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author's note

This short contains adult and objectionable themes. It is not suitable for the weak of heart, or those who are offended easily. Please do not read on if there is a chance you will find it so sickening that you throw up.

For everyone else, don't say you weren't warned ...

Also, if you are unfamiliar with Japanese naming systems and honourifics, that and other [bits of knowledge](#) are available at the end.

noooooo!

The scream echoes its way down the cold, empty corridors, unheard above the racket of generators nearby. There are no other noises in the basement hallway, but—ever so softly—strange muffled sounds come from the room marked with a star.

In this spacious room, a dressing room, a lamp lies on its side, still emitting a soft yellow glow. Clothes are haphazardly thrown about the place; entirely regular, human items lie where they fell, broken and neglected. This spot, right here, is where the screamer first screamed.

She is lying on the floor, as haphazardly (and possibly as broken) as all the other things contained here. One foot is without its heel, her small, socked toes pressing against the dresser table. She sports a pair of standard black trousers, hips rigidly raised, muscles trembling slightly. Her slim-fitting white shirt is torn; a hint of lightly tanned skin exposed underneath. The silhouette of a white bra, controlling her modest breasts, can be seen. Her knuckles are drained of humanly colour, clutching in pantomime by her throat. She has a petit, oval-shaped face, with a small but sharp nose, high cheekbones, and shoulder-length black hair. Pretty eyes, wide as saucers, look as if they are bulging from her head. Her mouth ... can't be seen; something is obscuring the lower half of her face.

Staring hard, I realise it is me. I am covering her mouth. I pause, confused, slightly dazed. I struggle with the alien concept of this situation, and how I fit into it. Disjointed fragments of memories form together and fall apart. I slowly peel my (is that really mine?) hand away from her mouth. Her hands loosen their grip and she coughs and wheezes for about half a minute. Her hips

lower their defenses, legs curling up towards her chest as she claws for air.

I sit on my haunches, still trying to make sense of it all. I am sweaty. I am vaguely aroused—given the circumstances, this may be misinterpreted in a very bad way—though it *could* be from exertion, right? Tears form at the edges of the girl's eyes.

I take a deep breath in, and hold it there, as if I were savouring a fine wine. Firstly, a thought hits me, and I speak it aloud, softly and slowly:

“You ... aren't—”

Secondly, something heavy hits me, on the back of my head.

I had wanted to say, ‘you aren't Natsuki Ayame-chan.’

four weeks earlier,

Detective Hasegawa peers into the dimly lit confines of a run-of-the-mill *Kabukichō* brothel. ‘Another dead whore,’ he tuts. The room smells of stale piss. Faded red paint is scarred by cracks in the walls. Windows are painted black, only the scratches letting small shafts of light through. A heavily stained red carpet. Dirty gray mattress, filthy gray sheets.

For the past six weeks, he alone has been assigned the seemingly impossible task of finding a serial prostitute killer. ‘Serial,’ his Captain calls it, though is three really serial? Hasegawa shakes his head; I’m getting cynical with age, he thinks. With the call of a third this morning, and

six weeks without any strong leads, the Captain decided to assign a green detective to help him out. Suzuki, he thinks. Or was it Sasaki?

“8.55am, May 14. ‘Flowering Blossom Motel,’ address is 2-19-15 *Kabukichō, Shinjuku*. Third floor, room 312. No sign of forced entry via the front door or main room window. Large, suspicious mark on the floor by the bed, looks like it could be—”

“Please, detective, would you mind taking notes later?” Hasegawa cuts the rookie off through clenched teeth, her quips already bothering him, so early in the day. Honestly, he sighs to himself, can’t young people just *remember* things anymore?

“Sorry, Hasegawa-senpai,” she apologises, pocketing the Dictaphone, and bowing slightly to Hasegawa’s back.

Silently, they look over the room. She’s right; there’s no evidence of forced entry anywhere. A dirty room, with a dirty bed, a dirty bedside table, and a dirty hooker. A dirty, dead hooker. He gives her a quick once-over, not really expecting to find anything new.

'3' has a slim build, approximately 5'5" tall, shoulder-blade length hair, dyed blood red. Tattoo of phoenix on ankle. Red welts along calves and thighs, same sticky residue as on hookers '1' and '2.' A fading indent where her panties sat on her hips. More red welts along torso and arms, more sticky residue. The bruising on her throat—if it's the same as the first two—came *from the inside*. Glassy hazel-coloured eyes stare blankly at the dirty ceiling.

"Sasaki—"

"Suzuki, sir. Suzuki Maya," she answers.

"Suzuki, what can you tell me about the cause of death?"

