



The Gun

By Fuminori Nakamura

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A Tokyo college student's discovery and eventual obsession with a stolen handgun awakens something dark inside him.

On a nighttime walk along a Tokyo riverbank, a young man named Nishikawa stumbles on a dead body, beside which lies a gun. From the moment Nishikawa decides to take the gun, the world around him blurs. Knowing he possesses the weapon brings an intoxicating sense of purpose to his dull university life. But soon Nishikawa's personal entanglements become unexpectedly complicated: he finds himself romantically involved with two women while his biological father, whom he's never met, lies dying in a hospital. Through it all, he can't stop thinking about the gun—and the four bullets loaded in its chamber. As he spirals into obsession, his focus is consumed by one idea: that possessing the gun is no longer enough—he must fire it.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *The Gun*

A *Wall Street Journal* Best Mystery of 2016

A *World Literature Today* Notable Translation for 2016

An ABA IndieNext Selection

BookRiot 100 Must-Read Novels of Noir

"A thriller in the same elevated sense as is Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* or Camus's *The Stranger* . . . ?Nature versus nurture, free will versus fate: Such are the themes that flicker almost subliminally through this shocking narrative, which also emits echoes of Poe and Mishima."

—Tom Nolan, *The Wall Street Journal*

"More a suspenseful study of obsession than a crime novel, Nakamura's noir story, translated by Allison Markin Powell, is about liberation . . . Love, even illicit love, has a way of bringing out the best—or the worst—in a person."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"Chilling."

—*Toronto Star*

"[Nakamura] tightens the screws on his character with eerie effectiveness, making the inevitable outcome shudder on the page."

—*Chicago Tribune*

"[*The Gun*] offers an addictive—one might even say compulsive—night's worth of chillingly unnerving entertainment."

—*The Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"[Nakamura] straddles the crime-literary fiction boundary like few others. It gives a new twist to Chekhov's rule: a gun mentioned in the first act—or here, a gun found by a dead body in the opening pages—must eventually be fired."

—*Maclean's*

"A fascinating, addictive thriller."

—*The Japan News*

"[A] powerful existential thriller."

—*The Sunday Times (UK)*

"A compelling study of a man whose deep wounds begin to open when, by accident, he stumbles across a gun. Nakamura understands how a life can swirl and eddy around an inanimate object, becoming so possessed by it as to suddenly be not a life at all."

—Brian Evenson, author of *Windeye*

"[Nakamura] spins dark, brooding tales of crime, deftly using acts such as murder and theft as unsettling ruminations on the human psyche and its predilection for darkness."

—***The Straits Times* (Singapore)**

"One of the jewels in the Japanese crime-fiction crown, [Nakamura's] debut novel features a nihilistic anti-hero filled with terrible rage."

—***South China Morning Post***

"An unforgettable, heart-pounding journey into the world of psychological suspense."

—***Crimespree Magazine***

"The psychological downward spiral into obsession is what drives this book, and during my reading, I couldn't help but think that Alfred Hitchcock could have created a brilliant film adaptation."

—**Bruce Tierney, *BookPage***

"An intense, claustrophobic, and effective noir/philosophical thriller."

—**International Noir Fiction**

"Utterly brilliant."

—**CounterPunch**

"Another masterwork from one of the best modern practitioners of the crime novel."

—**World Literature Today**

"Nakamura does obsessive and delusional very well . . . A fine first effort by a talented writer."

—**The Complete Review**

"Chilling."

—**Reading Matters**

"No crime author out there is currently doing what Fuminori Nakamura is doing. I've read every novel of his Soho Press has translated and they've all been unique in their subject matter and tone and exactly the same in terms of effectiveness and the wonderfully bizarre, oblique way in which Nakamura approaches the genre."

—**Gabino Iglesias, *Dead End Follies***

"[An] intense work of suspense and increasing madness."

—**Kingdom Books**

"An incredibly tense story about how obsession can mold your actions and how an inanimate object can become animate in the 'right' pair of hands."

—**Old Firehouse Books, Ft. Collins, Colorado**

"The author does more in less than 200 pages than most authors could pull off in 600 . . . Stripped down, focused, intense, and worth every second you spend reading."

—**Bookgasm**

"Suspenseful to the last page, Nakamura's existential noir translates well to America, [and is] a timely allegory for our gun-crazed culture."

