

Hard Work Into the Evening

**Hard Work
Into the
Evening**

D. Moonfire

Broken Typewriter Press • Cedar Rapids

Copyright © 2022 D. Moonfire
Some Rights Reserved
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike
4.0 International

Cover art by D. Moonfire

All characters, events, and locations are fictitious. Any
resemblance to persons, past, present, and future is
coincidental and highly unlikely.

This story contains no scenes of sexual assault.

Broken Typewriter Press
5001 1st Ave SE
Ste 105 #243
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

Broken Typewriter Press
<https://broken.typewriter.press/>

Version 1.0.0

Chapter 1

Assigned Duties

The Seven Villages is a prosperous cluster of night clans that line the Tikotāi River. They provide much of the food for the surrounding areas... while they lasted.

—Gobifuchi Nagòmi, *When the Horses Left*

It was early evening and the sun's last light was painted across the cloudless sky. To Tsubàyo, the dark purple smears looked more like bruises and his skin crawled with the still-fresh memories of his arrival to the village. He shook his head to clear the sour memory and then stifled a sudden yawn.

The coffee in his hand was still too hot to drink. He swirled it around in the heavy clay mug to cool it down. It was far too late in the evening and his body wasn't used to sleeping during the day to wake up with sunset. Though, the anticipation of the moon rise made it easier to crawl out of bed.

He turned slightly to look at the cottage that the Rojikinòmi had given him. Unlike the cave that he had grown up in, his new place was made from wooden beams. The edges of the rooms were straight and sharp, unlike the slightly

curved surfaces that he had seen for seventeen years. He wasn't entirely sure how he felt about it, but he had decided it felt warmer.

His eyes looked at the bare wooden walls in the living room. When he was forced out of the Shimusògo, he didn't have a chance to take anything. All he had were the ripped and ragged clothes on his back and the bruises that covered most of his body. He had gotten rid of both on the long trip back to the Rojikinòmi villages. The cottage was a new life for him, one where he didn't know anyone and no one liked him.

A horse whined nearby.

He cocked his head and took a deep breath. Energy rippled underneath his skin, sluggish and cold without the moon above the horizon. He pushed hard and reached out for the horse with his senses.

After a moment, the warmth of the horse's mind blossomed inside his own and he smiled. «Greetings, Pabinkue Tsubàyo,» came the horse's thoughts, more emotions than actual words but the intent was clear.

He let his thoughts ripple along the connection, «Evening, Great Pabinkue Gachyorábi.»

The horse's joy rose and he felt it flooding his thoughts. While the Pabinkúe clan didn't seem to appreciate his presence, the clan's horses were almost universally cheerful in their greetings.

Tsubàyo smiled and tested his coffee. It was cool enough to drink and he sipped at it. He still hadn't gotten used to the bitter liquid, but he couldn't fault it for pushing away the exhaustion of waking up late.

Suddenly, a thousand pleasures flooded his veins. He couldn't quite put a word on it but it felt like the rush of his heated battle with Chimípu, the thrill of balancing on the

edge of a cliff, and the afterglow of an orgasm all at the same time.

As quickly as it filled him, it was gone.

He let out a soft moan and turned his head to where the first crest of the moon had risen over the horizon. The brilliant white sphere was the source of his power and he could feel it flooding his body. The connection between him and the horse sharpened.

With the influx of power, Tsubàyò could sense more horses around him, from the five mares still in the stables down the road to the two horses pulling a wagon a quarter mile away. Seventy-three equines within a mile of him and each one greeted him with a wave of joyful emotions.

Tsubàyò smiled to himself and send a greeting to each of them. He finished his coffee by the time he finished. Then he looked at a black board hanging by his front door. It had a schedule for his week. He grabbed a hunk of chalk and drew through yesterday's entry of patrolling the villages and tapped on today's duties: fieldwork at the Karabi Fields. He had an hour to get there.

