



Belka, Why Don't You Bark?

Hideo Furukawa , Michael Emmerich (Translator)

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Belka, Why Don't You Bark? begins in 1943, when Japanese troops retreat from the Aleutian island of Kiska, leaving four military dogs behind. One of them dies in isolation, and the others are taken under the protection of U.S. troops. Meanwhile, in the USSR, a KGB military dog handler kidnaps the daughter of a Japanese yakuza. Named after the Russian astronaut dog Strelka, the girl develops a psychic connection with canines. A multi-generational epic as seen through the eyes of man's best friend, the dogs who are used as mere tools for the benefit of humankind gradually discover their true selves, and learn something about us.

Belka, Why Don't You Bark? Details

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From Reader Review Belka, Why Don't You Bark? for online ebook

Jazbeck says

A really interesting, semi-fictional tale of several generations of dogs trapped next to a fairly boring and predictable post-cold-war revenge story. Skip any chapter that doesn't feature dogs.

Megan says

A fanciful story about dogs and war in the second half of the twenty-first century that intertwines narratives and bloodlines that span Russia, U.S., China, among other locations and powers that participated or hosted conflicts around the Pacific.

A decent read that helped me better understand the Cold War and related conflicts in a new way. The book did feel like it lost its focus in the last third.

Bee Halton says

"Belka, why don't you bark" by Hideo Furukawa a so far for me unknown Japanese author published by VZ Media is available both on Kindle and as a printed version.

It tells the fictional story of war dogs in the 20th century on both sides of the iron curtain mixed together with a story of a young kidnapped Japanese Girl, who in the end works with her kidnapper.

The story goes in two lines: one the story of the dogs; the other the story of the Archbishop the kidnapper of the Japanese girl who has no name in the beginning. She'll become like the dogs the Archbishop trains and attains the name Strelka, the first dog in space. The Archbishop seems to be the connection to the storyline with the war dogs as it looks like he trained them for the USSR.

I had chosen this story for my #supporttranslatedfiction group here on Goodreads as the fact that a girl becomes like a dog or more gets a kind of psychic connection to dogs really fascinated me. I also chose it because I have not read a lot of books by Japanese authors, and I was really curious.

However it was a struggle to read it to be honest. The only thing that kept me reading the book was that I wanted to know what would become of the girl.

The story line of the war dogs is a long winded interpretation of the cold war all over the world. Often Furukawa repeats information or questions which bored me a lot.

It made me think a lot though about my knowledge of the war zones in cold war times. I also wondered if there really have been war dogs. I did not know about it and in a way that kept me reading, as well.

However, I had to skip bits of the book as I just got too bored with it.

All in all, I was disappointed as the idea of the girl connecting with the dogs is a fascinating one but this part does not take the most of the book in my opinion.

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"Belka, why don't you bark" von Hideo Furukawa, einem mir bislang unbekanntem Autoren, wurde von VZ Media in einer Kindle und gedruckten Version veröffentlicht. Soweit ich recherchieren konnte gibt es noch keine deutsche Übersetzung.

Das Buch erzählt die fiktionale Geschichte der Kriegshunde im 20. Jahrhundert auf beiden Seiten des eisernen Vorhanges, vermischt mit der Geschichte eines gekidnappten japanischen Mädchens, das am Ende mit seinem Kidnapper arbeitet.

Die Geschichte läuft in zwei Strängen: Auf der einen Seite die Hunde, auf der anderen die des Archbishop, dem Kidnapper des japanischen Mädchens, das zuerst keinen Namen hat aber dann Strelka genannt wird, wie der erste Hund im Weltraum. Der Archbishop scheint die Verbindung mit dem Strang der Hunde zu sein, da er sie für die UdSSR trainiert hat.

Ich hatte dieses Buch für meine Goodreads Gruppe #supporttranslatedfiction ausgewählt, da die Idee des Mädchens, das zu einem Hund wird oder eher eine psychische Verbindung zu den Hunden aufbaut, mich fasziniert hat. Außerdem habe ich noch nicht viele japanische Autoren gelesen und war einfach neugierig.

