

FLY BY NIGHT

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EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

Steel and concrete veins connect north and south west Honshu island, the mainland of Japan.

Along this moonlit highway, a vast unforgiving forest hides secrets best left buried.

No cars on the road.

Trash rises in the breeze. Rice crops make rows of blue lace-work on the ground.

A black CAR flies along the highway. Plates from a different prefecture.

INT. CAR TRUNK - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

JOE HORIUCHI (40s) wiry, athletic, used, unshaven, out of luck, comes to from the shot in his arm.

Hair matted with sweat, bruise colors his eye, dried blood cakes around his wounds.

Gagged. Rope binds his wrists in front of him.

He has no idea where he is.

Joe's breathing accelerates, his heartbeat echoes inside the trunk.

A muffled SCREAM, he SCREAMS again. He loses it, his bound hands move to the lid. He pounds on it.

His bound feet kick up at it. He cries. HYSTERICAL. His fingers claw at the lid, words we can't even imagine coming out his mouth

He exhausts himself.

JOE

Help me.

Tape deck kicks on. Muffled MUSIC plays. Joe halts his hysteria, listens. MUSIC gets louder.

He wipes his eyes, runs his hand down his face, sends the little boy back to where he came from.

Joe's back.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - FLASHFORWARD

DRIVER (40s) checks his watch, wears surgical gloves. Iranian, dark hair, mustache, solid build gives off a strong ex-military vibe.

A NOZZLE pokes through a crack in the back seat. WHOOSH! The car fills with WHITE FIRE RETARDANT, the driver, blind, coughs, gasps for air.

The driver wipes his eyes, his eyes widen.

In the rear view mirror Joe rises, covered in white powder, like a ghost.

Joe`s bound hands swing for the driver, a headlock. The car swerves. The driver wrenches his gun, through the dust covered windshield.

A TRUCK AHEAD. Too late to stop.

The driver SWINGS the wheel hard left, SLAMS ON THE BRAKES. Not in time.

The car clips the truck's right bumper. Tires screech, the car tips, FLIPS up, goes airborne.

METAL-CRUNCHING FLIPS send the car's undercarriage over and over and over.

Driver's driven forward by the force of the impact, a driver's side air bag, explodes, cushioning him.

The car CRASHES to a stop on the side of the highway.

Steam billows from the hood..

Silence.

Music picks back up.

(All conversations between Japanese nationals take place in the Japanese language).

JOE (O.S.)
Love hurts.

EXT. TOKYO - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Rain. Neon-drenched streets of a large red light district, eye-catching billboards vie for attention.

JOE (O.S)
 Few are spared agonies of intimate
 relationships.

Anonymous individuals under umbrellas float through a maze of
 bright lights, bars, pachinko parlors, touts and hustlers.

One does not.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Romance is shaped by how we imagine
 the range of our choices.

Joe disguised, like a thousand other businessmen, off-the-
 rack black suit, sensible shoes, a face made for anonymous
 middle management.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 These choices shape our choice of
 partner, the sense of worth given
 by relationships..

With a pocket video camera, he shadows TARO SUMIDA (50s),
 balding, overweight, another typical business man.

JOE (O.S) (CONT'D)
 ...the organization of our desires.

Trailing Taro, a GIRL (17), long legs, school uniform, short
 plaid mini skirt, long white loose fitting socks.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Choice. Choices are necessary.

Joe eyeballs the pair enter one door of a short-stay hotel, a
 nondescript exterior blends into Tokyo streets.

JOE (O.S) (CONT'D)
 It's important to secure choices.
 Evidence, adultery, violence.

A giggly couple fall out a separate door.

Camera viewfinder snaps shut, Joe backs into an alley takes
 cover from rain, he lights a cigarette, lingers.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Rain batters windows. JUNKO SUMIDA (50s), Taro's wife. Grey
 streaks, a timeless look, melancholy in her gaze. She stares
 at a laptop screen.

She watches her husband enter a love hotel with her daughter, MAO SUMIDA. Disbelief washes over her.

JOE
Our office is available to give
advice on such choices.

Junko, jolts back to reality by Joe's voice, hits the space bar, video pauses. She struggles for breath.

JUNKO
How's custody determined?

JOE
General practice is to award
custody to the mother...

JUNKO
Unless?

JOE
For detailed legal advice I suggest
you contact a lawyer.

Junko holds Joe's gaze.

JOE (CONT'D)
Unless there's an overriding reason
to award custody to the father.
Evidence needs to show a sexual
relationship existed, if not...

JUNKO
It's insufficient.

Joe doesn't answer.

JUNKO (CONT'D)
How long?

JOE
It's time stamped so you...

JUNKO
How long have they been doing this?

JOE (O.S)
Not a few weeks. Months!

INT. OFFICES - DAY

Small, ornately decorated, lacking in any clear theme. The office of a successful private investigator, however simply cosmetic.

Joe's shoulder wedges a phone to his ear.

JOE

Am I talking in a foreign language?
My payment, that's all! Hello?
Hello? Asshole.

Joe dries off. Checks messages, none. Throws a damp towel over his chair.

He tosses an envelope stuffed with ten thousand yen bills in an open drawer, pushes the drawer closed with his foot.

He stares at a small book with a number on one page, money paid. The next, money owed, numbers fill the page.

Joe dials. Sorts through mail. Bills, bills, bills, all past due.

A KNOCK at the door. Joe hangs up.

Another KNOCK.

STEVE (O.S.)

Horiuchi-san, its Steven Gan of the
International Credit Management
Association.

Joe creeps toward the door.

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I know you're busy, is now a good
time to talk?

Phone RINGS. Joe through the door.

JOE

I received your letter the other
day, sorry I didn't call.

Phone rings. Joe picks up.

JOE (CONT'D)

Dai? When you're gonna pay me.
Okay. Maybe I can means Monday.
Half's good.

STEVE (O.S.)

As I mentioned in our letters,
there's an outstanding balance owed
to ABC Credit Card. With all due
respect, I'd like to ask you, when
might you be able to make your
payment?

Steve knocks. Joe opens the door. STEVE GAN (40s) Chinese
American, clean shaven, shirt, tie, annoyingly polite.

Steve tries to enter, Joe jams the door against his foot.

JOE

Yes, yes, yes, I've every intention
of paying my debt.

STEVE

I appreciate your acknowledgement
of the situation. Would you help us
by making your payment in full
shortly?

JOE

I wish I could, I can barely make
ends meet now.

Steve examines Joe's life through the door crack.

STEVE

I appreciate your honesty. What
would you be able to afford at this
time?

JOE

Eight payments, 60,000 yen per
month starting at the end of the
month.

STEVE

Mr. Horiuchi, I appreciate your
kind offer, do you think it's
possible to pay this off within
four payments of 120,000 yen per
month?

JOE

Mr. Gan, I don't want to make
promises that I can't keep.

STEVE

The debt's a year old, I don't
think that ABC Credit Card can wait
much longer.

JOE

Mr. Gan, I am taking the last bit of food out of my family's mouth for you.

STEVE

Your cooperation is appreciated, I shall convey this to ABC Credit Card.

JOE

Thanks for coming by Mr. Gan.

STEVE

Thank you so...

Door slams shut. Joe leans against it, turns, scans his office, watches wallpaper peel off in the corner.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A GIRL'S FACE, a passport style photograph. 17 years old, Thai features, smiling, lip gloss, eyeshadow.

The picture darkens, distorts and blackens. A HISS, fire and smoke erupt through the girl's face, photograph curls up in flame.

Burning shards fall into a small metal trash can in a small bathtub.

A heavy book staunches rising smoke, dumped onto a trash can. A bible.

A MAN'S HANDS, slide a necklace into a zip lock plastic bag, rings follow. Hands seal the bag.

Hands hold open a bag. A roll of silver duct tape scooped into the bag.

Outside, low flying jet AIRCRAFT pass overhead.

