

Featured Felines: Miscellany 23 (2024)

(page checked July 2026)

Ihara Misao and her cat Fukumaru Shiba Prefecture, Japan



In 2000 photographer Ihara Miyoko started to chronicle in photos the ordinary daily life of her grandmother, Ihara Misao, with whom she lived in a rural spot on the Boso peninsula in Shiba Prefecture, not far east of Tokyo . Three years later a stray cat gave birth to an all-white male kitten in a barn on their property, and he was soon adopted into the family. Named **Fukumaru**, he formed a close bond with Miaso and the two became inseparable companions. Both being somewhat hard of hearing, they would often look into each other's eyes, no doubt strengthening their bond.



Miyoko was struck by the tranquillity of her grandmother's way of life. 'When I see the way she lives,' she said, 'I really feel that she has a kind of strength that our generation simply can't match. She gets up with the sun and goes to bed when it sets. She loves her cat and the vegetables in her field like her own children. If her vegetables come out well, she's happy; she doesn't have to worry about questions like, "What's the point of my work?" Her way of life fills me with admiration and a sort of envy.'



Following the disastrous tsunami that hit Japan in March 2011, Miyoko felt a sense of the impermanence of life and more than ever wanted to record her grandmother's life for posterity. Despite by then being in her late 80s, Misao continued to work daily in her fields, with Fukumaru always at her side, happy and contented.

Miyoko's photographic activities led to the publication later that year of a book of some of her photos of Misao and Fukumaru. Entitled 'Misao the Big Mama and Fukumaru the Cat', and published by Little More Books, it took Japan by storm and was well-received elsewhere too. There was also an edition with black-and-white images, called 'Misao the Big Mama and Fukumaru the Cat: Goodbye Hello.'

Fukumaru died aged just 11 from kidney failure, so assuming he was born in 2003 that would have been in 2014.





[Nippon](#) (May 2012) | [Little More Books](#) (*undated – archived copy*) | [Aramajapan](#) (?2014 – death)
Ihara Miyoko had a Facebook page, but it's no longer available.

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