, and found myself suspended several dozen metres in the air. Terrified, I looked around and discovered that I was in the palm of Mr Imagai’s right hand. The creases in his skin were as deep as mountain ridges, and in the distance several thick fingers were bent upwards, like columns holding up the sky. Looking further, I saw I was being held level with his nose, so that we were essentially looking at each other eye-to-eye. I asked him,

‘Mr Imagai, why did you call me? Don’t worry, the ship bearing provisions will surely arrive tomorrow—no, I mean today. It will surely arrive today.’

Imagai didn’t say a word, but as my body continued to slowly approach his mouth I finally realized with horror what he intended to do. I was terrified, even though I couldn’t quite believe what was happening. Was it possible that he intended to have me—his creator, who had worked for him for twenty years, Doctor Motose Zekū—as his breakfast? I cried out in terror,

‘Mr Imagai, Mr Imagai, what are you doing? Have you gone mad?’

He didn’t answer, but his two enormous eyes shone brightly like those of an invalid running a high fever. He continued bringing me closer and closer to his dark and cavernous mouth. I no longer had any doubts as to his intentions. Yes, he wanted to eat me. He had already gone mad—this guy had the biggest appetite in the world, and missing two meals was enough to make him delirious. It was not Imagai who was trying to devour me, but rather his instinctive greed.

Regardless of which Imagai it was who was trying to eat me, however, my

fate would still be the same. I certainly did not want to be deposited into that stomach and digested into excrement. I hollered and struggled with all my might. Fortunately, he was not holding me very tightly, and as his body was so enormous, his reflexes were rather slow. Impulses travel along unmyelinated nerves at a speed of only a few dozen metres a second, and it would take at least a full second for his brain to send a signal to the fingers at the end of his thirty- to forty-metre long arm, which made him much slower than me. Just as I was about to be deposited into that enormous mouth, I nimbly struggled free and leapt out of his palm. Unfortunately, in my confusion, I started running in the wrong direction and, as I dashed forward, I stepped on something soft (only later did I realize that it was his tongue), whereupon my foot suddenly slipped and I fell into a dark hole (his throat). Above me there was a hanging bell (his uvula). It was extremely slippery here and I couldn't keep my footing, so I slid all the way down a narrow tunnel (his oesophagus). This sliding process unfolded very slowly—so slowly that I regained my senses and realized my tragic circumstances. I was paralyzed by fear, and my mind froze. Finally, I landed at the bottom of the hole, and found myself standing in a pool of viscous liquid, enveloped by an acrid stench. I knew that this was his stomach, and that here I would be slowly decomposed by gastric acids into amino acids and fructose, ultimately becoming a part of this giant's body and participating in his ravenous consumption of the earth's resources. For some reason, this prospect left me very dissatisfied, and I would have preferred being eaten by a shark. I called out in despair, struggling to knock into and kick the stomach that surrounded me. But he gave no response.

I began to go into shock as a result of the acidic environment of the stomach, but my survival instinct allowed me to remain conscious. I resolved to climb out. Fortunately, his body was lying down so the dark and narrow oesophagus was not oriented at a very sharp angle. Without hesitation, I dug into the flesh wall with my fingers and started struggling forward. I climbed and climbed. My limbs were trembling and my mind was numbed; I felt like giving up and then going to sleep forever in the darkness. But my survival instinct was still dimly active, like a single lamp glimmering in the distance as dusk envelops. When I think back to this moment, I even feel very proud of myself—although Imagai Nashihiko's desire for possession was unparalleled, my instincts nevertheless refused to succumb to him.

I crawled into his throat, which was more sharply inclined. Here the air was fresher, which allowed me to recover my spirits somewhat. I grasped his uvula and climbed back into his mouth. Now, through the gaps between his teeth I could glimpse the morning sky and see the possibility of escape. I was afraid that

he would suddenly realize what was happening and would chomp down just as I was crawling out between his teeth, biting me in half. Perhaps the reason he had been lying there without moving was because he had been waiting for that very moment? But I didn't have the energy to crawl out through his nostril, since that path was too steep and treacherous. I had no option but to steel myself and follow his tongue past his bottom row of teeth. Thankfully, he did not move. I stood on his bottom lip and jumped, landing with a bang onto his chest, and then immediately began frantically to run away. I intended to jump into the ocean, to prevent him from grabbing me again. Therefore, I—

Wait a second—why hadn't he responded at all? Actually, when I was knocking around in his stomach or climbing up his oesophagus, he should have at least made some response. In the Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, when the Monkey King torments Princess Iron Fan from inside her stomach, the princess is left in such agony that she kneels on the ground begging for mercy. I paused and observed him carefully. Sure enough, he was not moving at all. I went back down to the edge of his chest and boldly climbed onto the area above his heart. I lay on the ground (which is to say, on the surface of his chest) and listened carefully, but couldn't make out a heartbeat, whereas previously his heart had always pounded like a 10,000-horse-power two-stroke marine engine.

