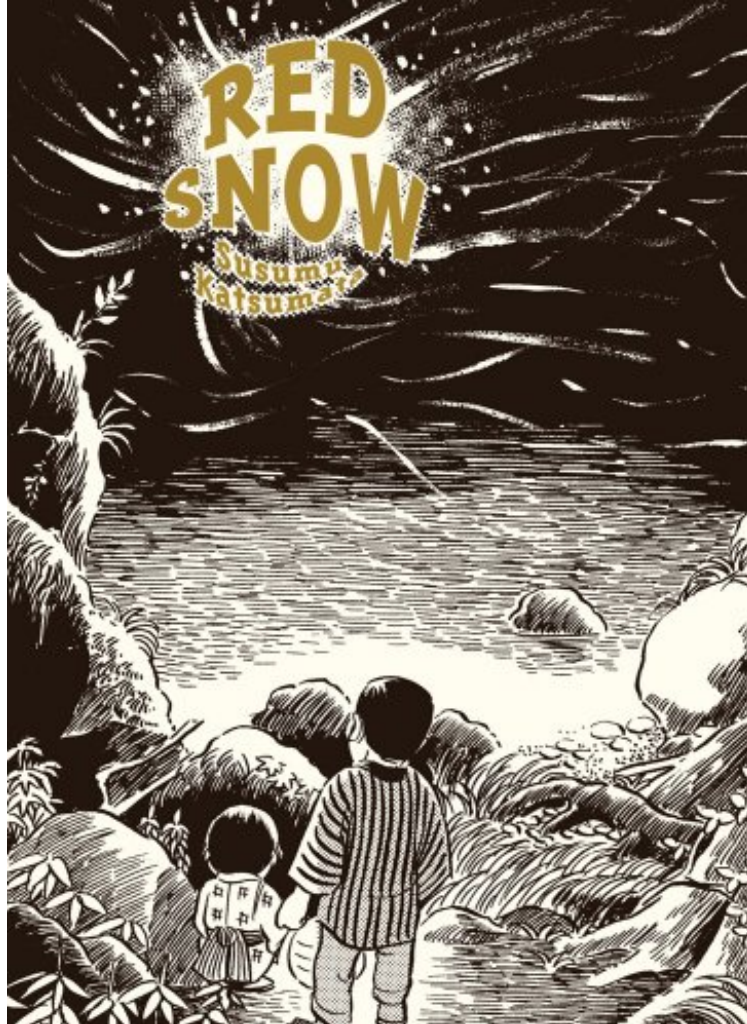


(Mobile book) Red Snow

Red Snow

Susumu Katsumata

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Susumu Katsumata : Red Snow before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Red Snow:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A gekiga short story masterpiece By Raul Susumu Katsumata was a manga artist who began publishing in the 70s, and belongs to the second generation of authors who started their career in the legendary Garo magazine. His short stories were much appreciated by colleagues such as Yoshiharu Tsuge (L'homme sans talent), Hinako Sugiura (Oreillers de Laque) or Shigeru Mizuki (NonNonBa, Gegege no Kitaro), but never became a mainstream success, which led him to slow down his production in the 80s, branching into book illustration and other activities. In a sad twist of fate, this collection of short stories, originally published in Japan in 2005, earned him success and critical acclaim, as well as the Japan Cartoonist Association Award, but he was terminally ill and did not live long to enjoy the belated recognition of his talent. Since then, this book has also been

published in Korea, France and, of course, the US Canada by Drawn Quarterly. What you'll get inside are ten splendid short stories, set in a rural, pre-modern Japan of hard, snow-covered winters, where the natural and the supernatural, such as ghosts or kappa creatures, can still sometimes mingle together, although, whenever they appear in the book, these beings are on the retreat, the remains of a vanishing past. The protagonists are toiling peasants, travelling monks, sake brewers, and lots of boys and girls facing the adult world at the terrible age of 12-13. Let's take a look at some of the tales. We have, for instance, "Torajiro Kappa", in which a kappa is persuaded by a young kid to interfere in a case of a husband that beats his wife whenever he's drunk. In "Wild Geese Memorial Service" a young man who gets lost in a snowstorm is rescued by a local farmer, and is found to bear an uncanny resemblance to his (very attractive and widowed) daughter's late husband. In "Mulberries" a boy and a girl share the pains of puberty, their attraction to each other disguised as childish pigtail-pulling hostility. A traveling monk has a rather explicit dream involving "The Dream Spirit" after having too much sake and sleeping in too crowded common rooms at the local inn. The girl that works scrubbing the floors at the inn at the hot springs in "Cricket Hill", is getting old enough to hear suggestions about getting more involved in entertaining the male clientele of the establishment. The drawing style is simple (these guys didn't have an army of assistants to do their bidding) yet beautiful and evocative. The first page of "Specter" is a lyrical 3-1-3 panel evocation of the arrival of spring, when blind traveling musicians came to bring a little entertainment to the people in the villages. Although "Now, it was just old Otoro who'd come by the hot springs alone". At the end of the book, we find an interview with the author, that appeared originally in the Japanese edition of Red Snow, and a short essay about his life and career, first published in a Korean manga magazine (that's where my "knowledge" about the life and work of the author comes from, by the way :p). The typography work is excellent, as we've come to expect from DQ (nothing like the arial or comic sans horrors of French publishers.) Sadly, the paper is nowhere as good and heavy as in the compilations of Yoshihiro Tatsumi's short stories, and this is the only fault I can find in this wonderful book.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Charming Evocation of Rural Life
By J. Davidson
This wonderful little book does a masterful job of creating a specific time and place. You really feel as if you are in a small Japanese village many years ago. Katsumata perfectly evokes the change of seasons, and the natural ebb and flow of rural life. The characterizations ring true, as do the charming and sometimes unsettling superstitions. Be warned that some of the stories are very dark. This book is a gem, one of the few comic collections I would keep to read over and over again. Very highly recommended!