He sighed with annoyance. The horses couldn't tell him where to find the fields. They understood landmarks, not signs. That meant he needed to talk to one of the Pabinkúe or Rojikinòmi. Grabbing his short sword and a pair of work gloves, he headed out without bothering locking the door behind him; there was nothing in the cottage that he cared about.

His destination was the stables at the northern end of the small village. His horse, Ryachuikùò, greeted him with a whiny and a wordless joy long before he finished walking up to the open doors leading inside.

"Hello?"

An old woman sitting on a bale of hay grunted. She spat at his feet. "Took you long enough, you ugly bastard."

The side of his face tightened and he fought the urge to scratch it. When he was a child, an accident with hot oil left the right side of his face scarred and disfigured. The marks covered his shoulder and down along his chest.

He gripped the dark blue short he wore and clenched it in his fist. With his jaw tight, he bowed. “Good evening, Great Pabinkue Maporéku. It is good to see you this evening,” he finished with a lie.

“You’re late, you miserable cock-sucking murderer.”

The muscles in his chest tightened painfully. “The moon has only been up for a few minutes.”

“You’re still late,” she said before spitting on the ground at his feet. She slid off the bale and hobbled into the stables. There was no love long between him and the Pabinkúe. Less than a month ago, he had killed one of their herd masters in a moment of passion. If it wasn’t for Pabinkúe accepting him as one of her warriors, they would have killed him at least a dozen times.

Tsubàyo sighed and contemplated going into the stable after the old woman. He never knew what was expected for him in the new clan. A frown furrowed his brow. It felt like the same abusive crap at the Shimusògo, only at night.

Ryachuikùo came trotting out, his hair gleaming and a fresh blanket over his back. He radiated joy and happiness as he rushed over to Tsubàyo and butted against him.

Tsubàyo’s sour feels faded away with the presence of his horse. He closed his eyes and buried his face against the warm body. «I missed you. At least you don’t hate me.»

«The Pabinkúe don’t hate you.» The horse rubbed against him, his tail whipping back and forth.

«Feels like it.»

«It takes a while for new stallions to be accepted.» Ryachuikùo’s thoughts grew more intense and weighted, as if the entire Pabinkúe herd was speaking to him at once. The

tones became more feminine. «They will. I choose you and they will accept in time.»

Tsubàyo hugged Ryachuikùò tightly. «Thank you, Great Pabinkúe.»

The presence of the clan spirit withdrew.

Encouraged, Tsubàyo pulled his face away to look at the scowling old woman. “Excuse me, Great Pabinkue Maporéku, will you please tell this humble man how to find the Karabi Fields?”

For a moment, he thought she was going to spit on him. Then she turned around. “North to the next village, then east at the town center. You’ll find the signs.”

He thanked her politely before mounting Ryachuikùò. It took almost no effort since rider and horse were in each other’s thoughts. As soon as he could, he gave her a bow from the top of the horse and spurred Ryachuikùò to the north.

It was short ride, only forty minutes at most, before he came up to a field that had been freshly turned. The rich smells of moist earth were almost overwhelming. He had spent his entire life in the sandy regions around the Shimusogo Valley. He never imagined a valley could have rich life and crops before. Then again, he had never seen a river before he joined the Pabinkúe either.

He spotted a wagon a short distance ahead with two horses grazing near it. He sighed with growing dread, it was another chance for a stranger to tell him he was ugly and a murderer. However, this was his home now and he had his duties.

The two horses were Jibòpu and Gokunàe, both older stallions. Their thoughts were easy to pick up and they greeted him with the same joy and friendship that all of the Pabinkúe horses possessed.

As soon as he was at the wagon, he slid off. Thanking Ryachuikùò, he reached out and patted Jibòpu and Gokunàè with each hand.

“You can always tell a Pabinkúé,” said a woman from behind him.

He jumped and spun around, a flush darkening his already dark cheeks.

She wasn't much older than him, with sorrel skin and dark green eyes. Her hair was pulled into neat rows of tight braids that went from her brow over her head and out of sight. She wore a yellow top that looked pale and ethereal in the fading light. On the bottom, she had dark trousers and sturdy-looking boots.