She stares almost in awe at the body, making mental notes, shaking her head slightly as she rules out options. Her eyes fix on the hair, and she asks:

"Is that blood in her hair?"

"Is it?" Hasegawa parries with a question.

Her eyes cast downwards; the shoulders, the chest, the stomach. Suzuki lets out an involuntary gasp.

"Is her ... body torn in two?"

“Yes Suzuki, her body is torn in two.”

After she leaves to throw up, the two detectives spend the next couple of hours in precisely the same manner:

- i. Hasegawa surveys a section;
- ii. Once he forms a conclusion, he asks Suzuki what she thinks; and
- iii. Hasegawa grunts slightly and nods.

The estimated time of death was between 1.00am and 5.00am, May 14. Being a weeknight, business was fairly slow, and ‘3’ didn’t have a client since 1.00am, when her last had left. She died of blood loss, from what seems to be a large blunt object being wedged into her uterus, entering from her vagina, expanding to the point where it tore her flesh, and effectively cleaved her in two.

There is an open window in the bathroom, where the detectives conclude the killer entered and exited the room. From the third floor. There are no visible signs of shoeprints, and there are too many fingerprints to match to anyone. A sample of the sticky residue will be taken for testing, but it will come up the same as the others.

Another dead end.

seven weeks before that,

I come home from work to an empty flat. I press play on the answering machine, but barely stop to listen. Groping my way through the darkness, I open the fridge door and take out a can of beer. 10.00pm. I need a new job. Yeah, one with less stress, but more pay. I chuckle to nobody in particular.

Taking out a spare beer, I head for the lounge room, throw myself onto the couch, and turn on the television. The music channel is doing a special set on an idol's debut album. Natsuki Ayame. There aren't enough girls like that in Tokyo.

In short, the girl is a dream. Slim build, pert breasts, tanned skin, tight ass, and a face far too cute to *bukkake* on. She's a good girl, which makes it even better—not one of the promiscuous 'idols' who gyrate around, wearing next to nothing, for the entire world to see.

While she sits alongside the host, in a cream-coloured Audrey Hepburn coat, aubergine-coloured blouse and gray pinstripe trousers, I wonder what she's really like, out of the spotlight. Is she that cute, bubbly and funny normally? Or is it all an act? What does she do on the weekends, or when she gets home from work?

I drift into a quasi-sleep, only just conscious enough to still hear the television, but my mind is already dreaming (or fantasising?) about Natsuki Ayame-chan, and what it'd be like to meet her, become her boyfriend, and for us to fall in love with each other. If only ...

—

Waking up with a start, my heart nearly bursts from my chest. I could've sworn I heard something. I check my watch: 1.13am. My head begins the ritual of throbbing in pain, a reminder that I haven't slept enough. I stand up

and cautiously take step by step; did it come from the kitchen?

There, illuminated by the light of the pale moon, is a fucking gremlin, scoffing a pack of *wasabi* peas. I stop in my tracks, staring hard at the blob, feeling for the light switch. The fluorescent tube buzzes for a couple of seconds, and then floods the room with harsh white light.

“... what the ... fuck?” is all I manage to exclaim.

It’s not a dog. It’s not a fat, dark kid. It’s not even a fox. Whatever it is, it’s ugly as sin, this *thing*, four feet tall, completely naked, covered in what I can only assume are gray-purplish bruises, short stubby arms, short stubby legs, mangy black hair, and a caved-in face. Oh, and a terrifyingly massive set of testicles. Is it a midget that’s been badly beaten up because of his hypergonadism? I suddenly think of coconuts.

Shaking myself out of my bewilderment, I adopt the *yakuza* gangland approach: bash first, ask questions later. One can never be too careful, living in this neighbourhood. I run up to the midget and kick him as hard, and as fast as I can, right into his dangling melon sack.

I kick a few more times, until it stops groaning and moving—except for a twitch here and there. Taking this chance, I stomp over fallen *wasabi* pea comrades, pick up the disgusting creature and throw it into the pantry. I hold the door closed with my back, lowering myself to the ground.

My hands are shaking as I pull a pack of cigarettes out of my trouser pocket, light one up on the third try, and fish for my mobile phone. 110. Taking deep breaths to calm myself down, I explain carefully and clearly that an ‘intruder’ broke into my apartment, but I subdued and have locked him in my pantry.

I don’t mention the testicles.

thirteen minutes later,

Hasegawa knocks on the door of an apartment, in response to an emergency call placed by one Ueda Ken'ichi. Standard fare intruder breaking and entering, but when the Captain tells you to check things out, you check things out.

“Ueda Ken'ichi-san? Detective Hasegawa here, you placed an emergency call about an intruder?”