It turned out Imagai was already dead. He probably died the instant I fell down his throat, so it was no wonder he had not responded to my irritations. I don't know how he died. Could it be that I had accidentally choked him to death? But whatever the reason for his demise, I was at least free from care. As the morning gradually grew brighter, I examined his corpse, this mountainous pile of flesh, and couldn't help feeling somewhat melancholy. This great life was my own creation, the product of my sweat and tears over the past twenty years. My twenty years of labour amounted to this?!

I spent the entire morning sitting on his chest, feeling his body temperature gradually drop. The sea was calm, the sky perfectly blue, and 'Imagai Island' gently rocked back and forth in the waves. Shortly before noon a ship appeared on the horizon. It was not, however, the provisions ship I was expecting, but rather a freighter brought by the police, who had come to complete the arrest proceedings they had initiated the previous evening. After assessing the situation, however, they realized that there was no need to make an arrest, and their task instead became that of investigating the circumstances of Imagai's death. As the only witness, I was questioned meticulously for a long time. This was routine procedure, insofar as the only on-the-spot witness must first be eliminated as a potential suspect.

Next, they summoned a forensic pathologist, who was flown in on an airplane. The pathologist quickly determined the cause of death, asphyxiation—it turned out that as Imagai was lifting his head to swallow me, the too-rapid motion caused him to break his neck (which is to say, his spine). So the fundamental reason for his death was his weight. Even in water, his sixty-metre, 300-tonne body was simply too heavy, and in the end he had simply collapsed under his own weight.

The pathologist easily eliminated me as a suspect, and for this I was extremely grateful. However, my gratitude was quickly transformed into fury. Because ... because this muddle-headed, arrogant bastard put down an incorrect time of death: between 10 and 11 p.m., on 15 November 2013. I objected, arguing strenuously that Imagai had actually died after midnight, because he tried to eat me before he died, and before that I had looked at my watch and noticed that it was already five minutes after midnight. That is to say, Imagai clearly died *after* the one year anniversary of his operation. I begged the pathologist to re-examine the corpse, saying, ‘His body being as enormous as this will cause his body temperature to decrease more slowly. Therefore if you had estimated his death to have taken place *later* than it actually did, I would be able to understand the mistake. But how could you possibly come up with a time of death that is *earlier* than it should have been?’

The pathologist looked at me with pity, but ignored my request. He simply couldn’t understand why I was making such a fuss. He probably assumed that under these unusual conditions I had gone somewhat mad. The police shouldered me aside and began discussing what to do with the corpse. Given that he was already dead, they didn’t want to tow him back to his home country. Since there wasn’t a crematorium there that was large enough to hold him, if they hauled the corpse back it would be difficult to dispose of, and they certainly couldn’t cut him up into 800 pieces and cremate each of them separately. It would have been even more impossible to follow the traditional practice of burying him in an urn, since there wasn’t an urn in the world that would be large enough to hold him. Eventually, they decided to leave him here for the time being while they asked his next of kin to see if the family would agree to a burial at sea. I assumed that the family would agree, because otherwise they would need to pay a fortune for funeral expenses. The family did agree to a sea burial, but even that became a source of trouble because carnivorous sea creatures had no interest in the corpse. But that is another story.

The police ship returned home, and I went with it. There was no point in my remaining by Imagai’s side. As we were about to leave, I stood in the ship’s bow

and bid farewell to the greatest creature that ever lived. I no longer had any stomach for debating the time of death with the pathologist, despite the fact that his two-hour error had cost me the prospect of collecting my twenty per cent stake in Western Steel. I had no choice but to accept it. Such is fate.

What I am concerned about now is where I should go tomorrow to find work to support my family. For the past twenty years I have been earning a low salary, and haven't had a chance to save much. Now, I've even lost my career as a neurosurgeon. Of course, I am the only physician in the world who can perform a brain transplant, but I don't know if this extraordinary skill will ever be of any use. Perhaps, perhaps I could find a new client—a rich old man who wants to avoid paying estate tax when he dies? Hopefully I will be able to find one soon, and hopefully he will not be as disagreeable as Mr Imagai. Hopefully. But no matter what, I have at least learned enough from this experience to know not to accept payment in stock options. Instead, whoever hires me will need to pay me in cold, hard cash.