Tsubàyo gulped. “Sorry.” He clenched his toes. They still were looking for boots that would fit him but his feet were heavily callused from spending an entire childhood walking barefoot on the sun-heated sand. He didn't need anything but he felt self-conscious among his new clan.

She smiled as she came up. “Don't be. It's a good thing. The Pabinkúé greet horses first, then remember there are people still around.”

He felt a blush as he tried not to stare. She wasn't thin and wiry like Shimusògo women, but broad shouldered with large breasts and wide hips. She dug into a leather pouch resting on her thigh and pulled out a small strip of cloth and wiped her hands. Then she held it out. “I am Fimúchi and I speak for Rojikinòmi.”

It took him a moment to take her hand. “I am Tsubàyo and I... guess I speak for Pabinkúé.”

She smiled brilliantly. “Now that we got the formalities, I'm sure you'd rather call me Múchi being that Káryo was your introduction to our ways.”

Mikáryo was a warrior of the Pabinkúe who hated formal names and always used the familiar ones. She was also the one who brought him to the villages.

He stammered for a moment. “No, Great Rojikinomi Fimúchi.”

She arched one eyebrow. “Fimúchi then.”

“As you wish, Great—”

“Fimúchi,” she repeated as she tightened her grip. “My name is Fimúchi.”

He winced. She had a powerful clasp and rough hands. “Tsubàyo.”

Fimúchi released him and stepped back. Her eyes scanned him from toes to head and then she gave a slight smile. “You aren’t what I expected.”

He tensed and scratched the scars on the side of his face. “Come on, ready to work?”

Tsubàyo said nothing and followed as she brought him to the wagon. It was loaded with trays covered in wet fabric. When she flipped over a corner, he could see it was hundreds of tiny plants in trays. He didn’t recognize the type. Everything was dripping wet and he could see eight buckets of water covered with cloth near the front.

“Tonight is going to be long, tedious, but fairly simple. I’ll plant the wheat seedlings and you try to keep up with me.”

He frowned and glanced at her. She didn’t look very fast.

Fimúchi smiled sweetly and picked up one of the tiny plants. With her other hand, she scooped up something that smelled like fish mixed in with other seeds and beans. Turning around, she carried them over to the furrow of freshly upturned earth and set the seedling down and patted her other hand around the base. He watched as she whispered a prayer over each one while pulling the dirt around the seedlings.

When she stood up, she returned to the wagon and grabbed another seedling and scoop. Giving him a nod, she planted both of them.

“Um,” Tsubàyò said. “I take it keeping up with you doesn’t mean going fast?”

“Of course not. Farming is slow and steady. However that wagon has a ton of water, plants, and supplies. It would be horrible if I had to keep walking back to it for this entire field, right?” She gestured to the dozen of acres in front of her.

Tsubàyò shook his head. He guessed shit work was part of every clan, be it cleaning off the lunch tables, taking out the garbage, or planting throughout the night.

She laughed, a low bellowing sound, but her smile was brilliant in the dim light. “Now you’ve got it. Come on, we get to take a break in four hours. I give your horses about an hour before they get bored and then you’ll have a struggle on your hands.”

«That’s because we can’t eat the delicious treats on this wagon,» thought Gokunàe.

He grinned.

True to her work, Fimúchi worked steadily. It would take her ten minutes to get down the furrow enough for him to move the wagons only a few feet and then he would have to stop.

It quickly grew dark, but neither of them stopped. One of the gifts both the Pabinkúe and Rojikinòmi had was their ability to see in the dark. The world took on a bluish-tinge and he found watching her alluring. Her top had become a surreal flash of dark and light, the patterns of what appeared to be straight yellow turned out to be designs of flowers and stars.

He realized he was staring and looked away, but that somehow made it worse. There was nothing to focus on except for the sound of her movement and the ripple of trees.

“Tell me about your birth clan?”

Tsubàyo scowled. “You don’t want to hear about them.”

“Oh?” she said as she straightened. She was sweaty from her effort and her shirt clung to her body. The smell of it wafted around him, sharp but not entirely unpleasant. “Want to hear about mine?”