—*Library Journal*

"This portrait of obsession and madness starts slowly but soon exerts an almost hypnotic pull as we contemplate both the extent of Nishikawa's alienation and the primal allure of these little machines for killing."

—*Booklist*

"Drenched—literally—in noir atmosphere . . . Almost a thesis on the seductive potential of handguns."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"[Nakamura] paints the story in short strokes, capturing nuance in simple, short sentences, somehow squeezing out the personal in cold prose. His story is small in the sense that it is only one person's strange world we see; yet universal in the way it characterizes how we might be led into it."

—**Ronald Tierney**

Praise for Fuminori Nakamura

"This slim, icy, outstanding thriller, reminiscent of Muriel Spark and Patricia Highsmith, should establish Fuminori Nakamura as one of the most interesting Japanese crime novelists at work today."

—*USA Today*

"*The Thief* brings to mind Highsmith, Mishima and Dostoevsky . . . A chilling existential thriller leaving readers in doubt without making them feel in any way cheated."

—*The Wall Street Journal*, **Best Book of the Year Selection**

"Deliciously twisted . . . Nakamura bend[s] the line between what is good and what is evil until it nearly breaks. It's impressive how a book so dark can be so much fun."

—**Grantland**

"His grasp of the seamy underbelly of the city is why Nakamura is one of the most award-winning young guns of Japanese hardboiled detective writing."

—**Daily Beast**

"Nakamura's prose is cut-to-the-bone lean, but it moves across the page with a seductive, even voluptuous agility."

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

About the Author

Fuminori Nakamura was born in 1977 and graduated from Fukushima University in 2000. He has won numerous prizes for his writing, including the ?e Prize, Japan's largest literary award; the David L. Goodis Award; and the prestigious Akutagawa Prize. *The Thief*, his first novel to be translated into English, was a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. His other novels include *The Kingdom*, *Evil and the Mask*, *The Boy in the Earth*, *Last Winter*, *We Parted*.

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Chapter 1

Last night, I found a gun. Or you could say I stole it, I'm not really sure. I've never seen something so beautiful, or that feels so right in my hand. I didn't have much interest in guns before, but the moment I saw it, all I could think about was making it mine.

It was raining last night. The kind of rain that seems like it will never stop, that falls at an angle, so even if you use an umbrella you still get soaked. I had been out walking around in it—if I had to say what time, it was about eleven at night. The relentlessness of the rain seemed to symbolize my own melancholy, and although from the knee down I was sopping wet and cold and couldn't wait to get out of it, for whatever reason I made no effort to head back home to my apartment. I really can't say why I kept walking around outside. I guess for no reason other than I just felt like walking, and I had no desire to go back to my own place. My actions were often motivated by such vague justifications. With no real plan, I changed course, passing through a street lined with darkened shops and along a side street that bordered a small park. I remember clearly that there was a small cat under a parked white van. The cat was staring at me. Come to think of it, this wasn't the only time a cat was watching me before something major happened. I didn't really register it at that moment, but now it seems like it might have been a forewarning.

I went over the railway tracks at a crossing, and passed through a warren of streets. Water had collected and was dripping down off of the edge of the roof of an old apartment building, falling persistently and loudly on broken pieces of prefab that were lying around. It was that sound, more than being pelted by the rain, that prompted me to think I ought to get back home soon. In my mind, I pictured myself hurrying home, taking a shower, and changing into dry clothes. Yet I continued my aimless wandering with no end in sight. No matter how often I think about it, I can't seem to attach any specific meaning to my actions at that time. But then, it really wasn't all that unusual for me. On rare occasions, I would let things happen that were—I don't know—the opposite of what I wanted to do. Soaking wet and still nursing my melancholy thoughts, I kept walking.

Despite all this, I still take pleasure in the choice I made that night. I hardly ever used to evaluate my own past actions. I really didn't make a habit of thinking too hard about right and wrong, or about the consequences that arose from either. But I feel something akin to gratitude for what I did that night. Had I simply gone back to my apartment, I wouldn't have the gun in my hands now. In contrast, when I think about the possibility of never having had the gun, I am seized with a vague terror. Maybe it's wrong to think that, since it wasn't mine to begin with.