“Yes officer, please come in. I managed to lock him in my pantry—jammed it shut with a chair. Just ... don't be surprised at his appearance.”

“His appearance?” Hasegawa repeats, following Ueda through the lounge into the kitchen.

“Oh, well, I may have ... injured him ... when defending myself.”

Hasegawa only grunts, seemingly uninterested. He unclips a *tonfa* from his belt, and carefully removes the chair. He clears his throat, and knocks on the door. A minute passes, but no sound comes from the pantry. Hasegawa turns to look at Ueda, who shrugs sheepishly.

“This is Detective Hasegawa from the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. When I open the door, I want you to walk out slowly, with your hands on your head. Do you understand?”

With no reply, Hasegawa steadily opens the door, side-on to the doorframe, ready for a confrontation. It takes a moment for his eyes to adjust to the darkness, but once he inspects the pantry, there’s nothing in there. Not besides food, anyway.

“Is this some kind of joke?” Hasegawa accuses.

“N-No, I swear! He was in there! Shit, he got out!”

Hasegawa and Ueda search the tiny apartment top to bottom, finding nothing. Just an open window in the bathroom. Hasegawa turns his tired eyes on Ueda, wondering if this was some stupid prank. He looks genuinely worried though, Hasegawa thinks. Ueda nervously goes over the details of the incident again.

“I woke up when I heard banging in the kitchen ... I walk in, turn the lights on, and there he is! I freak out, rush him and beat him to the ground. Then I throw him into the pantry and shut it with a chair. That’s when I called you guys. I mean, what if he was some kind of pervert? Like, a *sodomiser*? He had to have been a pervert, right? What kind of ugly purple midget-leprechaun—with huge balls, by the way—walks around naked?!”

Shock. Silence. Suspicion.

“You never mentioned you saw a ... purple midget-leprechaun, Ueda-san, in your emergency call. Nor that he was naked, or had ... large, umm, testes.

“Are you *sure* you saw someone at all? Perhaps you were simply having a bad dream, or need to refill some kind of prescription.”

Hasegawa checks in with dispatch, citing a false alarm. He sighs, giving the apartment one last glance, and tells Ueda to go to sleep, and not to waste the time of the police.

—

Hasegawa looks back at the apartment block, halfway to his car. Something's not quite right with him, he thinks. His peculiar description of the intruder ... something's definitely not right.

Looking around, he can see nothing but darkness punctured by a few streetlamps. He gets in his car and drives away.

six months before that,

a pretty girl strolls into the Womb Nightclub in *Maruyamachō*. She's wearing mid-calf-high tan leather boots over a pair of dark indigo stovepipe jeans, a black military jacket and matching military cap, with a simple ponytail peeking out behind her.

She finds a seat at the slightly quieter end by the bar, and orders a vodka & lemonade. The bartender gives her a knowing nod; she's been a regular since the big production crew started filming down the street. He leans in and asks if she'd like to head on into the VIP lounge, but she smiles happily at him and declines politely.

“Thank you for your hospitality ... but tonight, I feel like soaking up some of the energy here.”

“Long day, miss?” he asks.

“Yes, but it’s okay. I am tough!”

“Alright, let me know me if you need anything at all, okay?”

“Okay!”

Her name is Natsuki Ayame. They’re currently shooting her new blockbuster film, *Pinch is Chance!*, due to be released with the launch of her debut album. A superstar, an idol. That said, she does a very good job of looking like just another girl at a club. Looking at her in this light, she really is.

At the same time, a man leans over the bar and orders a bourbon & coke. He glances at her and smiles. He’s a few years older than she is, the rugged stubble kind of look, which clashes a little with the charcoal silk business shirt, Mont Blanc cufflinks, black suit pants and Gucci loafers. He’s about to hit on her; she can tell.

“Evening, miss.”

She smiles politely at him, and says hello back. She takes a few sips of her drink, trying her best to politely ignore him, when he starts chatting. What's your name, where are you from, that sort of thing. Slightly uncomfortably, she starts to tell him that she's waiting for a friend (a small lie,) when she begins to feel nauseous.

Her head spins, and a tingle of fear streaks down her spine. She tries to speak, but can only manage a few stammers. A cold sweat breaks out on her skin, and it feels as if a washing machine is spinning in her stomach. She tries to get up, to head for the bathroom—

“Oya, miss, are you alright?!” the bartender exclaims, seeing her nearly topple.

“Hey, slow down, you look ill,” Mr. Bourbon & Coke grabs a hold of her waist; “I'll help you to the toilets.”