“Why?”

“Because we have hours and it will pass a lot faster if we talk, don’t you think?”

“I guess.”

“Well, I was born here among the Seven Villages. In a few weeks, I’ll be twenty-one.” She was four years older than him. She walked up to the wagon.

Without thinking, he picked up one of the plants and scooped up some of the foul-smelling mixture. It looked like there were intestines and fish head in the mix. His stomach rolled but he turned and handed both to her.

With a smile, she took them and returned to the furrow. “My father was Pabinkúe but I never was good at riding horses. They were too delicate for me. But, you never know which spirit is going to call you so I spent my summers at the various clans in the area. There are twenty-one within a day’s travel.”

Tsubàyo was speaking before he realized it. “There are only four within walking distance of Shimusogo Valley.”

“Oh, which ones?”

Before he knew it, they were trading stories about their childhood. He tried to gloss over the less enjoyable parts of his past, like him becoming friends with Karawàbi and bullying Pidòhu and Rutejimo. A few memories rose up, of seeing Karawàbi’s corpse with his throat cut, but he pushed

them aside. Despite his effort, she managed to pry even his darker side out but didn't seem to take more than a passing interest. She didn't question or accuse him of anything, just took the story and gave another.

Chapter 2

Finishing Up

There are rare times when the clan disagrees with their spirit.
—*The Nature of Spirits and Their Clans*

Before he knew it, they were near the end of the field. With a start, he looked back to see the neat lines of plants sticking out in straight lines. It smelled of rich soil and fish guts.

“See?” she said as she leaned against the wagon. “Everything goes faster when you are talking.”

“I don’t remember eating dinner.”

“It was short.”

He shook his head. Somehow, he had just had the most enjoyable day since he arrived at the Seven Villages and he wasn’t even sure it was real. Bemused, he helped her finish the field.

Just as they were cleaning up with the remaining water, he felt a horse approaching. It was Zukejùfa which meant Kamùji was approaching. The muscles in his back tightened. Every encounter with the Pabinkúe clan leader left Tsubàyo feeling like he was one step from being executed.

“What’s wrong?”

“Kamùji is coming.”

She shoved her hands into the bucket and then wiped them on her trousers. “He always had terrible timing. What is he going to come out of?”

Fimúchi referenced Pabinkúe power to travel between shadows and appear in unexpected places. He closed his eyes and felt around him, exploring the world between the shadows and the minds of the horses.

He gestured to a boulder.

Fimúchi turned just as a shadow bulged out of it. It stretched unnaturally to the side, then peeled back to reveal a pitch black horse being ridden by a man in his forties.

Kamùji had a deep black beard with streaks of silver in it. His eyes were steady but clouded over. He had two pairs of swords on him, one set on his hips and another with a reverse sheath on his back. Power crackled along his body as he turned his mount toward them.

Zukejùfa pawed the ground and sent out emphatic greeting to Tsubàyo who returned it respectfully.

Kamùji let out a grunt before he turned to Fimúchi. “You were supposed to work the northern Kabayo Fields tonight.”

“Oh,” Fimúchi said in a sweet voice that Tsubàyo had only heard when she was mocking someone in her stories. “I must have gotten my schedule mixed up with Gegía’s. Silly me, I’ll have a word with my elder at the next schedule meeting.”

With another grunt, Kamùji waved his hand sharply. “You know damn well I was keeping her away from Peko-chìo. They spent half their time kissing and touching and not getting their job done.”

Fimúchi shrugged and wiped her hands on one of the now dry clothes on the wagon. “Pity. Did they finish the field?”

A moment hesitation. “Yes.”

“Then I guess nothing was wrong, Papa.”

Tsubàyo froze, his stomach twisting in a sudden pain. He had no idea that Fimúchi was Kamùji’s daughter. Suddenly, he wanted to be anywhere else.

“They were fucking when I found them!”

“Well,” Fimúchi said, her voice growing steady, “I hope you left them alone and let them finish. If they did their job, they can have fun. Can’t you see they are in love?”

