



Kaze ga tsuyoku fuite iru

[It's Blowing Hard]

By Miura Shion

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風が強く吹いている

三浦しをん

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Ten students live together in a rundown apartment in danger of collapsing at any time. One day they decide to start running, hoping to enter the Hakone Ekiden, a long-distance university relay race held every New Year between Tokyo and Hakone. The problem is that only a few of them have any athletic experience at all; the rest are a motley collection, including an *otaku* geek who spends his life immersed in manga comics and a theoretically minded academic. This is hardly the stuff from which a crack team of distance runners is made, but they do not let this put them off.

The *ekiden* is an athletic event with a long tradition in Japan, and the Hakone Ekiden is the one most closely followed. Dreaming of one day entering this hallowed race, the students give it their all. The story is based on a wildly improbable premise, and yet readers find themselves desperately urging these unlikely heroes on—maybe because just under half of the book is devoted to the climax of the Hakone Ekiden itself. Miura goes into fascinating detail of the *ekiden* that the 10 athletes must complete together, giving an exhaustive account of the runners' tactics at each stage of the race and of all the work of the athletes and their supporters. Just as the course of the *ekiden* goes up mountain passes and down into valleys, the runners have their own ups and downs in life. As each runner slogs along his section of the course, Miura gives flashbacks of his past and the people around him. The way 10 such disparate people gradually come to think and feel as one is depicted compellingly in this book. (MT)

Miura Shion

Born in 1976. Graduated from the School of Letters, Arts, and Sciences at Waseda University. Won the Naoki Prize in 2006 for *Mahoro ekimae Tada Benri-ken* [The Tada Handyman's Shop in Front of Mahoro Station]. In addition to numerous novels, including *Fune o amu* [Knitting Ships], winner of the 2012 Hon'ya [Bookseller] Prize, her works include *Sanshirō wa sorekara mon o deta* [And Then Sanshirō Left Through the Gate], a collection of essays about books. In 2015, *Ano ie ni kurasu yonin no onna* [The Four Women Who Live in That House] received the Oda Sakunosuke Prize.



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三浦しをん（ミウラ シラン）

1976年生まれ。早稲田大学第一文学部卒業。2006年、『まほろ駅前多田便利軒』で第135回直木賞受賞。『三四郎はそれから門を出た』など、エッセイ集でも人気を博す。2012年、『舟を編む』で本屋大賞を受賞。2015年、『あの家に暮らす四人の女』で第32回織田作之助賞を受賞。

いまにも崩れそうなボロ・アパートの住人である10人の学生が、ある日、「箱根駅伝」をめざして走りだす。陸上経験者は数人しかいないし、中には、マンガオタクやガリ勉学生など、運動神経とはほど遠いメンバーすらいる。それでも、日本固有の陸上競技である「駅伝」、その中でも国民的な注目度も高い「箱根」という夢の舞台をめざして、学生たちはひた走る。

こうした、まったくありえない設定の物語なのに、いつのまにか引き込まれ、熱烈なエールを送りたくなってくるのだ。それは、この作品の4割近くがクライマックスの箱根駅伝の場面にあてられているからだろう。ここでは、各区分を走るランナーの駆け引き、走っている選手とそれをサポートする人たちの活躍など、10人の選手が一人丸となって長距離を走り抜けるという「駅伝」の魅力が余すところなく描かれている。そして、山あり谷ありの駅伝という長距離走にふさわしく、一人ひとりの走りに各自の過去や、彼をとりまく仲間たちのことなどがフラッシュバックされていて、しだいに10人の気持ちがひとつになっていくさまが感動的に描かれていくのだ。(MT)

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