The trash can lifted out of the bath. Hands shake blackened scraps from the trash into the bag. Bag closes tight.

YONEKURA (O.S.)

Put it all in.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joe lounges, squeezes his empty beer can, throws a cigarette into his mouth, lights up.

He pushes in half his chip pile. The DEALER, dubious.

Lifts a card by its corner.

Across from him, YONEKURA (60s), pinstripe suit, gold jewelry, tattoo under his cufflinks, dark glasses, missing finger, yakuza alert.

Joe studies Yonekura's stacks, high society, glances at his own, short.

Yonekura shuffles chips in his right hand. DEALER watches.

JOE

I don't think you've got spades. I raise. I'm all in. Three million three hundred thousand.

Joe antes all his chips, they land in front of Yonekura.

YONEKURA

You're right, I don't have spades.

Yonekura lays his cards down. Joe deflates.

YONEKURA (CONT'D)

Aces full, Joe.

Joe sits there stunned, like he just took a punch to the face.

He rises, turns, falls toward the entrance door. Two large SECURITY GUARDS appear in his path.

He turns to the kitchen, a THIRD SECURITY GUARD appears. Shit.

INT. RESTAURANT - BACK OFFICES - NIGHT

Office door ajar. Joe peers in. ANURAK SONRAM (60s) Thai, looks like he's carved out of stone, sits in silence.

LEE WEI LIAN (50's) Chinese overweight, face down, prostrate on the floor in front of Sonram.

On the TELEVISION the SOUND of Muay Thai boxing. Bone on bone. Cheering.

Lee looks for comfort from Sonram. Sonram gives him none. Lee rises, hands a bloody handkerchief to Sonram.

Joe watches Lee leave. Clocks a missing finger on Lee's left hand.

Joe enters, stands across from Sonram.

SONRAM
Didn't leave yourself any outs?

JOE
You'll get your money. Stake me?

SONRAM
There's 10 thousand 46 yen in your
bank account, credit cards maxed
out. ABC banging down your door.

On the TELEVISION Two Thai Boxers beat on each other, crowd
wild, people bet on which way the fight will turn.

SONRAM (CONT'D)
I've heard you're trustworthy.

JOE
Who did you hear this from?

SONRAM
People say you're like a Japanese,
an honorable man.

JOE
News to me.

SONRAM
My granddaughter's gone. Again.

JOE
Sarai? Cancel her credit cards,
she'll be back in an hour.

GUARD
She left three days ago. Without
her cards, she's not answering her
phone.

JOE
Call the police?

SORAM
It's important to ensure this
family's image is upheld.

JOE
How's that my problem?

SONRAM
You're going to bring her back.

JOE
Have him do it.

Joe gestures to one of the security guards.

SONRAM
I'd think you'd want to help, given
how close you were to her mother.

Joe's eyes fall on a family photo atop Sonram's desk. A THAI WOMAN (25), her Thai husband, and baby.

INT. IDIOT SAVANT - NIGHT

A tap spews out beer. An old small pub. YUKA TAMURA, (30s) beautiful, upbeat, a sweetheart, hands Joe a beer.

They share a smile. Hers lingers longer than his.

YUKA
He ruins your life, now you're
gonna bring home his spoiled
granddaughter?

JOE
It's not his fault she grew up
without a dad.

YUKA
Not yours either. Careful turning
over old stones.

JOE
Don't you have a bar opening to
worry about?

Customers wait, Yuka ushers a bartender to serve, she lingers.

YUKA
I've got your back, just don't
throw it all away.

JOE
Throw what away? I don't do
anything. I sit, watch, film, I let
it happen.

YUKA
You're supposed to let it
happen. It's your job.

JOE
It's my excuse.

INT. GOVERNMENT HOUSING - NIGHT

Joe enters, old apartment, a shambles, not much furniture, books and CD's, filled with unemptied moving boxes.

He moves to a bedroom. His brother, SHUN HORIUCHI (19), hides, torch light moves under bed sheets, a sweet kid with Downs Syndrome.

JOE
You shouldn't be up.

SHUN
I wanted to see how much you lost.

JOE
It's late. You know the drill...

SHUN
Read me a story?

JOE
The shortest you got.

Joe flips through Shuns' book.

JOE (CONT'D)
A young girl was playing under a pear tree in her yard one evening, suddenly she disappeared, without a trace. Thirty years later, she returned, looking old and haggard. She remained silent, but said she just wanted to see everyone once more, she leaves as mysteriously as she came. No one tells her story, because no one wants to hear it. They know she's kamikakushi, hidden by the gods, spirited, enslaved for the rest of her life. Bleak.

SHUN
They would always come back with some mark.

Shun flashes a self inflicted marker pen tattoo on his arm.

SHUN (CONT'D)
Something to show they'd been
taken.

JOE
I got a job offer.

SHUN
I think we're gonna need another
lunchbox.

JOE
Like I said. I love you, goodnight.

SHUN
Night big bro.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Frustrated, Joe cracks a beer. A LOW RUMBLING. Plates
clatter. Rumbling grows louder, dishes fall over in the sink.

Light from the passing train comes through the window, glows
upon a judo trophy sticks from one box. Large, noble, a
golden judo player stands in frozen motion at the trophy's
pinnacle.

Clattering dies down.

Joe opens a drawer. Parking tickets, an old photo, he pulls
it out.

It's Joe with the woman from the photo on Sonram's desk.
Younger here, college sweethearts. He dials his cell.

SONRAM (O.S.)
Glad you called.

JOE
What was she wearing when you last
saw her?

SONRAM (O.S.)
Mickey mouse jacket, mini skirt.

JOE
Clear my debt, cover my expenses, a
list of Sarai's friends, hangouts,
and I'll do it.

He hangs up. He pulls a small box, opens it. A DIAMOND
ENGAGEMENT RING. Joe sips his beer, eyes the ring.

INT. TOKYO EXPRESS - NEWS FLOOR - DAY

Dilapidated décor. MAMORU TAKANO (50s), heavysset, battle-scarred reporter. A cynic, he strides through reception.

Faux leather sofas surround a one long table overflowing with newspapers, magazines piled underneath it.

Blinds over windows covered with a nicotine glaze.

He passes an island of desks, heads to the SENIOR REPORTERS DESKS in back, a sofa jammed against the wall.

Collects a stack of letters, flips through them.

YOSHIHARU MIZUNO (60s) joins Mamoru. Express Bureau chief. Mamoru's boss.

MIZUNO

Do you know Watanabe over at the city office? He credible?

MAMORU

Rule of thumb about anybody in that place, they lie even when the truth would work better.

MIZUNO

Remember Misaki Tada?

MAMORU

Please don't. It's a loser story.

MIZUNO

Do me a favor. A short anniversary piece. It'll keep you out of trouble.

MAMORU

Yeah right.

MIZUNO

Try to do a respectable job on this last one.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

NURSE RIE (30s), young puffy-faced nurse, sits at a desk filling out a form.

Joe glances over. Nurse Rie holds up the wallet sized photograph of Sarai.

NURSE RIE
This recent?

JOE
Two months old.

NURSE RIE
She still wears her hair like that?

JOE
Yep.

Nurse Rie resumes filling out forms.

NURSE RIE
Nothing in admissions, we'll keep
an eye out. If she does come in.

JOE
You've got my number, thanks.

INT. INTERNET CAFE - DAY

Joe pecks away at the keyboard, scans Sarai's social media accounts. CLICKS on the profile icon for Sarai.

He CLICKS on the most recent one, FaceTime video display opens.

The call RINGS: Sarai Sonram's not available. Joe reads the message, dials Sarai on his cell, straight to voicemail.

Joe texts Yuka.

JOE
Talked to her school. Didn't come
to class this week.

YUKA
Skipped school before?

JOE
Yeah.

YUKA
Isn't school over next week?

JOE
Yeah.

YUKA
Probably just screwing around with
her friends. Reached out to them?

