

## Blank White Rice: E-mail with Mari Mukai

### **How do you feel about, according to the *Secret Language of Birthday* book, that you are born on the same day with Madonna? (Ei)**

Listen to this. Or read this. According to the Birthday book thing, it says, "Those born on August 16 are full-bodied sensualists who knows how to get their way. Yet in everything they do, there is a sense of refinement, of style, of highly magnetic attractiveness which endears them to most people". It is so Madonna. The book also says, "[they] are often hypersensitive, electrically nervous type" and "can be quite destructive to others when they set their mind to it". I could totally relate myself to that.

On sharing the same birth date with Madonna, I don't think we are the same type. Her image is "self-inventor" but I am not. I was always good at controlling people's opinions. I sound such a meaner but this is true. I've always wondered how come other people don't do this. It will make their lives so much easier. I've noticed my skill when I organized boycotting midday nap at my elementary school. I wasn't the leader type, but whenever I wanted to control people around me, I knew the way to do it.

If there's such thing as "Leo Women", as the book puts it, I think she has a fierce temper that I have, but mine doesn't come out that often. I mean, not to girls, I should say. You can ask my girlfriends and they will all agree that I am the "mellow one", but to guys I have no tolerance or whatsoever. Not just men who I date, but even to my friends. I can't help it. Girls need to be treated nice. Does this put me in sexist category? Also, the book said "August 16 seek to triumph over [opposing points of view] and in certain extreme cases DESTROY THOSE WHOM AS ENERMIES". wow. The only people I felt like I had to destroy in last six years were NOBITA, and recently Kuroda-san.

### **After you published your first book, somehow I felt some difference in you, in the way you speaking. Is this related to your mind-set as a writer**

I think the change started slowly during my last semester at Brooklyn College. I don't know exactly how to put it, but that's when I started to realize that my life needed to be geared to the different direction, because I will no longer be my parents' schnorrer, and I needed to be independent and decide what I wanted to do with my life. This sounds so weird writing it. I feel like I'm at a job interview and

pretending to be someone that I am not. I guess I was still enjoying the finally-out-of-my-three-years-in-boarding-school freedom, if I may say it, and was just a rotten spoiled child. I mean, you know me. I changed four schools and six majors during those six years, and got my visa situation really bad. When it comes down to it, it might as well be said that my U.S. life was concentrated on how to hide my living situation from my parents and how to deceive them. I didn't do drugs, nor had crazy parties, but if my parents find out, it will have the same affect on them. I feel so guilty reading what I just wrote. I can never repay my parents...!

**When you can't start to write at night, you continuously type "Shiroi-Gohan" (White rice) on a page again and again. How long you've been doing that? It has to be in Japanese (Shiroi Gohan)?**

I can't put exact date on when I started writing that words, I am guessing in my college year. And it always had to be in Japanese. There are obvious similarities in a bowl of white rice and a piece of blanc paper. They are the base of what I am going to do (eat/write), in the most primitive form. I can type whatever I want, or I can add any flavors I want. I used to think this is coming from my obsession with food. I tried that evil Atkins diet thing, and didn't eat any carbohydrate for two weeks. My body's reaction to white rice was overwhelming. I think I ate three cups of rice at once (approximately serves for seven people). When I was a child, my parent forbid to eat syoyu-gohan. they thought it was ghetto. I loved it. I still remember sneaking into the kitchen with my cousin and ate bowls of rice with just soy source. Here's another memory. Eriko and I used to cook lords of rice in our high school dormitory after school, and ate just rice with furikake. That was fun. we still talk about it. Don't you agree that the word 白いご飯 possesses some kind of power or energy?