



The Cage

Kenzo Kitakata , Paul Warham (Translator)

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Kazuya Takino leads a quiet life running a supermarket in the Tokyo suburbs. But when an extortionist tries to force him out of business, he finds himself drawn into the *yakuza* underworld-a world he once called home and thought he had left behind. Pursuing him is Detective Takagi, an aficionado of French cigarettes and modernist poetry, the most decorated inspector on the Tokyo police force. As the shadowy Maruwa gang engages Takino in an escalating cycle of violence and retaliation, Detective Takagi can only stand by and watch as the beast within Takino is lured further and further out of his cage.

A towering masterpiece of the hardboiled genre, *The Cage* is at once a searing portrayal of the violence of the Japanese underworld and a tender mediation of the ties of love and friend that can save men from madness-or plunge them deeper into it.

The Cage Details

Date : Published September 5th 2006 by Vertical (first published 1987)

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Author : Kenzo Kitakata , Paul Warham (Translator)

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Genre : Cultural, Japan, Asian Literature, Japanese Literature, Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Noir

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From Reader Review The Cage for online ebook

Meredith says

It was an entertaining novel, however, it was also fairly straight-laced. It's a nice, short, action novel; it's not one to look towards for a complex tapestry of plot lines. The characters were written well and each had their own quirks--the Old Dog quickly becoming a favorite. Overall, a decent go.

Cal says

Well this was definitely written by a man for men. There is very little emotion in the book, and loads of violence and mistresses and action and golf. Can't say I enjoyed it too much since I like drama quite a bit.. still, if you're into this kind of book, it'd probably be perfect for you. I have to wonder if it feels exactly like this in the original japanese, but well....probably :D

Drew says

This is the third book by Kenzo Kitakata that I've read, the first two being Ashes and Winter Sleep. Translated by Paul Warham, this book is a fitting addition to Kitakata's works in English. The hardboiled styling of this book is more in line with 1990s Hong Kong action films rather than Japanese novels, but it makes the book a fast and enjoyable roller coaster ride.

The Cage continues in the style set up in these previous books, with the focus on two main characters, Kazuya Takino and Detective Takagi. Takino, a former Yakuza who's gone straight, struggles with the life he's created and the world he thought he'd left behind. By rendering this gangster as a complex human being, Kitakata can deftly explore the various levels, neighborhoods, and relationships of contemporary Japanese society. The cage is a metaphor for the world that Takino has made for himself, and that he is aware of, but the novel also explores the cages that the other main characters have built around themselves, for better or for worse and knowingly or unknowingly.

Sean Thompson says

I picked this up on a whim while in a specialty shop, but it had no purpose for me. everything here is surface level action and the back cover synopsis more than suffices for the full experience of the novel

Edwin Battistella says

The Cage by is Kenzo Kitakata's 1983 novel about a yakuza gangster, recently (2006) translated from the Japanese. Kazuya Takino is a former gangster, running a supermarket owned by his invalid father-in-law. Through a combination of events and character he finds himself drawn back in and eventually encountering

Detective Tagaki, a poetry reading, brandy drinking detective known as The Old Dog. It's hardboiled, noirish fiction, which reminds me in some ways of Dashiell Hammett's The Glass Key—the pacing, style and moral ambiguity of the characters. The story began slowly, I thought, but as the action unfolded and Tagaki was introduced (on page 90!), things picked up and moved to an interesting resolution.

Adam Perry says

I read this book in bits and pieces over the course of a theater performance. The story itself was pretty well self contained. At the beginning it was hard to differentiate the characters from one another because of the Japanese names, but as each character becomes more and more defined, it becomes easier. There was nothing particularly unexpected about this book, but the way it flowed and the way it pulled you along the way reflected not only an excellent author, but an excellent translator.

Rogue Reader says

Bad guy gone good outsmarts them all - corporations, thugs, pimps but can't escape the big one. Originally published in Japan in 1983, the noir seems more classical and more noirish than that period's big hair and glitter pop. Kenzo Kitakata deserves all of the awards he's received and more.