Pictures with another GIRL, pretty, affluent. Sarai wears a mickey mouse jacket. It's date stamped, recent.

Joe checks Sarai's phone location. A bar.

INT. BAR - DAY

Dark, dingy. Formica tables. Customers in used clothes sit at the bar, nurse drinks, chat. Anime on a big MUTED TV.

Joe enters, all conversation stops. Patrons stare. After a moment, they return to their drinks.

Joe glances around. No sign of Sarai.

Joe approaches a bored-looking BARTENDER, behind the counter.

JOE

Excuse me.

The Bartender, cuts vegetables, looks up, knife in hand.

JOE (CONT'D)

I was supposed to meet my girlfriend here.

The Bartender shrugs, gives him a look: Yeah, so?

JOE (CONT'D)

Dark hair, slender, about five five. Wearing a mickey mouse jacket.

BARTENDER

A what?

JOE

Mickey mouse jacket.

The Bartender plops vegetables in small plates.

BARTENDER

Order's ready.

The Bartender pauses, shakes his head.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Don't remember.

JOE

You sure?

The Bartender leans over, calls out:

BARTENDER

Hey! Man here's looking for his girlfriend, dark hair, mickey mouse jacket. Anybody see her?

Joe looks along the counter. Blank faces, a few disinterested shrugs, a few headshakes no.

Joe turns back to the Bartender, scratches his head. Doesn't make any sense.

JOE

Is there another bar?

BARTENDER

Definitely is.

Joe clenches his jaw, takes another look around.

A young couple sit at a rear table. They watch him, whisper to each other.

JOE

You got a lost property? I think she left her phone here.

BARTENDER

After four days we take it to the police.

JOE

Shit.

EXT. JAPAN ATHEIST ASSOCIATION - DAY

Mamoru exits his taxi, approaches, rings the doorbell, no answer. A CLICK.

VOICE (O.S)

Yes.

MAMORU

Takano Mamoru from the Tokyo express.

Mamoru leans in.

VOICE (O.S.)

We don't need any.

MAMORU

I'm not selling anything.

VOICE (O.S.)
We already have a newspaper
subscription.

MAMORU
I`m not selling newspapers, I`m a
reporter, from the Tokyo Express.

VOICE (O.S.)
A reporter?

MAMORU
Yes, a reporter. Hello?

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Joe masks his distrust, strides through automatic doors. He
approaches a large, old POLICE OFFICER sits at reception.

JOE
I called about some lost property,
my sister's phone.

POLICE OFFICER
Down the hall.

Joe shuffles deeper into the belly of the police station.

OFFICER (O.S)
How may I help you?

Joe startles.

JOE
You could not sneak up on me. I
wanted to check if you had my
sister's cellphone.

OFFICER
She contacted the mobile phone
carrier to prevent misuse?

JOE
To my knowledge.

OFFICER
Let me check. Please wait here.

JOE
Thanks.

Officer returns with a box pull of mobile phones each in zip
lock bags. Joe rifles through.

JOE (CONT'D)

This is it, she loves her mickey mouse.

OFFICER

Happy you've found it, they can be expensive to lose.

JOE

Indeed.

OFFICER

Before you leave with it, to claim it a SIM card number or serial card number is required.

JOE

Damn. I don't have that.

OFFICER

It's clearly stated on our website. Do you have a letter of authorization?

JOE

A what?

OFFICER

If someone else is to pick up the property we need a letter from the owner.

JOE

But I`m family.

OFFICER

We need it for mobile phones. Even if you're family. You got some valid identification?

EXT. SETAGAYA - DAY

Where rich folks live. Joe pulls up to a large house, gets out. Joe knocks on a door.

YUME (17) sits on steps. Tall, long black hair. She's affluent, pretty, smirks, stink-eyes Joe's car.

JOE

Detective Horiuchi, TMPD. I'm looking someone, Sarai Sonram?

YUME

Lies.

JOE

Excuse me?

YUME

Lies. Police don't drive crap cars.

JOE

I'm undercover.

YUME

And foreigners don't work for them.

JOE

It says Japanese on my passport.

YUME

Lemme see your badge.

JOE

Alright, I'm a friend of Sarai's grandfather, okay? Mr. Sonram's really worried.

YUME

I already told one of Sonram's guys, I haven't talked to Sarai in a week.

JOE

So if I look through your phone, I'm not gonna find anything from Sarai? No calls, texts..?

YUME

No. But even if they were on my phone, I wouldn't give you the password.

JOE

You've been invaluable.

Joe walks to his car. Takes three tries to start it, drives off. Joe turns the corner, Yume's on her phone.

YUME

Come on, answer..!

SARAI (O.S.)

Hi! It's Sarai, leave a message...

Behind Yume, Joe`s car BURNS around the opposite corner, hops out, unseen, he approaches Yume from behind.

YUME

Hey, it's me! Listen, there's someone looking for you. I think your grandfather sent him..

Joe yanks Yume's phone out of her hand. Yume whips around to see Joe going through her phone.

YUME (CONT'D)

Hey! You can't take my phone!

A TEXT SELFIE of Sarai in her mickey mouse jacket, arm in arm, with Yume.

Joe blows up the photo, a motel sign in the B.G.

JOE

Got a problem? Call the police.

INT. IDIOT SAVANT - DAY

Shun helps Yuka hang an old black and white photo. A WOMAN enters, not a hair out of place.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Glad to see you're keeping out of trouble.

Yuka turns.

YUKA

Do I know you?

She flashes her badge, DETECTIVE SEIRA NOGUCHI (30s). Beauty censored by a simple suit. All business.

NOGUCHI

No, but I know you. Noguchi, TMPD. As long as we're looking through old photos..

Noguchi lays a mug shot on the bar of Joe. Yuka stiffens. Noguchi clocks it.

NOGUCHI (CONT'D)

Recognize this guy?

YUKA

Something tells me you already know the answer.

NOGUCHI
I'm interested in what you know.

YUKA
He's a good photographer.

NOGUCHI
A wakaresaseya employee?

YUKA
A photographer.

NOGUCHI
Seen him recently?

Yuka shrugs, non committal. Noguchi places her card on the bar, turns to leave.

NOGUCHI (CONT'D)
If you see him please tell him he's
going to lose his license.

YUKA
For what reason?

NOGUCHI
Interfering in police business.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

A JET AIRLINER descends overhead, a sign above a Hawaiian
themed motel: HANEDA ROYAL INN

INT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

Front office, Joe shows a photo of Sarai and Yume to MR
HARA(60s), motel manager, balding, out of shape, aloha shirt.

JOE
Seen this girl? Did she come in?

HARA
Didn't see her.

JOE
You didn't see her, or she didn't
come in?

HARA
Are you a police?

JOE
Yes, sir.

HARA
They don't hire foreigners.

JOE
I get that a lot.

HARA
Where's your badge?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe slouches on the sofa, stares at that old photo of Sarai and her mother. Shun walks up, Joe grins.

Shun observes him, senses his deep sorrow, lays a bowl of food in front of Joe, overcooked pork rice and eggs.

SHUN
You need to eat.

Joe drops the photo back in a drawer. He reaches for a small box, flips it open, the ENGAGEMENT RING.

Phone rings.

JOE
Moshi Moshi

ANDREA
Do you speak English?

JOE
Yes.

ANDREA
A friend gave me your number. She was a stripper at the Karma Sutra; she said you might be able to help.

JOE
Try me.

ANDREA
At the place where I work, there are some new girls. Not from here. Philippines, Thailand. They seem to be, under duress.

JOE
What do you mean?

ANDREA

They`re being forced to work, and they`re not getting paid.

JOE

What kind of work do you do?

ANDREA

I guess you could say I`m a prostitute.

JOE

And you`re doing this by choice?

ANDREA

Of course. But these girls, it's not the same for them. They don't want to be doing this. They got tricked, forced into it. They`re always sobbing, they can't leave the building during the day.