The next thing I did was buy a can of coffee from a vending machine. I wasn't thirsty, but I often drink coffee while I'm walking, so I bought it out of habit, more or less. I flipped the tab and took a sip as I stepped carefully to avoid the puddles that had formed on the asphalt. The sky was overcast with heavy gray clouds—neither the moon nor the stars were visible. There was a chill in the air—the rain had banished any trace of warmth from earlier in the day.

I continued to wander. Literally wandering; like I said before, I had no destination. I drank the canned coffee as I listened to the sound of the rain, and after I finished the coffee, I lit a cigarette. I passed through another warren of streets lined on either side with residences, and emerged onto a wide avenue. Cars sped along right beside me, sending up spray, not a single one slowing down as it passed. Needless to say, I was soaked repeatedly. I would have liked to get off that road, but there were no side streets that I could turn onto. As each car drove past, the headlights illuminated the drops of falling rain, which glimmered gold like particles of light. This registered as beautiful to me, but I could no longer bear the chill that I felt throughout my body, or the accompanying discomfort of being wet.

The road turned into a bridge that spanned a river, and on just this side of the bridge there was a gentle slope carpeted with grass, which I headed down. For now, I only wanted to get out of the rain. I figured I could stop under this huge bridge and smoke a cigarette while I thought about what to do next. Approaching the river, the ground went from grass to concrete, and both sides of the embankment were also faced with concrete. The river was high because of the rain, and it flowed swiftly and noisily. I ducked under the bridge, closing my umbrella. The sound of the river echoed under the bridge, making it seem remarkably louder. I found the noise extremely unpleasant. I wished I were back in my apartment, as I usually was, so I wouldn't have to listen to it. I was fed up with everything, but I knew that I had no one to blame but myself. I lit a cigarette, and looked for a place where I might be able to sit for the time being.

Right then, over by where the lawn turned to concrete, I thought I saw a dark silhouette, in the shape of a

person. I considered that it might have just been some trash lying there, though the shadow looked a little too much like a man. I was immediately struck by a desire to flee. I felt a mixture of discomfort and unease, a complicated awareness that didn't take long to morph into fear. But my impulse to run away did not exceed my sense of curiosity. I focused my attention and approached cautiously. After taking two or three steps closer, I could tell for sure that it was a man. At that moment, I experienced a sharp jolt to my heart. He was wearing a black suit, lying facedown with his left arm stretched out limply above his head. I could feel my heart starting to race, fast and loud. I swallowed my saliva repeatedly in an attempt to moisten my throat, which had gone dry.

I came right up next to the man. He had short hair with a hint of gray, which made him appear to be in his fifties. His head was turned to the side, so I could see him quite clearly. I would have expected him to have a terrible look on his face, but there was something quite calm in his expression. His features had hardened, as if he were staring sullenly at something. Neither of his eyes was completely open, and his mouth was almost closed—there was nothing disgusting running out of it either. On the concrete where his head lay, there was a dark pool of liquid that, based on present circumstances, I assumed to be blood. For whatever reason, I couldn't stop staring at the blades of grass that stuck out from between the fingertips of the man's left hand. His suit jacket was flipped up in the back and I could see a little bit of his white shirt. I don't know why, but that white held my gaze for a long time too. The man's body retained a vigor, and exuded a sense of presence—the concrete and the lawn actually seemed like they were there for his sake. That didn't make any sense, though, because the man was dead. I stood there, as if rooted to the spot, but after a while the pounding of my heart gradually settled down, and finally I managed to regain my composure. This surprised me a little, the fact that I had started to get used to this scene, to this situation.

Not far from the man's right hand, I noticed the dark, clear-cut shadow of an object. I must have only become aware of it because I had started to accustom myself to the dead man. My heart started beating fiercely again, ringing in my ears. It felt like my heart was pounding even more wildly now than when I first saw him. I crouched down over the spot to get a better look at the dark object. I picked it up and brought it close to my face. I had no strength in my arm, so it took a lot of effort to maintain that position. I could feel an intense joy spreading throughout my body. And at the same time, to think that I felt such excitement at the mere sight of it—that I was filled with such delight—was disturbing. I had the sense of being torn in two. The elation seemed to escalate, independent of my own will, and I feared that I wouldn't be able to control myself. But I couldn't stop it, or pull myself back together. It wasn't long before the joy exceeded my tolerance level, and for a moment I was carried away. My heart throbbed painfully, my vision narrowed and, at the edge of my consciousness, I could tell that everything was growing blurry. It occurred to me—from this day on, the gun was mine. These words, which must have been generated by me, repeated themselves inside my head. The pleasure of that repetition, the bewildering pleasure—I had never experienced such a sense of fulfillment. Before long, my mind seemed to catch up with the joy, and I consciously repeated those words to myself. I even felt a slight blur of tears in my eyes. It was as if—I don't know—as if I forgave myself for feeling that way. Who knows, maybe I had already lost my mind. But now that I am able to make an even-tempered judgment, even if I was out of my head at the time, I think it was only temporary.