Kamùji glanced at Tsubàyo who stepped back. Then he turned back to his daughter. “You were not supposed to be here.”

Fimúchi started to fold the cloth on the wagon. “I was curious about the newest Pabinkúe. Since the schedule gave me the opportunity, I decided to swap stories.”

“That is not your decision to make. Pabinkúe should have never had selected him.”

“Oh? Last I checked, I was Rojikinòmi. We and the Pabinkúe have been together for centuries and I have no trouble learning the character of our newest ally.”

The scowled deepened. “You are being nothing more than an insolent brat.”

“I’m a woman who can make her own decisions, Papa. You may still think I’m your little girl but that time has passed. I’m allow to make my own decisions as long as Rojikinòmi—not Pabinkúe—decides it is for the greater good.”

He opened his mouth.

She interrupted by pointing at him sharply. “You are Rojikinòmi lands, remember that.”

“And you are protected by the Pabinkúe!”

Tsubàyo felt completely divorced in the conversation while bristling as the subject. He wanted to lash out, but couldn't. Instead he remained still and listened.

The ground underneath all of them shifted slightly. The freshly planted seedlings twisted and turned until their leaves were facing Kamùji. Tsubàyo gulped as he looked around, it felt like the ground itself was breathing underneath him.

He looked around with his lips pressed into a tight line and his knuckles white as they balled into fists. Then, he relaxed them. "I don't trust him, my daughter."

"Then you might consider including him in the conversation," she said with a smile that never reached her eyes.

Tsubàyo grew flushed as Kamùji looked sharply at him.

"Do you have anything to say, Boy?"

Tsubàyo's muscles tensed. The Shimusògo always called him "boy" when they were insulting him. A familiar anger rose up.

The four horses pawed at the ground.

Kamùji's eyes widened and he looked down. Then up. There was just a hint of fear in his eyes but a lot more growing anger.

A warm hand caught his. He looked to see that Fimúchi had grasped his fist. With all his willpower, he relaxed his fingers. "I'm sorry, Great Pabinkue Kamùji."

"You should head home, Boy."

Tsubàyo bowed while he kept his anger in check.

"I'll see you tomorrow," Fimúchi said cheerfully.

Tsubàyo looked at her in shock.

Kamùji sputtered. "What? No! How!"

"Oh," she said dismissively. "The problem with us farmers is that we are always messing up the schedule. You never know which of us Rojikinòmi is going to show up to what

field. Right? Besides, I want to hear more of his stories. I enjoyed them.”

She squeezed Tsubàyo’s hand before she stepped away. Both men watched as she gathered up the two work horses and lead them away.

Tsubàyo reached out with his mind and said goodbye to Jibòpu and Gokunàe.

They sent partings back before lugging the now empty wagon down the street.

“That girl always fights to get her way,” muttered Kamùji.

Tsubàyo decided to keep his mouth shut.

“I could put you on sentry duty for the rest of your life to keep you away from her.”

He tensed, the anger starting to show in his clenched fist.

“But it wouldn’t matter, would it.” Kamùji muttered. “Like a moon-damned weed, she would find some way to spend time with you until she gets what she needs.”

Surprised, Tsubàyo turned and looked at his new clan leader. “Great Pabinkue Kamùji?”

Kamùji shook his head before he looked down at Tsubàyo. “You killed a good woman, Boy.”

“I know.”

“I don’t know why Pabinkúe choose you but I suspect I’m going to find out sooner or later. That doesn’t mean me or the rest of the clan is going to accept you with open arms. Not tomorrow, maybe not ever. You are a stranger and a murderer, don’t you forget it.”

Tsubàyo nodded. “I know. I should have never stolen that horse.” Or killed the woman riding it. It was a moment of anger and desire that drove him and he could never get the blood off his hands for that one moment in his life.

Kamùji sighed. “Keep to your schedule. Let her measure out your character. Maybe she can see the good that I can’t.”