JOE

I`m off the clock right now, can we organize a time and place to talk more?

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Mamoru takes off his coat, sits down at his desk: years of shit on walls. Photos, clippings, phone books, hard drives.

What's not on walls or desk sits in boxes.

Mamoru`s shoulder wedges a phone to his ear.

MAMORU

Jun, hi. Takano Mamoru over at the Tokyo Express. Detective Sekiguchi there? Calling about a missing persons case...

Mizuno crosses the newsroom.

MAMORU (CONT'D)

Have him get back to me, okay?

MIZUNO

How`s the packing going?

MAMORU

It`s not.

MIZUNO

What you got?

MAMORU

All anyone knows at this point, or is telling, is Misaki Tada left Tokyo, in a hurry, left a note at the Japan Atheist headquarters, went to Fukushima, stuck around for a month, kept in touch by a cell phone, in the course of that month, someone, who was not Misaki, sold her Mercedes to a local realtor.

MIZUNO

That's not really much to go on. Basically you have "semi famous atheist is gone".

MAMORU

The first story basically opens things up. Misaki's gone. Is she hiding out somewhere?

MIZUNO

Who knows? Why would anyone care that a formerly wealthy person has vanished.

MAMORU

Things are kind of coasting.

MIZUNO

Keep on it, there's a reporter from the Yomiuri paying attention to it. You don't want to be embarrassed by him getting ahead of it.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

ANDREA (20s), sits, foreign, white skin, blonde hair, tall, skirt jacket, blouse with high heels, a ponytail with a little pomegranate colored lipstick.

ANDREA

I`m a prostitute by choice. I like sex. I don't have a problem with what I do.

JOE

What's the problem then?

ANDREA

What I have a problem with is women being forced into it and the assholes making them do it.

JOE

I see. You know who these assholes are?

ANDREA

There are two guys running the show in Roppongi, and near the airport, supplying girls for the place I work in. One guy's Japanese, everyone calls him Slick.

JOE

Have you got his real name?

ANDREA

No, sorry, there's a tough guy named Kenji. They own five or six clubs, recruit women abroad, mostly poor countries, sometimes off the streets, through ads or brokers, bring them to Japan, stick them in sex clubs and rip them off.

JOE

Why don't they just quit?

ANDREA

They're totally dependent on these bastards. So they end up like sex slaves.

JOE

And where's it you said you work?

INT. HOME - DAY

Phone rings. Mamoru picks up.

CALLER (O.S.)

You Takano Mamoru?

MAMORU

Yes.

CALLER (O.S.)

It was a kidnapping. I have the person's name who organized it. He's from Tokyo. His name's Kenji.

MAMORU

What? Was a kidnapping?

CALLER (O.S.)

The Tada woman. I was told by a third party who was involved. That person's gone now. He put together a group of people to do this.

MAMORU

This Kenji did this?

CALLER (O.S.)

They had handguns, trained at a range in Tokyo. I don't know the name. They kept her at a place called the Royal Inn in Tokyo.

MAMORU

This Kenji is the one who did all the planning?

CALLER (O.S.)

He infiltrated the organization. Money was the motive. They took her at gunpoint to Fukushima.

MAMORU

Look, I'm interested, but you haven't told me anything with breakthrough information.

CALLER (O.S.)

He got cooperation from her by threatening violence. The guy's name was "Kenji Kakiuchi," or Kakuchi. I can't remember.

MAMORU

May I ask for your name?

CALLER (O.S.)

I want my name off the record, I can't be quoted. Kakiuchi got Daichi Nishimura to come from Saitama with this big kidnapping plan.

MAMORU
Ok. Who's Nishimura?

INT. ROYAL INN - DAY

Joe enters the lobby, stops, scans the room.

No one pays him much attention.

There's something wrong here...He can't put his finger on it.

He stares at the customers. Why do they avoid eye contact?
They hiding something?

He scrutinizes more...

A gruff SALARYMAN, sits at a nearby table, shovels food in
his mouth, averts his gaze.

A traveling SALESMAN. Overweight, sweaty. Pops vitamins along
with his coffee.

A domestic TOURIST, reads a comic book at the bar.

Strange. No women. A BUSINESSMAN approaches the counter.

Joe eyes Hara jot a note down on a pad, tears off the carbon
slip.

He places one copy on the desk, the other in a pile by the
cash register.

Joe approaches.

JOE
I want to see your slips.

HARA
What?

JOE
You write down names. I want to see
them.

HARA
I don't have to show you anything.

Joe leans in his face.

JOE
If a girl came in here, her name's
in that pile.

Hara stiffens, stares him straight in the eye.

HARA

I've had just about enough of you.

Joe reaches for the receipts. Before he can, Hara's hand clamps onto his.

JOE

Let me see the fucking slips.

Joe overpowers Hara, he grabs the receipts.

He goes through them, fast, looking at names. TAO, MANA, FUMIO, ANA and...

Joe raises his eyes, the unpleasant tip of a large sushi knife looks back at him.

HARA

You have to leave.

Joe steps back. Everyone in the lobby stares. He shuffles backwards, for the exit.

EXT. ROYAL INN - DAY

Joe sees an EMPLOYEE head to the rear of the hotel with a garbage bag. He watches the employee disappear around a corner. Joe creeps to the corner.

From the corner he watches the employee dump envelopes, polaroids, and lost property in a dumpster.

The employee saunters away, pulls out a pack of cigarettes, lights one.

Joe creeps up to the dumpster, peers over.

Burnt photos of young girls. He reaches in, employee approaches, Joe falls in, freezes.

The employee saunters past. Joe's cellphone RINGS.

The employee stops, turns. Moves towards the dumpster.

VOICE (O.S)

Hey! Breaks over.

The employee returns inside. Joe waits, peers out of the dumpster. Grabs the evidence.

INT. CAR - DAY

Wipers drag a piece of paper across the windshield. Joe reaches out, plucks off a parking ticket, crumples it, tosses it into the back seat, where ten more sit.

He checks his missed call. Shun.

Joe notices in his rearview mirror, parked down the road, a BLACK MERCEDES BENZ. Heavy rain bounces off it`s hood.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Mamoru stands at reception, armed with a pile of documents.

An OFFICER (40s), graying, overweight, not interested in helping.

OFFICER

Has a search request been submitted?

MAMORU

Ah, no.

OFFICER

Got some personal information? Name, date of birth, permanent domicile, or occupation; physical features height, build, hair style or blood type; Photographs are very helpful for us.

MAMORU

Yes I do.

OFFICER

Do you have parental authority or guardianship over the missing person?

MAMORU

No I do not.

OFFICER

Are you the missing person's spouse?

MAMORU

No.

OFFICER

Relative?

Mamoru declines an answer.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Employer?

MAMORU
So you're not going to do anything?

OFFICER
Are there suspicious circumstances
surrounding the disappearance?
Blood stains? Suicide note?

MAMORU
I understand.

OFFICER
You could hire a private detective
to try and track her down if you're
concerned about her well-being.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Mamoru, wrapped up in his phone cord.

MIZUNO
Get anything?

MAMORU
Apparently, people have the right
to disappear.

MIZUNO
They tracking her phone?

MAMORU
Not without a court order. We've
got a missing girl, where did she
go? Did she run out on her
boyfriend? It's not much.

MIZUNO
Can't make a case with that. All
you can do is write a story that
says Misaki Tada disappears, and
she may have been involved in
prostitution. That's if you can get
it past our lawyers and me.

MAMORU

How about we moved that little packaging of coincidences down from about the second paragraph to midway in the story.

MIZUNO

Lowering your liability.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

Joe drives. A car BUMPS him from behind, Joe's tape deck triggers MUSIC. Joe pulls over, tries to turn it off.

He looks in his rearview mirror, through the rain he sees the black Mercedes Benz.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Joe gets out, a ding in his fender.

