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Engelke

Samurai by Hisako Matsubara (New York Times: \$9.95). The irony of the title of this compact novel set in Japan in the early years of this century does not strike the reader until after reaching its emotional conclusion, a peak achieved through economical but accumulative means. In Ruth Hein's translation (from the original German), Matsubara draws us into the story slowly but powerfully—then drops the ending like an ax. A tight and resonant performance.

—DANIEL CARIAGA