Es war aber ziemlich anstrengend das Buch zu lesen, um ehrlich zu sein. Das einzige, was mich am Lesen hielt, war meine Neugierde wie es mit dem Mädchen weitergeht.

Der Erzählstrang der Kriegshunde ist eine langwierige Interpretation des kalten Krieges auf der ganzen Welt. Furukawa wiederholt oft Informationen oder Fragen, was mich ziemlich gelangweilt hat.

Es hat mich aber auch zum Nachdenken über mein Wissen der Kriegszonen im kalten Krieg gebracht. Ich wunderte mich, ob es die Kriegshunde wirklich gab. Ich wusste davon nichts und das hat mich irgendwie auch am Lesen gehalten.

Ich habe allerdings Teile des Buches übersprungen, weil ich einfach zu gelangweilt damit war.

Im Großen und Ganzen war ich enttäuscht von dem Buch, da die Idee, des Mädchens, das sich mit den Hunden verbindet faszinierend fand, dieser Teil aber nicht den Großteil des Buches ausmacht.

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## Osiris says

La segunda guerra mundial, la guerra de Vietnam, las guerras en Afganistán, las guerras entre carteles en México, de un modo u otro hay perros involucrados, algunos como escoltas, como radares, como armas, como compañía, pero siempre están presentes, y en este libro se van cruzando las historias del linaje de 4 perros militares (algunos americanos, otros japoneses) y el como su progenie se va distribuyendo poco a poco a lo largo del planeta, llegando a Rusia, a México, incluso a Samoa, pero de un modo u otro partícipes de distintas aventuras.

Un libro difícil de describir, con largos pasajes que cuentan la historia de perros como DED en Vietnam, Cabrón en México y Kita en Alaska, pero donde además, se cuenta la historia de una niña japonesa que queda en medio de un conflicto en el cual, también los perros son el motor que lleva la trama.

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## **Stephen Douglas Rowland says**

3½, I think, though not worth rounding up to 4. Yes, this book is annoying, but I think a lot of the dramatic excess in the narration and the ridiculous surplus of expletives and slang in the dialogue may be the fault of the translator. And yes, instead of a major climax, it just kind of fizzles out toward the end. However, it is remarkably original and audacious in scope, and often enthralling.

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## **Coyote says**

Meh...  
(Or a bored woof)

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## **Clark says**

I'd have given this book a mere "it was ok" rating if it weren't for the fact that it's one of the weirdest books I've read in a while. Extra points just for existing. Maybe it speaks more to someone else who isn't me. I like how the narration addresses the dogs in the story directly. Silly!

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## **the gift says**

sounds like a cool idea, sounds like fun violence, sounds like first-person dog story...but then you read it. translated from Japanese maybe loses something, but the main thing is a lot of politics, a lot of human stories, not enough dog even when the narrative addresses you as one of the dogs. too much humans, though it does travel, there is some interesting views of global politics, but only sometimes interesting.

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## **John Treat says**

This is a great idea for a novel: twentieth-century history and its unpleasantness through the eyes of military dogs and their descendants. Contemporary Japanese literature has plenty of cuddly animals, but Furukawa's German Shepherds are not those. The "animal turn" (my phrase) in writing today becomes more and more curious, and a novel like this only makes it more so. Furukawa is not my favorite Japanese novelist -- he promotes himself too shamelessly, then again, don't they all? -- but he's written something far more provocative than the better known Haruki Murakami or Yoko Tawada. Recommended if you find a copy in the library or a second-hand bookshop, if you know what I mean.

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## **Jeff says**

Or titled, white men can't jump and dogs can't write. Mislabeled as Sci-Fi, the book needs to go into hiding.