She shuffles her way through a throng of people, mostly propped up by a stranger she didn't even want to meet. Once they reach the bathroom doors, she pushes her body weight in and rushes for a stall. She looks back and sees him, staring blankly, as the door creaks shut.

She locks herself in the closest available toilet, and heaves a sigh of relief. Was her drink spiked? She takes her cap off and leans her face over the toilet bowl, ready to throw up, hoping to god she's okay.

—

She wakes up with a groan, her head leaning awkwardly by the toilet base. What happened? She remembers finishing work. Walking to the club. She had a drink at the bar. A man tried to hit on her. Things started getting fuzzy from there. She tries to move her arms, to sit herself up, but they barely respond.

The sound of a belt unfastening, *click whirr*. The sound of a button being undone, *pop*. Another button, *pop*. Another button, *pop*. Rough hands pulling at the edges of jeans, slowly yet surely dragging them down.

Her eyes snap open, and through the blur, she sees Mr. Bourbon & Coke. She gasps for air and begins to let out a scream, when he punches her in the nose and mouth. Blood begins to drip out, and she chokes out a barely-audible wail.

He smiles at her again; the same way he smiled at her by the bar. He lightly runs his fingers along the front of her panties—as if savouring the feeling—before pulling them down: slowly yet surely. His eyes light up at the small triangle of trimmed hair, pushing her knees apart easily, while she fights with all her energy to keep them clamped shut.

He runs his finger along her, torturing her, as she squirms feebly away from his touch. Then, without warning, he pushes his finger inside. She screams in her mind, because she can't scream in this bathroom, at this crime, against this man. He removes his hand to unbuckle his trousers, hastily removing his clothing to expose the weapon that, right now, she fears the most.

Crawling closer, he presses his already hard dick against her, and violently pushes his way in. She makes a series of coughs and gulps, a little like a fish out of water, before he clamps his hand over her mouth. It feels like a burning rod is being stabbed into her, again and again, tearing her insides.

She begins to cry, tears rolling down her cheeks like sad little raindrops, and at this exact point, she hates this

man, this world, and herself. She hates everything. The nauseousness builds up again, and she throws up through his hand. She's almost glad when she passes out again.

She wakes up a day later, in the hospital. Her sister is there—stifling sobs while listening to the doctor—intermittently losing composure and breaking down in tears. She groggily lolls her head forward to try and hear better:

“... there was significant damage to the reproductive system, but we managed to get her stable. She's lost a lot of blood. Physically, she'll be fine. The ... knife wounds, they will leave a scar though.”

She feels numb, while her sister cries.

“We can talk about counselling later, when she's feeling up to it. Until then, we'll be sure to take care of her. Again, I'm terribly sorry.”

The doctor humbly bows on his way out. The next day, Natsuki Ayame's sister catches her on the rooftop of the hospital, before she makes it over the edge. She is

transferred to the psychiatric ward for trauma-related depression.

Two months later, Natsuki Ayame is discharged, and goes to live with her sister. The next day, Natsuki Ayame's sister finds her in the bathtub; deep vertical cuts from wrist bone to elbow. An ambulance takes her away, but her heart stops en route to the hospital. Miraculously, after four minutes of being pronounced dead, Natsuki Ayame comes back to life.

Two months later, Natsuki Ayame is discharged, and goes back to her own apartment. The next day, she finds herself awake, after swallowing a bottle of aspirin. The day after, she finds herself alive, after hanging by her neck for over half an hour.

Natsuki Ayame is faced with the predicament of life, when all she wants is to die. She cannot die. She is cursed.

two months later,

I light up another cigarette after Hasegawa leaves, hinting that I was a lunatic and needed medication. I know what I saw, and it wasn't a dream, or a hallucination, or whatever. I'm not even on any medication. Wait a second; does that mean I should be? I ponder this for a few more minutes, until fatigue forces sleep to take over.

—

Sun shines down on my face, waking me from my slumber. Jolly good—I haven't been murdered in my sleep by an ass-raping purple midget. My mouth is really dry; I feel like a withered husk. Slowly getting up, I trudge to

the sink and drink from the tap. I notice my hands are really dry too; in fact, my skin everywhere is really dry. Cracks form everywhere, making little scales of flaking skin. Foraging through my medicine cabinet, all I can find is an old bottle of sunscreen. It's the closest thing to moisturiser, so I slap it on thick, all over my body.

I call in sick and spend the day making trips to the pharmacy and back, spreading my body with a film of moisturiser. I feel like perpetually buttered bread. By evening, my hands have swollen considerably and turned pink. Fearing the worst—that is, I am infected by a sodomising midget leprechaun, and only a few shades away from purple—I reach for a phone to call an ambulance.