A FIGURE emerges from the offending vehicle. KENJI (40s). Sunglasses on his forehead; hands dropped at his side. A cool character.

JOE

Lucky, that dent matches the others. How about you give me twenty thousand yen and we'll call it a...

BAM! He punches Joe across the face. Joe drops to his knees, everything a blur.

MUSIC plays, Kenji moves toward Joe's car. Something in Joe ignites. He CHARGES.

Joe tackles Kenji over the hood. He punches him in the solar plexus, stunning him. They struggle for control.

Kenji KNEES Joe, a combo, GUT! JAW! GUT! Joe drops, squints up at Kenji.

Joe gets up, barrels into him. Kenji knees Joe in the solar plexus, lands two more well placed kicks in Joe's back.

Joe's not a bad fighter, it's just Kenji's so damn fast.

Joe to his feet again. Kenji lands two more brutal shots to the side of Joe's head. He's a bloody mess.

Kenji lunges a kick at Joe. Joe flies back. Before Joe can stand, Kenji lands a brutal kick to the side of Joe's head.

Kenji reaches into Joe's car, grabs at the dumpster evidence, jumps in his car, screeches AWAY.

Joe, on one knee, spits out blood and a few teeth, gets to his feet to MUSIC, staggers, no evidence, blood everywhere, no clue what just happened.

EXT. STREET - TOKYO - DAY

People ogle the busy crime scene. Police string tape, interview witnesses, the Mercedes Benz gone.

Police surround Joe, bruised, dazed, resting on the curb.

WOMAN (O.S.)
Mr. Horiuchi..?

Noguchi parts the circle of police. Joe looks up.

NOGUCHI
Detective Noguchi, TMPD. Can you tell me what happened?

JOE
I just told two other police the whole story. I gave a description of the suspect and his car. Didn't catch a plate.

NOGUCHI
Every officer in the city's looking for him.

JOE
Except you, I guess.

She's thrown, albeit piqued by his rough edge.

NOGUCHI
Alleged kidnapping is serious business, so you'll probably have to tell a few more at the station.

JOE
I don't think so. As long as she's out there I need to be looking.

Joe starts to go. Police shove him back down. He eyes a POLAROID, Noguchi turns, clocks Joe's car, Joe pockets the polaroid.

NOGUCHI
Your vehicle?

JOE
That's a fancy word for it.

Noguchi puts him in cuffs.

NOGUCHI
I'm placing you under arrest

JOE
For what, getting beat up?!

NOGUCHI
Unpaid parking tickets. There's a
warrant out. Guess we're going to
the station.

INT. POLICE STATION INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Joe sits, taps his foot, anxious.

Noguchi enters with INSPECTOR CHIAKI SEKIGUCHI (50s), tall,
dark, thick set, deep eyes, Elvis haircut. Mistaken for
yakuza a lot. Prides himself on order.

SEKIGUCHI
Mr. Horiuchi, I'm Inspector
Sekiguchi, thanks for coming down.

JOE
You can thank Noguchi, here.

SEKIGUCHI
We found the car. Stolen last week
in Kanagawa. It's being processed
as we speak. If they left prints.

JOE
He was wearing gloves. The BFF give
you anything useful?

SEKIGUCHI
How do you know we talked to her?

JOE
First place you look. Since I've
been here for two hours, enjoying
Tokyo's crappiest coffee, I figured
you were.

SEKIGUCHI
She claims you harassed her.

JOE
Bullshit.

SEKIGUCHI
About your connection to Sarai

JOE
For the third time, I dated her
mother, in college, still see the
family around.

SEKIGUCHI
If you were to describe how the
relationship ended.

JOE
With her marrying someone else.

SEKIGUCHI
So, not well. For you.

JOE
You say that like I'm a suspect.

SEKIGUCHI
Everyone is until we establish the
facts.

JOE
That in the police manual?

SEKIGUCHI
How about we ask the questions?

JOE
Since you're never gonna ask a
question you don't know the answer
to, I'm not going to tell you
anything you don't already know.

Sekiguchi remains poker faced.

SEKIGUCHI
That's why you call the police for
something like this. Hire an
amateur, you get amateur mistakes.

JOE
There must be witnesses.

Nothing from the inspector.

JOE (CONT'D)
What is it, tea time?

Still nothing from Sekiguchi. Finally:

SEKIGUCHI
You lost a man we wanted. Very
incompetent on your part.

Sekiguchi bows slightly, Joe's not sure why.

JOE
So working with me is out of the
question?

SEKIGUCHI
You're a foreigner. Go home.

INT. POLICE STATION - BOOKING - DAY

Joe hangs up, scans around.

Fifty identical desks. Fifty identical phones. Fifty
identically dressed men in white shirts and ties work under
fluorescent lights of this large open room.

He heads towards the door, passes long rows of bureaucrats,
telephones ring off the hook.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - NIGHT

Mamoru sits surfs the waves, pretends to work, reads wire
stories. He hits a story.

A story marks the third anniversary of a headless, handless
corpse found near a river in outer Tokyo, police remain
baffled by the crime.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Joe exits processing to find Yuka waiting.

JOE
Thanks, I'll pay you back.

YUKA
I'll add it to your tab. What the
hell happened to your face? And why
do you smell like garbage?

JOE

Long story. Tell you in the car.

They turn a corner, Yuka a bit thrown to see.

NOGUCHI (O.S.)

Interesting. So you two are..?

JOE

Friends.

Which rankles Yuka.

JOE (CONT'D)

You guys know each other?

YUKA

Long story. Tell you in the car.

They exit. Noguchi watches Joe, intrigued. Sekiguchi drifts in.

SEKIGUCHI

What do you think?

NOGUCHI

I'm not sure what to think.

SEKIGUCHI

Keep looking into him. Never know, he may be our key to finding the girl, and the man who killed your partner.

INT. YUKA'S CAR - NIGHT

Yuka drives, Joe checks his bruised eye in the visor mirror.

JOE

You wanna punch me in the other eye? Maybe it'll look better if they match.

YUKA

You're lucky he didn't kill you.

JOE

It's like everything I touch.

YUKA

This isn't your fault.

JOE

That's not how it feels.

YUKA

Maybe you should just let the police handle it.

JOE

And walk away? Anytime something gets hard, I walk away. I can't walk away from this.

Yuka nods, feels the gravity.

JOE (CONT'D)

So what's up with you and Noguchi?

YUKA

It's nothing. She's looking for someone I knew.

JOE

What is it with this town? Everybody's looking for someone.

INT. EIGHTH CIRCLE OF HELL STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A chandelier, a few sofas for intimate chat, a karaoke machine.

A BIG GUY behind the bar, no neck, short haircut, a bad suit that's too tight, yakuza alert. The guy gives Mamoru the once-over.

A buxom redhead grinds her ass on Sekiguchi's crotch, she runs her fingers through his crew cut.

SEKIGUCHI

Order one Blue Hawaii, you can pack your bags and cover family affairs.

MAMORU

Make mine a whiskey.

Sekiguchi nods to the bar keep, who nods back, pours him a shot of Jameson's, slides it down the bar to him.

Sekiguchi lifts the glass to his mouth in one motion, knocks it back.

SEKIGUCHI

So this stuff's confusing for you?

MAMORU

Well yes, if prostitution is illegal, shouldn't everything in this area be closed down?

SEKIGUCHI

Depends on your definition. Let's walk, I'm off duty, this is off the record.

EXT. KABUKICHO - NIGHT

Disneyland festival of lights parade, except the neon signs advertise blow jobs instead of family vacations.

In front of buildings, middle of the streets, TOUTS in formal black suits and white shirts seek out customers, grab sleeves, shove pamphlets into hands of meandering salarymen.

Loudspeakers vomit out husky voices of women advertising sexual pleasures. Every building covered in semi nude signs of women working there.

SEKIGUCHI

You have to understand the Law here's really about protecting prostitutes.

MAMORU

How does that work?