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## **karen says**

a goodreads review of this book suggests that you should "skip every chapter that doesn't feature dogs," and that's not bad advice.

i'm not sure how i feel about this book. i know i didn't hate it, but i am left a little perplexed as to what the story was, exactly.

i know it was the story of a group of four military dogs, one american, three japanese, abandoned on the aleutian island of kiska in 1943. THIS IS NOT WHERE *ISLAND OF THE BLUE DOLPHINS* TAKES PLACE, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE GREAT WILD DOGS IN THAT BOOK.

one of the dogs is a hokkaido:

oh my god, why would you ever abandon this dog??

and three are german shepherds:

which, well, yeah.

i love the notion of military dogs. i had to read *Eyes of the Emperor* for library school, and that was the first book i had ever read about military dogs. i liked that book a lot and expected to love this one, which was partially told from dog POVs. who doesn't like dog POVs?? besides jason. so these dogs are abandoned and later rescued and put to other uses. the rest of the book traces their bloodlines all over the world, outlines their experiences and the way their paths diverge and occasionally, unexpectedly converge once more. some remain military dogs, some go on to become show dogs, drug-sniffing dogs, guard dogs, sled dogs, humble pets, oceanic explorers, etc. and i agree with the other reviewer - almost all of the dog parts are riveting. but also sad, at times. their whole lives are chronicled, down to their deaths, which are occasionally heroic, but

still sad.

they are kind of dog-POVs, but they are written in second person, but not second person where "you" are you the reader but "you" are you the dog. and not always the same dog, just whatever dog happens to be the focus of the narrative at that point in time. so, that's a little gimmicky, but whatever.

the other complaint i have about the dog bits is the repetition. the repetition. the repetition. the sire/dams are always invoked when discussing a new dog, as well as snippets of their backstory as though you may have forgotten it in the space of a few chapters. as well as facts from the chapter "you" are at that very moment reading. which makes for clunky prose.

as far as the more human-centric chapters, hmmm... well, the humans are not given names, just nicknames, really. you know, like they are pet dogs, dig? unless they are real people like ho chi minh or gorbachev or lyndon b. johnson. then they get to keep their names.

and there is this kidnapped eleven-year-old daughter of a yakuza boss who seems to only know the word "fuck." now, i myself have a potty mouth, so cussin' doesn't bother me at all, but it just seems so incongruous to have this little kid dropping f-bombs four or five times in a single sentence. we get it. she's hard.

and so interspersed with all the doggie "where are they nows" is the story of the cold war. the wietnam war. the afghan-russian war. the space race. and the part that the original island-dogs' descendents played in all of these. which historical content is told in in this really casual om narr voice, complete with "likes" and "you knows" and it is so distracting to get so much historical background in this voice. because it is very detailed information, but it sounds like it is coming from the mouth of some drunk guy at the bar, who i guess is the same om narr talking to "you" the reader, the dog, in all the other chapters. and, then, under all of that historical layer, there is a third story of revenge and assassins and the criminal underworlds of russia and japan.

i am making it sound like a mess, and it's not, not really. the dog bits are mostly really interesting and moving. i liked learning about the different ways dogs can be trained to fight a bad guy, alone or in a pack. the bite to the wrist to disarm, the retrieval of the gun, and then the bite to the throat, or not, depending on the particular brand of training.

awesome.

and you know you aren't going to have a russian dog story without this little cutie:

and these luckier pups:

hence, title.

it's worth reading, but it is not my most favoritest dog story ever. but it's summer soon, and this would be perfectly suitable hot-day casual reading.

roof!!

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## Shawn Mooney says

I lost interest in this one, only reading a quarter of it before bailing. The (true?) stuff about the military dogs was rather interesting, but dogs do not make good literary characters, I don't think; it was the other part of the story, however, some weird International gangster-terrorist conspiracy that was somehow tied to the dogs, that I found to be so deeply uninteresting.