It all goes pear-shaped when my fingers have swollen too much to press the buttons. I angrily pitch my phone against the wall, and get up to drive myself to the hospital, when searing pain invades every inch of my body. My legs are frozen; my chest is on fire; my arms are being yanked from their sockets. Everything goes red as I pass out.

I dream about coconuts.

When I manage to wake again, I don't feel too bad. My head feels a bit like it's wrapped in cotton wool, but the unspeakable pain is gone. There's a spill down my shirt that I can only assume is vomit, though it's oddly black in colour.

As I try to brush the black substance off, a shiver runs through my fingers. No, they're not my fingers, are they? They're far longer than my fingers were. I don't remember them being red, either. Intently inspecting my hands, I notice little raised discs on the underside. They almost look like ... but they can't be.

Slowly, I make fists of both my hands. When I do, my entire body spasms and shudders, and I fall to the floor, panting and gasping. What was that? It felt like ... intense pleasure. So intense it hurt. Warmth spreads through my nether region. I delicately undo my pants, trickles of concentrated sensation forcing me to gasp for air.

Desire overtakes me; I grab at my erect penis, reveling in the pleasure flowing from both it and my hands. It grows with a mind of its own, a foot in length and still not stopping. It turns bright red, and starts to ooze a black viscous fluid. The raised discs fasten onto my penis, like

wet little suckers, each massaging a spot. It doesn't take long before a torrent of sticky black goo shoots out as I orgasm.

Unable to move, I kneel there, chest heaving, my mind light and fuzzy. I can't think about anything, only about the pleasure. I want to touch somebody. Anybody will do. I can't think anymore. Nothing else matters.

eleven weeks later,

Detectives Hasegawa and Suzuki are sitting in an unmarked car outside of Ueda's apartment building, waiting for him to leave the house. Suzuki hasn't yet asked why they're on stakeout here; she knows Hasegawa-senpai has a hunch, and as a junior, she should keep quiet and pay attention. All she knows is:

For the past two months, they've sat in this car. Watching. Waiting. Ueda rarely comes home; he must be some kind of *salaryman*, in a job that requires a lot of travel. When he does come home, it's only for a day or two, and then he's out the door again. Pretty much every time it's to Narita Airport, and nearly every time he's

boarded a flight to Thailand. Yesterday, Ueda came home from a weeklong trip. He's been inside ever since.

Their case has gone cold; they have no leads, no suspects, no witnesses. Nobody cares about a few dead prostitutes. Suzuki looks off into the distance, almost in a daze, trying to piece all the events together. Just one clue will do. Actually, anything at all will do.

A phone buzzes; Suzuki looks at the display: her sister. She looks up at Ueda's apartment, but no lights are on. Hasegawa grunts and half-nods in her direction; answer it, he gestures. She apologises and takes the call, quietly slipping outside to walk down the street.

"Nee-chan? Are you alright, what's the matter?"

"Sorry, Maya. I just ... do you think you could come visit me? I'm not sure what to do."

"Umm, yes—of course, I'm working at the moment but tell me where you are and I'll leave straight away."

Suzuki nods, and says yes several times, then says she'll be there in half an hour. When she tells Hasegawa, he *hmmms* in acknowledgement, and tells her to get in.

“Ueda’s not budging. For all we know, he’s not even the one. I’ll drop you and come back.”

Suzuki shakes her head, but smiles and thanks him.

“Thanks for the offer, but what if something happens while we’re gone? Besides, walking will be faster. Don’t worry; you stay here, I’ll be fine. Call me if anything happens. Oh, and thanks again, Hasegawa-senpai.”

With that settled, Suzuki walks briskly towards the Tokyo Midtown shopping complex. She heads down to the basement, until she finds several bodyguards blocking her path.

“Let her through. She’s my sister,” a familiar voice calls out, “did you even look at her? Please leave us. We will be fine alone. We’ll be back stage in an hour.”

“We’re very sorry for not realising, Natsuki-sama, and ... Natsuki’s sister. We’ll head upstairs right away.”

—

“I still find it weird to hear you being called that,” Suzuki complains.

“It’s just an idol name, Maya. Everyone has one.”

Suzuki smiles meekly, following her sister into her room. A long rack takes up one wall, packed with clothes. A makeshift dresser table has been set up, where a lamp provides a soft yellow glow. In the corner sits two empty suitcases, stacked neatly in front of a fridge.

“Why are you here, sis?” Suzuki wonders aloud.

“Everyone thinks I’m in the back stage area at Billboard Live, up on the fourth floor. No diehard fans are looking for me here. It’s just a break room, actually—has a bath in it, though ... I’m sorry for dragging you out here, Maya.”