Sekiguchi points out a THAI PROSTITUTE lurks near an alley, hoping to drum up customers.

SEKIGUCHI

I could arrest her if she's openly soliciting. That's illegal. But, if guys come up to her..

MAMOMRU

Not a problem.

SEKIGUCHI

Exactly. After the war, there were lots of people selling there own daughters into the sex trade. In 1958, prostitution as it used to be was banished. Many of the women in the industry were being coerced into it, if you punished them it would be punishing the victim. Plus, no one would come forward to the police.

Mamoru and Sekiguchi stroll past love hotels, Thai PROSTITUTES gather near a park close to Okubo station.

IRANIAN MALES service JAPANESE MEN in park restrooms.

MAMORU

Why doesn't the law punish the customers? Wouldn't that discourage the trade?

SEKIGUCHI

Sure it would, but who the fuck do you think wrote the laws? Guys. Hell, in the 1950s probably half the Diet was frequenting Soapland.

INT. S&M CLUB - NIGHT

A short little BALD GUY wearing a sarong chats up Sekiguchi.

Mamoru peeks behind a curtain.

In the center of a huge room filled with eight or nine tables a platform.

On it a DOMANATRIX clad entirely in leather. Her breasts jut out of her blouse, nipples pierced with safety pins, hair pulled back in a bun.

The only thing on her not leather, a huge white strap on dildo, she sodomizes a MIDDLE AGED MAN in a navy blue suit with.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A handful of patrons. A WOMAN straightens bottles behind the bar. Sonram sits reading.

He looks up, surprised to see Joe standing in front of him waving a polaroid.

JOE

Why didn't you tell me your guys were on this?

SONRAM

Still alive.

JOE

Change in plans.

Joe tosses the polaroid onto the table.

SONRAM
How'd you get this?

JOE
I stole it.

Polaroid of Kenji screwing a young naked woman on a Tatami mat.

SONRAM
Know her?

JOE
We can ask someone I used to work with. Someone I pay money to...

INT. SHABU SHABU RESTAURANT - NIGHT

No panty Shabu Shabu. Half nude YOUNG WOMEN prepare beef dishes at customers' tables flirt with them while they eat.

MAMORU
So, what's illegal besides actual intercourse.

SEKIGUCHI
Not much. Hard core pornography. Uncensored stuff.

MAMORU
You mean it's illegal to sell pornography showing someone getting fellated but not illegal to get the actual blow job?

SEKIGUCHI
You catch on fast. You can do it, but you can't watch it. At least not on your TV.

MAMORU
So what's to enforce?

SEKIGUCHI
Every now and then you have to take down places blatantly offering intercourse. You have to draw a line somewhere.

MAMORU
You remember that case, the guy they found, missing hands and head?

SEKIGUCHI
Nishimura? How can I forget?

Mamoru's eyes widen.

INT. IDIOT SAVANT - DAY

Joe ices his face. A bunch of documents rest on the table.

SHUN
I do all the cooking and cleaning.
You're out most of the time, I'm
practically looking after myself.
Why not?

JOE
Because.

SHUN
Why?!

JOE
I made a promise.

SHUN
You're not mom.

JOE
As long as I'm around you're under
my care, so no.

SHUN
Let me be free.

Silence, Shun reaches for his glass of coke, tips it over,
brown liquid spills across all of Joe's papers.

Joe to his feet.

JOE
Goddamnit, can't you watch what
you're doing!

SHUN
I'm sorry.

JOE
I catch all kind of shit out there
because I'm busting my butt trying
to be a decent brother and...

SHUN
I'm sorry.

JOE
That's terrific. That's really
terrific. You calling me at work,
nearly getting me killed.

Joe notices an important paper covered with Coca-Cola

JOE (CONT'D)
Oh, crap.

Shun starts to help.

SHUN
I'm sorry.

By now there's nothing Shun can do right.

JOE
Fucken retarded

SHUN
You're an asshole.

Joe regrets that. Shun storms out. Yuka overhears, looks at Joe.

INT. PACHINKO PARLOR - DAY

A wall of noise, a cloud of cigarette smoke.

Endless rows of men sits in front of machines punching the
flippers. NOISE from metal balls, deafening.

No social interaction.

A MAN in a Hawaiian shirt (50s), his arms covered with
tattoos, badly in need of a shower, starts a new game.

Joe moves up to the vacant machine beside him, puts in his
change. Joe doesn't face the man, they speak in Japanese.

The man in the Hawaiian shirt walks off. The snitch. Joe's in
business.

INT. CRAMPED ROOM - REAR OF PACHINKO PARLOR - NIGHT

Clatter of machines outside. Joe's snitch sits cross-legged
on the floor, studies the polaroid. Joe towers above him.

SNITCH
Very nice. Do you have any more?

Joe grabs him by his collar, shoves him against a wall.
Polaroid falls to the floor.

JOE
Who's she?

Joe bangs the snitch's head back against the wall, bangs his
head against the wall again. The snitch, terrified.

SNITCH
She works in a Department store.

JOE
Where?

SNITCH
West Tokyo.

INT. SEIBU DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

A GIRL (20s) behind a cosmetic counter. She wears a store
uniform: blue and white dress, white gloves. A doll.

A photo of one of Kenji's porno pics. Same face. Joe holds
the polaroid, stands in the crowded store. Joe glances back
at his snitch standing by the door.

The snitch nods.

They watch the girl help a customer choose an eyeliner.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joe watches through the window, SALESGIRLS line up at the
door across the street, bow, thank the last customers.
Standard practice.

The girl comes out in her uniform, heads down the street.

Joe gets up to follow.

EXT. COIN LAUNDRY - NIGHT

The girl steps out, carrying her laundry. She walks past a
doorway where... Joe stands.

EXT. NIGHTCLUB DISTRICT - NIGHT

Narrow streets with exploding neon ideograph signs as far as
the eye can see.

The girl hurries down the street. Joe, a half block behind, bumps into people, tries not to lose her.

She crosses. Joe drops off.

The girl disappears into an apartment building.

EXT. GIRL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Joe watches our girl inside her apartment. She flips off the TV, climbs into bed.

INT. CAR - DAY

CAR ALARM jolts Joe awake, exhausted, his head rests against the window.

Joe eyes her, in store uniform, exits her apartment.

INT. HALLWAY - GIRL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Joe, on his knees, examines the lock on the girl's apartment door.

He inserts a tension wrench into the key hole, applies pressure, inserts a pick at the top.

Joe applies torque to his wrench, scrubs his pick back and forth, all the pins set.

Joe raps the knob plate, uses his sleeve to wipe prints off.

The door swings open. Joe walks in.

INT. GIRL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A cheese box with a few vintage pieces of American deco furniture.

Joe goes over the place.

Closet opens, packed with expensive dresses, pants, sweaters...

Joe goes through her chest of drawers: on top, a lot of high quality lingerie.

A PHOTO: The girl and Kenji pose on a vintage Corvette.

Joe replaces the picture, rearranges the drawer so it appears untouched. He pulls open another drawer. Another. Under jeans and Donald Duck T-shirts, he finds:

A BANK STACK OF U.S. CURRENCY in hundreds. The drawer lined with stacks. Joe shoves the drawer shut.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The girl buys fruit from a stand. She wears tight leather pants, red leather jacket, earrings, bright red lipstick, she's dumped the pony-tail, her hair falls to her waist.

The girl turns, finds herself facing Joe, yards away.

Joe smiles, walks into a store, hopes he hasn't been made.

The girl moves to the corner, stands alone on the street.

Joe watches in a doorway, hands thrust in his jacket.

THREE BOSOZOKU riding bikes come around the corner, drive past her, then circle back.

A RIDER stops to talk to her, drives off. She hurries off in the opposite direction.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The girl, on the move, pushes through crowds, crosses the street. Joe, pretends to look in a store window, picks her up.

She climbs into a taxi.