--*Ashland Mystery*

Debra says

Supermarket owner, Kazuya Takino isn't overly happy with his life. His marriage has grown stale and running a supermarket for the past five years is hardly a thrill a minute, especially for a man who once belonged to a gang. When dead rats show up in his freezers and red dye in the jugs of milk, Takino treats this as more of an annoyance than a catastrophe. He's a resourceful guy and not one to back down from a fight. While he's sorting out business problems, Takino takes a mistress and tries to help old friend and former gang member, Takayasu, get a thug named Sugimura and his girlfriend out of Japan. And that's when things get complicated. Not only are the police after the escapees, but so is a powerful gang.

The underlying tone of emptiness, monotony, and disenchantment make this story part noir and part police procedural, as point of view switches increasingly to the police officer in charge of investigating Sugimura's disappearance. Adding to the bleak tone and tension, is what's not being said between characters. Unfortunately, this also made it difficult to connect with them. Despite all of Takino's inner monologue, he wasn't a character I warmed up to. And given his actions, I didn't care what happened to him, or others, by the end of the story.

Also difficult was the similarity of many Japanese names. Takino, Takayasu and Takagi are three main character names which took time to sort out. And don't get me started on the numerous street and city names? they all just blurred together. If you're familiar with Japanese geography or the language, though, this won't be a problem, and since this novel was translated to English, the primary audience was likely Japanese

readers. Still, if you want some insight to the country's middle-class life, gangs, and police methodology, then THE CAGE is worth reading.

Standndie says

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Angel says

I wanted to like this since I do like hard crime and noir novels, but I found this to be pretty disappointing. The premise seemed so good-- former Yakuza gang member trying to go straight but getting pulled back into the life. Granted, it is a pretty simple premise, and it has been done before. However, if done well, it works. However, this novel just did not grab me. By the time I got to see the detective chasing the protagonist, I honestly did not really care. Takino is just a bit on the bland side. Sure, tough, but he just seems to meander. Does not really care about the women in his life; in fact, he is pretty blah about them, no passion there. And while there are some action scenes, overall, the characters are not ones you really care for, in part because they seem so bland. I just did not feel too excited about this book, and it does not even give that much of a look into the Yakuza. In other words, a lot of what other reviewers said as well as what the book description promises is just not there. To be honest, I wonder if some readers are just over-praising the book. I did not think it was such a big deal. And the ending was just a basic cliche.

I am not giving up on reading Japanese fiction in translation, but I may not look up this particular author anytime soon. The book may have worked for others, but it did not for me. At times I just skimmed parts just to get to the point and the end. That for me is a sign the book did not hold my interest, but I did not want to drop it. Glad I am done so I can move on to other things.

Robin Edman says

This is the most skillfully written/translated piece of crime fiction that I have read in a long time, possibly ever. A reformed yakuza walks quite deliberately back into the life for reasons that are not completely clear until the very last page. He is hunted by a man who is almost completely empty of any enjoyment of life beyond his ever-present Gauloise. You wouldn't think this could be a great story, but it is.

Nickoletta says

3.5 stars

David says

The story of Takino, an ex-Yakuza who has settled into straight life running a supermarket and a coffee shop with his wife. Six years have passed since Takino left the gangster world, but when he squares off against a punk who has caused trouble in his store, Takino feels "a strange rush of something close to happiness." The old Takino has emerged from his cage--one of several metaphorical "cages" in the novel--and he knows at once that he does not want to go back inside. An interesting psychological study of both Takino and Takagi, the grizzled, decorated police veteran who pursues him.

First reading: circa 2007.

Second reading: 23 March 2009.

Made DNA says

Takino has lead a quiet life for the past 6 years. He runs a small, local supermarket in Tokyo with his beautiful wife. But he used to be yakuza. When an extortion racket comes round demanding he sell his store and his land, Takino can't comprehend what the fuss is all about. When digs deeper, he digs himself into a hole from which there is no escape.

This is a brilliant noir crime novel set in 80s Japan. It's bleak and hardboiled. Well-paced, the book is a smooth read that builds to a crescendo of consuming (yet not senseless) violence. Highly recommended.

Anna says

Hard-boiled Japanese contemporary crime. How can I not like this?

Takino is an ex-yakuza man who's trying to just run a supermarket in his new life, leaving the bad stuff from the past behind. But when local organized bad guys start to try to milk some protection money from him, that sets the action slowly in motion.

Hard-boiled in the super classic style - including a lot of whiskey too. But yet still very very Japanese, and with some very zen elements.

3.75*