“Talk to me—we can fix it, I’m sure we can.”

“I’m announcing at the end of this gig that I’m quitting show business. I thought I could get back into it, somehow ... to live my days normally ... but it’s just not working. I don’t know what to do or where to go, or why even. I still don’t see the point in it all.

“I hate this world, Maya. I want to end my life ... end it all ... but I can’t. I just want to die—why can’t I die—why won’t god just let me leave?”

Natsuki begins to cry, tremors wreaking through her like an earthquake. She grasps at her abdomen, digging her nails in, trying to rip out all the parts he touched. All the parts he fouled. Red eyes drop clear tears, hitting the floor with the force of tiny atom bombs, creating a fallout of sorrow Suzuki can barely comprehend, let alone understand. She begins to cry too; holding onto her sister tightly, they cry like the day they were born.

Once they calm down enough, Suzuki wipes the tears from both their faces and forces Natsuki to have a bath. 'Bath, that's an order!' were the words, gently piloting her by the shoulders towards the bathroom. While the water fills, Suzuki gives her sister a head massage.

Natsuki removes her clothes and gingerly tip toes into the steaming water. After settling in, Suzuki ties up Natsuki's hair and gives her a kiss on the forehead. She gets up to leave, but warns Natsuki: 'no funny business.' She leaves the door open and takes a seat by the dresser table, where she can keep an eye on her beloved sister.

meanwhile ...

Hasegawa's eyes light up to match the lights in the apartment. Ueda's making a move. Within five minutes he's ready and out the door; but this time, he leaves on foot. Where is he going, Hasegawa wonders. He waits until Ueda hits the end of the street, before turning the engine on.

He crawls behind Ueda for several blocks, until rounding the corner onto the main highway. He curses; Suzuki was right. It's backed up with cars as far as he can see. He sits in gridlock for a minute, trying to keep an eye on Ueda, honking in the vain hope the traffic will move.

Giving up, he slams into reverse and chaotically parks in the closest available spot. He clambers out, stopping to take something from the glove box, and begins to follow on foot. They walk, some 30 metres apart, as if an invisible chain links hunter to prey. When Hasegawa notices the massive building Ueda walks into, he gives Suzuki a call. Her phone's turned off. He leaves her a message, and then grimly enters.

Before even making it through the doorway, Hasegawa had already lost the target. Everywhere he looks, the floor is flooded with people. Great, he thinks, a shopping centre. He hurriedly scans their faces, heading in the most general direction, before backtracking. Checking an info board, it says some pop concert is going to be on in under an hour.

Like a wild goose chase, Hasegawa quickly combs each floor, knowing that with every minute, the chances of finding Ueda again get slimmer. He reaches the fourth floor; the concert is here, at Billboard Live. Security stops

him several times, but a police badge is an all-access pass. Still, he turns up empty handed.

Shit, he thinks, and retraces his steps back to the ground floor. He hands a photo over to the man on duty at the security office, telling him to urgently put the word out for all guards to look for this man. Don't apprehend him though, Hasegawa adds, call me on this number if someone finds him.

He tries ringing Suzuki again—he could do with another pair of eyes to search. No luck; her phone still diverts to voicemail. He hangs up, deciding what to do next, when he hears a long, high-pitched noise. What was that, he asks out loud, to nobody in particular. He strains his ears to hear more, but nothing comes.

“What's in your basement?” he asks the officer.

“Just generators, janitors' storage, and a break room.”

“Any people?” Hasegawa asks.

“Perhaps a janitor?” the security officer guesses, not really knowing or caring too much.

Without another word, Hasegawa turns around and dashes away.

three minutes earlier,

a man stands outside a door, making sure the floor is empty. He leans in and takes several small sniffs, recognises something, and licks his lips hungrily. Then, as if slightly uncertain, he furrows his brow. He takes a couple more sniffs; makes doubly sure he's not seen; opens the door and lets himself in.

Sitting by a dresser table is a girl. She looks at him quizzically, her beautiful face framed by the soft glow of a lamp. She opens her mouth and her lips form words, but he can't hear what she's saying. All he can hear is the blood in his head pumping; faster, faster, *ba-domp, ba-domp*.

He takes a step towards her, then two. He balls his hands into fists, then uncurls, then repeats. Slowly, impossibly, his fingers begin to elongate, changing colour, until they drag along the ground behind him. The front of his pants begins to swell, farther and farther, until the material strains under the pressure and tears. He pushes them off his hips and steps out of them, revealing his engorged, red penis.