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## Tomoho says

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## Brent says

There are lots of stories about men and dogs out there (or women and dogs, or dogs and dogs), but rarely do those stories place the dog in something other than a supporting role. Usually it's the human's story, filled with their dramas and their struggles. This does wonders for solidifying dogkind's role as humanity's best friend, but what if it were the other way around? What if the dogs had their own interests, and their time spent side by side with humanity had a different purpose than what we imagine? This is a question that few books explore, and none in as interesting a manner as Hideo Furukawa's *Belka, Why Don't You Bark?*

The story of *Belka* is an epic that begins in 1943, spans several generations and continents, and is told through the eyes of man's best friend. It all starts when three German Shepherds, trained by the Japanese military, are abandoned on an island just before it is seized by American troops. From there it's a winding journey filled with twists, turns, and many miles traveled by boat, plane, and of course on foot. The narrative follows the family line of these dogs all the way until the international space race, each of them leading otherwise mundane lives as dogs of war, show dogs, sled dogs, and even wild dogs. Then, one day everything changed. One of the descendants of the original three was sent up into the first manned satellite, causing dogs all around the world to all stare up at the sky, sensing but not seeing canine history in the making. Somehow, each and every one of them knew that on that day a new age had started, a dog age.



Belka, *Why Don't You Bark?* isn't a narrative in a traditional sense. It is told through dozens of different voices—some human, but mostly canine—all the while continuously jumping forward and backward through the ages. Some of the narrators tell a story that lasts their lifetime, while others may only span a few days. Unlike the canines in this story, the human characters are intentionally minimized in their importance, and are rarely given actual names. Instead Furukawa gives them monikers, such as The Archbishop, The Hellhound, or even The Yakuza Boss. The only weakness of this story is the fact that by the end of the story the journey is clearer than the destination. Lives were lived, adventures were had, and somewhere in the middle there was even a conspiracy involving the Russian mafia, but by the last ten pages I was struggling to see where all the loose threads lead, if anywhere. The story of Belka, much like the life of every canine on the face of this planet, is a story with no real future or past, only a continuous present. In many ways this makes the story truer to the main characters, for how can a novel claim to be told through the eyes of a dog when the dogs are thinking like humans?

In the end, if you're looking for a story with a complex plot and a large and diverse cast of characters, Belka has that. If you're looking for a compelling narrative told from the perspective of non-human characters, Belka has that too. Like any good dog, Belka gives everything it has to offer, without restraint, and when it can't give anymore, it ends.

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## **Mircalla64 says**

### **cani e padroni**

comincia bene questo libro "i primi a impiegare cani nelle azioni di guerra furono i Tedeschi" no, furono i Romani

poi prosegue con un'inverosimile "gli Americani riconoscevano la leggera superiorità dei Giapponesi nell'addestramento dei cani" ma davvero?

poi c'è anche un insopportabile lamento indirizzato al cane che soffre il mare "tu come ti senti?" e come vuoi che si senta? è un cane!

"e voi altri dove siete finiti, amati cani?" chi lo sa, ma qualcosa mi dice che ce lo stai per raccontare tu...

il capitolo su Anubi il Dio cane è un delirio totale, un cumulo di sciocchezze da srotolarsi sul pavimento dalle risate, col cane in questione, dotato di un orgoglio di razza alla giapponese e di una coscienza della sua volontà da fascista in erba, che gira col pisello ritto alla ricerca di una femmina nobile in tutta la Siberia e con una generosa visuale dei deliri personali dell'autore sul programma spaziale di Kruscev

ogni capitolo inizia o finisce con l'invocazione "dove siete finiti, miei amati cani?" più patetico di così non si riesce a immaginare nulla

e inoltre vorrei proprio sapere chi è il demente che ha parlato di "nuovo Murakami", questo autore non ha nulla in comune con Murakami, la sua prosa è scadente, non è certo un postmoderno e non c'è traccia alcuna di surreale nel suo lento e monotono raccontare...

l'ultima parte è tutta rivolta ai cani, come se fossero loro a leggere questo delirio, i dettagli dell'impiego di ciascun cane nelle guerre e nei macelli per conto di Usa e URSS sono descritti nel particolare, ma questo non riesce a far sì che il lettore superi l'irritazione di trovarsi a leggere cose del tipo "cosa pensavi tu Belka? Bauu

Bauu Bauuu"

si tratta davvero di un'abuso irritante della seconda persona singolare, immotivato e del tutto gratuito, sembra di essere in presenza di un cerebroleso che racconta una storia a un bambino

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