EXT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

The girl exits the taxi, goes inside. Joe watches from across the street.

Joe approaches the entrance. Looks in, packed with Salarymen, hostesses in silk dresses sell cheap champagne at expensive prices.

The BOUNCER in a white tux, stops him.

Joe, takes a step forward. Bouncer shoves him back.

JOE
Hey, no hands, huh?

Joe steers himself away from the main entrance, down basement steps.

INT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

Joe walks right through the basement kitchen, filled with CHINESE and FILIPINO COOKS and DISHWASHERS who pay no attention.

Joe starts up a stained kitchen staircase through a pair of swinging doors, lands in a seat at the bar.

The bar crowded. A HOSTESS slides her arm around his neck, pours him a whiskey. He checks out the room, searches for the girl.

Joe notices two THUGS standing outside a sliding door, he finishes his drink.

HOSTESS

Sit, sweetie.

(to bartender)

Another Seagram's!

Joe relents, spots something across the room:

A rice paper door slides open, a DOZEN men with close cropped hair sit on tatami mats, playing poker. Some have their coats off, arms covered with tattoos. Yakuza.

A hostess, serves drinks, slides out leaves the door ajar.

The hostess slides a door open to an adjacent room,

Joe cannot see inside. She slides it shut.

Joe gets to his feet, pretends to be drunk, he stumbles toward the sliding doors.

Joe bumps into a table; slaps a stranger on the shoulder; sings along with Frank Sinatra on the stereo. He's loud, off key.

The BODYGUARDS eye Joe. He stumbles past them, grabs the sliding door, moves through it, yanks it closed.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A long aisle, five cubicles on either side. Curtains hang from doorframes affording privacy to each cubicle.

Joe pulls back a curtain, a YOUNG GIRL lays on a mattress, soiled sheets, drugged up, wears nothing but an unbuttoned blouse.

Discarded small towels lay in a cardboard box in the corner. Next to the bed, Joe eyes a bucket, half a dozen used condoms in it.

The girl looks up at Joe, holds up a condom in a lazy, indifferent hand, spreads her legs.

Joe fights back his revulsion, retreats.

Joe pulls another curtain aside: a MAN fucks another GIRL, who lays there, far away glaze in her eyes, while he pounds away.

Out in the corridor Joe moves on. Pulls the next curtain, finds a man about to mount another glazed over girl, whose face he cannot see.

Joe's about to withdraw when he sees, on the floor by the bed, a mickey mouse jacket.

EXT. SETAGAYA - DAY - FLASHBACK

Joe goes through Yume`s phone, A TEXT SELFIE of Sarai wearing a mickey mouse jacket, arm in arm with Yume.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Joe springs forward, grabs the man by his shirt, pulls him off the girl.

MAN

What the?

Before another word comes out of his mouth, Joe knocks him out.

Joe turns to the girl expects to find Sarai.

A complete stranger.

Joe lifts the jacket.

JOE

Where did you get this?

The girl in too much of a drugged state to answer.

JOE (CONT'D)
Who gave it to you?

FOUR GUARDS see Joe, pull out their Beretta's. Two more grab him, fling him head first against the wall.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

A low table. Kenji at one end. A half dozen LIEUTENANTS sit on either side of the table.

Half, older, dressed in conservative suits; the other half, younger wear \$700 Issei Miyake jackets.

Kenji in heated discussion. The girl Joe's been following saunters to Kenji, sits beside him.

Bodyguards bust in with Joe. Joe feigns being drunk.

JOE
I have to piss, gentlemen... I'm so
sorry but I have to...

The bodyguards hurry him towards the door.

EXT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

Joe stumbles down steps, affects a drunken, pigeon-toed walk. Two bodyguards watch from inside.

No longer being watched, he stops his affected walk.

Joe jumps into a payphone, dials.

EXT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

Joe stands across the street waits for police to arrive. Joe freezes.

The GIRL steps out, lights a cigarette. TIME SLOWS.

She looks up, spots Joe through traffic. SIRENS AND POLICE CARS from either end of the street peel around the corner.

She goes back inside.

Joe races across the street toward the motel. Horns BLARE. Joe reaches the curb, front doors to the Royal Inn BURST OPEN.

It's a madhouse. Remaining lieutenants and bodyguards fan out, trying to elude arrest.

Joe hurries inside.

INT. ROYAL INN - NIGHT

The patrons, still in place, two side rooms, now empty.

Joe spots Kenji going out the rear entrance. He starts after him, the bouncer who stopped him earlier confronts him.

Joe connects to the bouncer's jaw before his adversary can raise his hands. The bouncer staggers back.

Joe flies out the rear door.

EXT. REAR ROYAL INN - NIGHT

SILENCE. Narrow streets, deserted. Joe makes his way down the street.

Wind jostles a paper lantern, plucks at tails of banners hanging outside shops.

A GUNSHOT.

Joe ducks for cover, it's a car BACKFIRING. He continues on.

Joe clocks a woman giving a man a blow-job in a narrow alley. The man's face, hidden in shadows.

Joe continues on. From the darkness.

KENJI (O.S.)

Foreigners like you are a dime a dozen.

Joe turns. Kenji steps out from the darkness, raises his hand, makes a gun with his finger, points, shoots at Joe... He lowers his hand.

Kenji tosses a handful of change at Joe.

KENJI (CONT'D)

Keep the change.

A brand new Kawasaki motorcycle with windshield and full fairing gleams under a street light.

The DULL ROAR of a half dozen motorcycles in the distance breaks the stillness.

TWENTY BOSOZOKU (BIKERS) on their multi-cylinder high tech street bombers, creep around the corner.

They ride toward Joe.

Turbo punk Elvis-samurai hybrids, some in leopard skin pants, and tattoos...

They head straight for Joe, at the last moment, split floating away IN SLOW MOTION, as if Joe didn't exist.

The bikers stop near various doorways and alleys, gun their engines.

KENJI (CONT'D)

You`re a rookie... But you can take care of yourself.

Joe glances at the bikers, back at Kenji. Unarmed. To make a move would be suicide.

More POLICE SIRENS in the b.g. Closing in.

KENJI (CONT'D)

What's the matter? I'm right in front of you, Joe.

Kenji steps forward. His face inches from Joe's.

Joe doesn't budge. Kenji turns, walks off. Bikers gun engines.

The street, empty, except for a street sweeper pushing his wet broom.

Joe frozen, middle of the street, realizes how deep in it he is.

INT. ROYAL INN - DAY

Police flood in, from every doorway, yelling, surround the hotel. Patron's duck, terrified, staring down gun barrels.

THE DOOR splinters. Bouncer steps back as four helmeted emergency service officers, rush in.

Pandemonium. People rush for exits, any exit.

Joe watches, takes a shot of whiskey left on the bar.

Sekiguchi approaches Joe.

JOE

So, you're going after them?

SEKIGUCHI

Think you can get one of those women to come forward and talk?

JOE

You'll protect her right?

SEKIGUCHI

We'll have to arrest her for working illegally on a tourist visa and deport her. With her testimony we can bust the two guys for violations of the immigration laws, maybe we can shut their business down that way.

JOE

Who's going to come forward only to go to jail?

SEKIGUCHI

It's the law.

POLICE line patrons up against walls.

Organized Crime Control Division members cart out women and men in handcuffs.

Joe rifles through his pockets, pulls out a directive from the National Police Agency.

JOE

It says here all police in Japan are to make serious efforts to close down human trafficking operations and take care of the victims.

SEKIGUCHI

That's NPA bullshit, divorced from reality. There's no way we can ignore someone working here illegally and give them shelter.

JOE

Even if they're victims?

SEKIGUCHI

There's no criteria for identifying them. That's why it's impossible to build a case against traffickers.

(MORE)

SEKIGUCHI (CONT'D)
Victims are classified as illegal
workers and repatriated. No
witnesses, no cases.

JOE
What if you just don't arrest the
women then?