The girl's mouth opens in shock; sucking in air sharply, she lets out a blood-curdling scream. He rushes towards her, wrapping his distended fingers around her arms and body, pinning her to the floor. She curls up and lets loose, rapidly kicking him in the face and chest with everything she has. He crouches and closes the distance, immobilising each of her legs with a tendril-finger.

She begins to gasp for air, her hands grabbing at the tendrils wrapped around her mouth and throat. He looks at her closely, watching her suffocate. Then, strangely, he stops. He unravels himself from her, leaving both bewildered. His mouth opens, as if to speak, when something hard and heavy smashes into the back of his head.

Natsuki stands over the body of a man—no, a creature—completely naked, her perfect body still dripping with beads of bathwater. Perfect, except for the scars above her pubic region—her everlasting reminder of that one horrible night. Her breath comes in bursts, unsure of what to do next.

Finally, she drops next to her sister, cradling head upon naked lap. *Are you all right?* she whispers, *we need to go, can you stand?* Natsuki starts to help her sister up, when a whip-like object cracks through the air, hitting both girls across the chest. They're knocked off their feet, as the creature slowly stands up. Effortlessly, he ties both up, five fingers per girl. He stares at them in wonder.

“... Twin?” his gravelly voice murmurs.

His penis pulses in time to his racing heart, lust in his eyes. Like a pianist, he wriggles his fingers, the extended tips slithering across the girls' bodies. He tears the clothes from Suzuki, leaving her as naked as her sister.

They can only stare in disgust as his penis throbs, black seeping from its tip. With a grunt, it starts to tear down

the middle, the black liquid dripping to the floor, steaming and sizzling, until two separate penises stand erect, pulsing, oozing. He pulls them up, like marionette dolls, inching closer towards him.

“Noooo!” Natsuki screams. “L-Let her go, *monster!*”

Closer. With every beat, each one grows and grows.

“Don’t touch my sister, you bastard! You fucking bastard! Just leave her alone ... I’ll ... I’ll do whatever you want—I promise,” she pleads.

“*Nee-chan*, you can’t ... what are you saying? Don’t touch her either, Monster-san!”

The marionette sisters stop moving, only inches away. He peers at their faces, with their same eyes, nose, and mouth. The same slim bodies. The same soft skin. He sniffs at them, leaning into their exposed breasts, pressing his nose to each nipple of each sister. He lifts them higher, inspecting their genitals, then stops. He sniffs one.

“Nathuk ... Aya-cha ...” his words come out garbled, but the meaning rings through clearly.

“Y-Yes, that’s right. I’m Natsuki Ayame. Leave my sister alone. You can do what you want with me.”

He moves her over both penises, and drops her downwards. The breath is forced out of her. She groans involuntarily. The two heads fight and force their way past the opening of her vagina, stretching her painfully. She shudders, crying, as the long fingers suck onto her skin, pulling her down, shoving her onto the massive penises.

“No—no god—don’t, stop it! Stop hurting my sister!” but Suzuki’s cries do nothing except annoy him.

It makes a sickening crack as her head impacts the wall, and she blacks out instantly. He releases his suctioned hold on her. Instead, the five tendrils latch onto Natsuki. One fills her throat, causing her to gag and choke, as the suckers attach half a foot into her oesophagus, trembling at the feeling of her throat massaging his finger. Others coil around her breasts, pulling at her nipples, livid red welts appearing. One runs down her spine, feeling its way between her buttocks, and pokes into her anus. Her screams are muffled.

He pushes down harder; only half the length is in her body. Black oozes out, and the creature quakes with pleasure. The liquid helps him bury his penises into her, filling and stretching her to breaking point.

He begins to bob her up and down, in small short bursts to start with, lengthening after each down thrust. Her nails dig into her palms, breaking the skin. Her lips fade from pink to pale blue. Her eyes strain as if wanting to burst from her skull.

Minutes pass. Minutes that feel like hours; that feel like days; that feel like hell. Natsuki's skin around her vagina begins to tear, droplets of blood splattering on the floor. Her hip bones start to separate, parts breaking off from other parts, causing her to twitch uncontrollably.

Finally, with a growl, he stabs into her for the last time. He swells inside her, tearing the flesh all the way to her stomach, and a gush of black spurts out, mingling with blood. Panting, heaving, he slowly unravels his fingers, laying her on the floor. They begin to contract, back to his hands, until his fingers look almost normal.

Natsuki lets out a small wheeze, her breaths shallow and faint. The door creaks softly, Natsuki dazedly looks in its direction. The monster begins to turn his head too, following Natsuki's gaze, when three little lights spring out, accompanied split seconds later by three loud *poows*. Black

liquid splatters the surrounding area; the man crumbles to the floor.