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Good stories, excellent drawing
By Hsiaoshuang
There are 10 pictorial stories, all dealing with life in the countryside in semi-modern Japan. The stories are all interesting and the drawing is excellent. I've uploaded the images in sharp, 600-pixel resolution so you can judge for yourself. Unfortunately they are displayed at half the resolution size. Anyone who loves stories and pictures should get a copy of the book. The author has died and this book is about the final of his life's work.

AN AWARD-WINNING BOOK FROM A LEGENDARY MANGA-KA
Continuing D+Q's groundbreaking exploration of the fascinating world of Gekiga, this collection of short stories is drawn with great delicacy and told with subtle nuance by the legendary Japanese artist Susumu Katsumata. The setting is the premodern Japanese countryside of the author's youth, a slightly magical world where ancestral traditions hold sway over a people in the full vigor of life, struggling to survive the harsh seasons and the difficult life of manual laborers and farmers. While the world they inhabit has faded into memory and myth, the universal fundamental emotions of the human heart prevail at the center of these tender stories. Katsumata began publishing comic strips in the legendary avantgarde magazine Garo (which also published his contemporaries Yoshihiro Tatsumi and Yoshiharu Tsuge) in 1965 while enrolled in the Faculty of Science in Tokyo. He abandoned his studies in 1971 to become a professional comics artist, alternating the short humorous strips upon which he built his reputation with stories of a more personal nature in which he tenderly depicted the lives of peasants and farmers from his native region. In 2006, Katsumata won the 35th Japanese Cartoonists Association Award Grand Prize for Red Snow.

From Publishers Weekly
This collection of resonant short stories introduces English-language readers to the late Katsumata's distinctively poetic work, a second-wave participant in the gekiga alternative manga movement spearheaded by Yoshihiro Tatsumi. Katsumata's frank tales of betrayal, conflict and vulnerability suggest comparisons to Tatsumi's own work. But where Tatsumi captures extreme forms of urban desperation, Katsumata narrates vignettes of rural Japanese life. Prostitution, alcoholism and other plot elements that might elsewhere be underscored are presented here as part of the texture of a difficult, traditionally defined existence. When characters fail to meet their religious and customary obligations, their lives are permeated by a magical realist culture of arboreal spirits, half-human water creatures and snow fairies. But these thematic elements are less a platform for fantasy than a material representation of the power ancient folktales retained even as mass-mediated popular music began to filter out into Japan's agrarian regions. The art preserves a sense of the comic, but rendered in a looser, calligraphic style to reflect organic images of the country. These blend seamlessly with visual flourishes that veer toward poetic abstraction. Katsumata's allusive tales sometimes climax unexpectedly with these visual grace notes, distinguishing imaginative,

tonal portraits of a past, remembered world. (Nov.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist A realist manga creator like Yoshihiro Tatsumi, the late Katsumata (1943-2007) broke from Tatsumi's post-World War II urban Japan scene to show the pre-modern village life of his childhood in northeastern Honshu's boondocks. Creatures out of folklore, such as the mischievous, amphibious kappa, interact with people, and a great tree emanates a spirit that wins a young woman's heart. Male-female relations are the bedrock of Katsumata's stories, the events of which are like so much earth mantling the seething lava of emotions. Opening the book, *Mulberries* is basically a dual portrait of dawning attraction between a boy and a girl on the cusp of puberty. Closing it, *Red Snow* springs from an older boy and girl's conflict when she finds out he has been to a brothel. Rape, marital abuse, and in a tale worthy of Chaucer, sexual abduction animate all the other tales. While his figuration is akin to Tatsumi's caricaturalism, Katsumata sometimes abruptly culturally cross-references the action with panels from outside the main settings, a technique as bracing as it is reminiscent of avant-garde filmmaking. --Ray Olson

About the Author Born in 1943 in Ishinomaki in northeastern Japan, SUSUMU KATSUMATA died in 2007.