Soon after the joy flooded through me, I remembered that a person was lying dead only a short distance away. But I no longer cared about him. He was just some guy I didn't know, a stranger. I shoved the gun into the back pocket of my jeans, covering it with my shirt. I think I probably had a smile on my face. Now in high spirits, I had the urge to do something clever; I thought about calling up the police to tell them that I'd found a body.

But that seemed like it would be too much trouble. My next thought was that I ought to stay out of this, as much as possible. They might think that I was the one who killed this guy and, since above all my intention was to make off with the gun in hand, I might already be liable for a crime, legally speaking. I cautiously surveyed my surroundings, the same way that someone who had committed a murder would, and checked that there were no witnesses. Then I scrutinized the area for traces of myself, making sure that I hadn't dropped anything before I left. I projected a deliberately calm expression; I didn't hurry, I walked at a

purposely slow pace. I paid particular attention when I emerged from the grassy slope back onto the street. I remained hidden in the shadow of the bridge, waiting patiently for a break in the stream of passing cars, so that I wouldn't be seen by anyone. I tried to concentrate on even the slightest sound, but it was hard to hear over the noise of the rushing cars and the raging river. Timing it just right as I emerged, I was careful to maintain a composed look on my face. I walked away slowly, going so far as to make it look as though I were pondering something, aware that someone might be watching. Then I realized that I was walking along without using my umbrella, so I hastily opened it. I was suffused with a joy that would not subside. The spray from the cars drenched me all over again, but I no longer minded in the least. My attention remained focused on the way the gun felt in my back pocket. At one point, unable to contain myself, I ducked into the shadow of a building to pull out the gun. The way it appeared in the light from the street was exceedingly beautiful. But now I realized that it was covered with crimson blood, smeared in particular around the end from which the bullets fired. I was stunned; it seemed strange to me that I hadn't noticed this when I first discovered the gun. I remembered that I had a packet of tissues shoved in my pocket and, moistening them with rainwater, I used them all up to wipe off the gun. I stuffed the now bloodstained tissues into the right front pocket of my jeans. I had no choice—there was nowhere to throw them away. It wasn't until after I finished wiping the gun off that it occurred to me that there was no need to have done such a thing right here and now. Once again, I surveyed my surroundings, checking that no one had seen me. There was no sound other than the rain drumming against the ground and the buildings—the neighborhood was so quiet it was unsettling. I exhaled a breath, savoring my sense of relief, and took one more look at the gun, confirming its magnificence. Then, as if to seal in that beauty, I hastily shoved it into the other back pocket of my jeans. I almost felt as if by exposing it for too long out in the open like that, its beauty might escape. I started walking slowly, in an effort to contain the heightened emotions coursing through my entire body. Maintaining that pace, this time I headed steadily back home.

I opened the door to my apartment, slowly went inside, and turned the lock. Standing in the middle of the wooden floor of my tiny apartment, I took out the gun I had just acquired. Looking at it, I could again feel joy spreading throughout my body.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Travis Freeman:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era where everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not call for people to be aware of each data they get. How people have to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Reading a book can help people out of this uncertainty Information specially this The Gun book as this book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

Alma Young:

The experience that you get from The Gun will be the more deep you searching the information that hide within the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Gun giving you joy feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in certain way that can be understood by means of anyone who read that because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. So it is easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We propose you for having this particular

The Gun instantly.

Jim May:

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Cindi Russell:

Reading a book to get new life style in this year; every people loves to go through a book. When you study a book you can get a great deal of benefit. When you read guides, you can improve your knowledge, mainly because book has a lot of information on it. The information that you will get depend on what forms of book that you have read. If you would like get information about your review, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, such us novel, comics, along with soon. The The Gun offer you a new experience in looking at a book.

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