SEKIGUCHI
That would be negligence of duty.

Joe grabs his jacket, his anger palpable.

SEKIGUCHI (CONT'D)
You find this appalling. So do I.
However since it's prostitution,
it's not really in our
jurisdiction.

JOE
Got it.

Noguchi, annoyed, looks at Joe.

JOE (CONT'D)
All yours.

Noguchi pulls out her POLICE BADGE, hangs it around her neck,
climbs onto the table.

NOGUCHI
Under section 216 of the Penal
code, I serve notice this premise
and its occupants...

Hara, bolts from patrons lined up against the wall. Noguchi
jumps down to stop him.

NOGUCHI (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

Hara head butts her, Noguchi hits the floor. Hara, runs.

Joe, doesn't miss a beat, a small sigh.

JOE
Fabulous.

He takes off after him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Joe, short of breath, chases Hara, past dog-walkers, past women climbing out of taxis...

Hara has a half block on him.

From nowhere, Noguchi blasts past, blood streams from her nose, leaves Joe a half block behind, cursing his fitness.

AT THE CORNER a car jerks to a halt, a man gets out, throws Hara in the back, surgical. Car streaks away.

83 Noguchi turns to see Joe, hands on knees, gasping for air. 83

EXT. TOKYO EXPRESS - DAY

Mamoru bursts into Mizuno's office.

MIZUNO

Try knocking. That's all, thanks everybody.

The room clears out.

MIZUNO (CONT'D)

You're a week from retiring, doesn't mean you can come barging in...

MAMORU

I rolled up, usual drills, ran the traps, checked clips...

MIZUNO

Ok, wait.

MAMORU

I'm trying to write a respectable story that, covers my ass...

MIZUNO

Hey!

MAMORU

And I received this.

Mamoru places a recording device on the desk. Pushes play.

VOICE (O.S.)

Erase the story or we will erase you.

(MORE)

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And maybe your family, we will do
them first so you learn a lesson
before you die.

They share a stunned stare.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Barely a stick of furniture. Phone RINGS off screen, stops.

JOE (O.S.)
Yeah... sure, sure I'll be down.

Joe walks in, naked. Every muscle aches. One side of his
face, completely swollen.

A band-aid over his eye; blood caked on his earlobe.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joe drops Sarai`s mickey mouse jacket in front of Sonram.

Joe rubs his neck in obvious pain.

JOE
Hara had five hundred thousand in
an attaché case.

SONRAM
One guy do all the damage?

JOE
Yeah.

Sonram's smile fades.

SONRAM
Thought you knew your way around
dark alleys. Let's go for a drive.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Joe exits the car with Sonram to see Hara, caught in the
glare of bright white headlights:

Hara blinded by lights, kneels, rigid with fear.

HARA
I'm so sorry. Please. Please.
Please don't hurt me. I'm so sorry.

SONRAM

What are you sorry for?

HARA

I thought...

SONRAM

How old were they?

Hara can't answer.

SONRAM (CONT'D)

Answer the question.

HARA

Seventeen...fifteen...

SONRAM

You knew, and you did nothing.

Joe watches Sonram open the trunk, he pulls something out. Sonram walks towards Hara. Joe sees it's a machete.

HARA

They pressured me to take this job, I earn less than half my previous salary. You have to have pity on me.

SONRAM

This isn't about you. This is about your daughters and making sure you don't forget them.

Sonram nods to two HEAVIES with him who grab hold of Hara.

One heavy slips a plastic strap around Hara's arm, uses it as a tourniquet. They wrestle Hara down, pull his arm.

HARA

I won't forget. I promise. Forgive me!

Sonram approaches, grips the machete. He looks down at Hara...

HARA (CONT'D)

Fukushima!

SONRAM

What?

HARA

They took her, some others too. I'll change. I'll be a better man.

SONRAM

I know.

Sonram slams down the machete, severs Hara's arm at his elbow. Hara SCREAMS in agony.

Sonram turns to Joe.

SONRAM (CONT'D)

If there's anything you need,
information, money, call me.

JOE

Does Sarai take any medication?

SONRAM

Why?

JOE

Girls are often kept sedated with
morphine derivatives.

SONRAM

Anti depressants. Her mother lived
on them. Joe?

JOE

Yes.

SONRAM

Don't come back without her.

INT. IDIOT SAVANT - DAY

Joe and Shun at a small table. Joe with a whiskey, Shun,
stirs his coke and ice with a straw.

JOE

You don't like me.

Shun gazes out the window.

SHUN

Did I say that?

JOE

You toler --, tolerate me.

SHUN

Are we getting married?

JOE

I just want you to be ok.

SHUN

I love you very much, you're my brother, but I have to do this.

JOE

I've gotta go away for work. Stay at the apartment, I get back, if everything's ok, we'll talk more about you getting your own place.

YUKA

I can check in on him.

JOE

And If it doesn't work out?

SHUN

I'll come back and tolerate you some more.

EXT. FUKUSHIMA - STREET - NIGHT

Raucous students, shoppers, strollers in middle-class contentment. An OLD COUPLE window-shops

WHAM! From nowhere, SARAI SONRAM(17) deep, old-soul eyes, strong willed, not the entitled brat we thought we'd find. Shoeless, knocks them over as she flees for her life.

Sarai dashes across the street, bounds around a parked car, onto the sidewalk.

INT. NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Mizuno and Mamoru share a strong drink.

MIZUNO

No story's worth dying for, no story is worth your family dying for.

Ash from Mizuno's cigarette falls onto the carpet, stubs it out in an ashtray, lights up another.

Mamoru sticks one in his mouth, fumbles for his lighter, Mizuno flicks his lighter, holds it to Mamoru's cigarette.

MIZUNO (CONT'D)

You're leaving the newspaper anyway. Now's the time. You're not a coward if you do it. You have no cards to play. The Inagawa kai?

(MORE)

MIZUNO (CONT'D)
The Sumiyoshi kai? They're cute
compared to these guys.

Mizuno grabs Mamoru's shoulder, looks him right in the eyes.

MIZUNO (CONT'D)
I know what you are trying to do.
You sure you want to go down that
road?

MAMORU
I'm just pursuing the story. I'm
not planning to do anything crazy.

MIZUNO
You're not planning at all. Think.
Keep you're eyes on the right road.

EXT. FUKUSHIMA - STREET - NIGHT

Sarai reaches the other side, alive, jumps a guide rail into
darkness below.

She hides, panting, panic in her eyes becomes relief. She's
free.

Still. Silent. Unprepared for.

THE SHOOTER. (40s) he's behind her. His watch, features
familiar, he's the large ex-military Iranian driver. Tonight,
all business.

His surgical gloves hold a Makarov, silenced pistol. He steps
forward, raises his weapon at Sarai, when.

Behind him, shit.

A BICYCLE comes quick, some UBEREATS DELIVERY GUY, on him,
already there, slows down.

Uber Eats delivery guy speeds up, past the shooter, he's a
witness, no choice, no hesitation, he raises his gun.

Uber Eats delivery guy panic-peddles away, as BANG spine. He
skids, falls, like a faulty toy.

The shooter, can't make sure his kill was successful, tucks
away the gun, descends onto Sarai.

EXT. PETROL STATION - NIGHT

Mamoru fuels up his car, snack bar in hand.

MIZUNO (O.S)

Find out what those bastards are
afraid of. Drive up to Fukushima,
compare notes with the police. Your
peace treaty with them will not
hold. I guarantee you that.

An old car speeds past.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Joe cruises past the petrol station, along the highway, flies
by a road sign, FUKUSHIMA 239 km.

INT. ABANDONED OFFICE - DAY

A framed Made in Tokyo poster sits askew on a wall.
Shattered, old furniture.

Sarai, kicks flails, tied to an arm rail. Bound, DUCT TAPE
over her mouth, tears stream down her face. Her eyes widen.

A FIGURE stands over her, pulls out a knife.

END PILOT