With a grunt, Kamùji turned and headed back for the boulder. “If you hurt her, though, I will have your organs ripped out of your stomach and stretched across this field for fertilizer.”

Before Tsubàyo could respond, Kamùji and Zukejùfa plunged into the boulder and were gone.

Tsubàyo shivered at the threat and then turned to look across the field he had helped plant. Stories about Fimúchi growing up danced across his mind and he smiled. She showed him a world of peace and prosperity, two things he had never had when he was growing up. His clan may hate him, but he could see that there were some good things in his new home.

Buoyed by the hope for the future, he mounted Ryachui-kùo and headed home.

By the time he reached the stable, it was getting close to morning. The old woman was still there. She sat on her customary spot on a hale bay, smoking a pipe and staring at the moon. When he stopped in front of her, she slid off and held out her hand.

Tsubàyo dismounted and bowed to her. “Good evening, Great Pabinkue Maporéku,” he said and tensed for the insulting reply.

She only grunted as she took the horse into the stable. He started to follow but she stopped and held up her hand. “Let this old lady take care of Great Pabinkue Ryachuikùo. You take that basket and go home.”

He looked where she pointed. There was a basket on the hay bale. Curious, he peered inside it. The smell of roasted meat, sharp cheese, and fresh bread rose up. It was warm, probably the hottest meal he had since he arrived. He sniffed again and let a smile paint itself across his face.

“Thank you.”

“Thank Fimúchi, not me.” The old woman lead Ryachui-kùo a few steps and then stopped. Then, she turned and let out a long sigh. “Have a good night, Great Pabinkue Tsubàyo.”

Stunned, Tsubàyo couldn't say anything. Maporéku had not said a pleasant word toward him since he arrived. He took the basket and left without another word.

At home, he went inside and set down the basket on the table. It clinked against something. Curious, he peered around to where someone had brought some flowers in a vase. His black board had been moved from the wall to the table. On it, there was a new item written under the next night's sentry duty.

“Dinner with Fimúchi.”

D. Moonfire

About D. Moonfire

D. Moonfire is the remarkable intersection of a computer nerd and a scientist. He inherited a desire for learning, endless curiosity, and a talent for being a polymath from both of his parents. Instead of focusing on a single genre, he writes stories and novels in many different settings ranging from fantasy to science fiction. He also throws in the occasional romance or forensics murder mystery to mix things up.

In addition to having a borderline unhealthy obsession with the written word, he is also a developer who loves to code as much as he loves writing.

He lives near Cedar Rapids, Iowa with his wife, numerous pet computers, and a pair of highly mobile things of the male variety.

You can see more work by D. Moonfire at his website at <https://d.moonfire.us/>. His fantasy world, Fedran, can be found at <https://fedran.com/>.

D. Moonfire

Fedran

Fedran is a world caught on the cusp of two great ages.

For centuries, the Crystal Age shaped society through the exploration of magic. Every creature had the ability to affect the world using talents and spells. The only limitation was imagination, will, and the inescapable rules of resonance. But as society grew more civilized, magic became less reliable and weaker.

When an unexpected epiphany seemingly breaks the laws of resonance, everything changed. Artifacts no longer exploded when exposed to spells, but only if they were wrapped in cocoons of steel and brass. The humble fire rune becomes the fuel for new devices, ones powered by steam and pressure. These machines herald the birth of a new age, the Industrial Age.

Now, the powers of the old age struggle against the onslaught of new technologies and an alien way of approaching magic. Either the world will adapt or it will be washed away in the relentless march of innovation.

To explore the world of Fedran, check out <https://fedran.com/>. There you'll find stories, novels, character write-ups and more.

D. Moonfire

License

This book is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license. More info can be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>. This means:

You are free to:

- Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner,

but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

- NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

Preferred Attribution

The preferred attribution for this novel is:

“Hard Work Into the Evening” by D. Moonfire is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

In the above attribution, use the following links:

- Flight of the Scions: <https://fedran.com/hard-work-into-the-evening/>
- D. Moonfire: <https://d.moonfire.us/>
- CC BY-NC-SA 4.0: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>