Hasegawa kicks the corpse of the former Ueda Ken'ichi, before shaking Suzuki's still, naked frame. She comes to; he shrugs his coat off to cover her. Her eyes adjust to the scene in front of her, a scene from a horror movie. With a shriek she scrambles to her sister's side, cradling head upon naked lap. Natsuki looks up in a stupor, and smiles up at her twin sister.

"I'm glad ... I could do something to protect you, Maya. I ... love ... you."

"Nee-chan, I'm sorry, I'm so, so sorry ... I love you too, please don't die; please don't leave m—"

"I want to ... die—with you safe ... I can die happy."

Natsuki Ayame dies with a smile on her face. Suzuki cries for what seems like forever, refusing to let go of her sister's lifeless body.

sixteen days later,

Hasegawa sits in his lounge room, watching the news. It's 11.38pm. A glass of whiskey sits in his hand, the ice slowly melting. His Captain is on the television; the case of the century solved by one of his, a detective named Hasegawa. In cooperation with the Thai authorities, a total of 34 murdered prostitutes have been identified, making Ueda Ken'ichi the deadliest serial killer in Japanese history. Hasegawa has been given a medal for his work.

34 prostitutes, Hasegawa thinks—and one idol. The other half to Suzuki Maya. He sighs and empties his glass, at least a bit past drunk. How many could have been

saved, he wonders. How many girls would be alive, if it weren't for me?

From the shadows behind Hasegawa a figure emerges. It's short, very short. It croaks softly: "You got what you wanted, right?"

Yes, Hasegawa thinks, but not like this. I didn't want it like this.

"We made a deal, though. I gave you what you wished for. You said it yourself: you'd give your soul to solve one last great case before you retire."

Hasegawa sits in silence.

"The problem, you see," the leprechaun continues, "is that what's mine is covered in all this ... flesh. It can't be helped; I'll have to take it out."

Hasegawa doesn't make a sound as sharp teeth bite into his neck, ripping meat from bone, spraying blood across the room, burrowing deeper and deeper, until he sighs his last, penitent breath.

things you may already know

names

In Japan (and most Asian languages,) the family name comes first, and—unless it's a close relationship—one will pretty much always be called by this name.

In close relationships, a given name can be used.

With family relationships there are different ways to call brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandfathers etc. Suzuki calls her sister '*nee-chan*,' (informally dropping the

polite ‘o’) with the close *-chan* suffix. From this, we infer she is very close to her sister.

honourifics

Honourifics in the Japanese naming system can come in many forms, usually to denote a relationship status, seniority (in age, work position or school year,) or deference (important people, royalty, etc.)

-chan suffix: usually reserved for informal, close relationships, but also someone senior may call a junior with this suffix (e.g. a lady to a young girl.)

-sama suffix: shows a great amount of respect and deference (e.g. a majorly powerful big boss will get called with this suffix by his underlings.)

-san suffix: the most stock-standard approach, has a good level of formality and respect.

-senpai suffix: used to denote seniority (e.g. a first-year student would call a second-year student with this suffix.)

In cases of very close relationships, a suffix can get dropped entirely (like how Natsuki only calls her sister by her given name.)

places

Kabukichō: an entertainment and red-light district in Shinjuku, Tokyo.

Shinjuku: one of the 23 special wards of Tokyo.

Womb Nightclub: an actual club in Maruyamachō, Shibuya.

Maruyamachō: a district in Shibuya, Tokyo.

Shibuya: one of the 23 special wards of Tokyo.

Tokyo Midtown shopping complex: an actual shopping centre in Akasaka, Minato. It is part of 'Tokyo Midtown,' a mixed-use development project including office, residential, commercial, hotel and leisure space.

Akasaka: a residential and commercial district in Minato, Tokyo.

Minato: one of the 23 special wards of Tokyo.

definitions

bukkake: a (fairly gross) sexual practice where a mass ejaculation occurs onto any part of the body (but usually the face.)

hypergonadism: a medical condition of abnormally increased functional activity of the gonads, with accelerated growth and precocious sexual development.

salaryman: a term for Japanese white-collar businessmen, refers to someone whose income is salary-based; particularly those working for corporations.

tonfa: a traditional Okinawan weapon from which the modern side-handled police baton is derived. In Japan, firearms are fairly restricted, so police officers are trained in martial arts.

wasabi: referred to as “Japanese horseradish,” it has an extremely strong flavour, much alike a hot mustard. It often is sold as a ready-to-use paste. Wasabi peas are peas that have been roasted with a coating of this paste.

yakuza: members of traditional organised crime groups in Japan.