

Asakusa Junikai

Having received the notification of the long-awaited package from Yokohama, he thought that he could finally do what he always wanted.

In the evening, the back door of Djunikai was opened and a cart with a load drove up there.

- Careful, fragile.

- Is there glass, or what? Painfully hard.

Two men, holding the box tightly, carried it inside the tower. There were indeed glassware inside, but by no means dishes or works of art. When the movers finally left, the man was left alone in the basement of Djunikai. Dozens of wires were already ready to connect the device, scattered in a mess on the floor. He decided he would do it tomorrow. In any case, the final setup would have taken a few more days.

He went out into the street and looked at Djunikai. The building was called Asakusa Junikai, preferring this name to the official Ryoungaku. During the Meiji era, when it was first built, it was crowded with visitors, but by the beginning of the Taisho era, the walls of the half-abandoned building were covered with a layer of ten years of mud. Despite this, some merchants still kept their establishments inside the tower.

The man, Takeshita Hirotake, did not own the building itself, only the lightning rod at the top until it was replaced with a thicker and longer pole. In addition, he had in his untimely use a basement set aside for a warehouse. Indeed, the Djunikai tower lost its former significance, but people still said that it was huge, because there were no buildings in the district that could equal its height. Therefore, Takeshita chose this place - and he did not care at all what kind of things were going on below the foundation of Djunikai.

The Rokku theater district, with its small opera houses and small entertainment houses, is what lay on the surface for the layman, but other establishments near Djunikai were also popular. Especially shops like The Fine Alcohol Merchant. And such establishments did not receive their main income from the sale of alcohol. At The Merchant, the fair sex sold itself even cheaper than women from the entertainment district of Yoshiwara. Respected people bypassed this place. Visitors to this brothel were those who tried to become writers, such as Mori Ohai or Natsume Soseki, or

communists, which tried splash out in love his dissatisfaction with modern society after the Meiji restoration.

Usually Takeshita bypassed these places, but that day he was so inspired that his plan finally began to work that he did not hesitate to continue his way through the unknown corridors of the "Merchant of Excellent Alcohol". There the smells of cheap powder and garbage mixed in the air and the tart scent of loneliness. Not all women were invited to the lattice doors. Suddenly something caught in his peripheral vision caught Takeshita's attention, and he turned to look.

It was not a woman who had thrust her fingers through the holes in the grate.

And the girl sitting behind her in a dark corner.

It may have just been sold. Due to the lack of clients, she would most likely be forced to act as a servant. He did not feel any particular regret for her. However, the dejected expression of her face in this darkness for some reason did not leave Takeshita's mind.

About half a month had passed since that day, and the device in the basement finally began to work. After that, Takeshita almost stopped going outside. But he was not alone. A girl named Ain has since started living with him.



WAN-WAN-WAN-WAN ...

A humming echo came from the basement incessantly. If such a sound came from the direction of the same Yanaka cemetery, the locals would have raised a commotion, but since it was about Djunikai, no one paid much attention.

WAN-WAN-WAN-WAN ...

The sounds of the machine were similar to the operation of a generator, which was quite consistent with the description of the device. Takeshita and the girl remained in the basement, preparing for something. Takeshita surrounded himself with many makeshift machines and spent most of his time in the basement. Around him shone with a dim light, like the round lanterns of fishing boats, huge glass bowls. Images and letters appeared on their surface. It was said that the goldfish bowl lamp was invented by a talented Englishman named Brown. Takeshita stared at these bowls without looking up.

"Listen, aren't you tired?"

For the first time, after several hours of silence, the unbearably bored girl asked.

- I'm bored. Why can't I go outside? I haven't come out for so long! Let me take a break, if only for putting people in danger with electricity!

- Ain, we don't do anything like that.

Judging by her appearance, she was about to turn twelve, but her expression was like that of an adult. On her head wore, apparently against her will, a large bow, like a Western girl. And this bow was completely out of tune with a pair of big cat ears.

- Oh! I have remembered! Today at Mita there will be a lecture ... Hey! That person will be there from Germany!

- How is it? Is it today?

- You were going to go?

- Yeah ...

Last year, Modding magazine invited a renowned scientist, Ph.D. Einstein, to the city. His visit to Japan became a hot topic of discussion.

- Listen, I'll go there, and then I'll tell you everything. Thanks to the results Dr. Einstein's theory of relativity, I will be able to see future events.

"But not only because of the theory of relativity, right?"

Takeshita designed his device on his own, but he studied in America, and the teachings of Nikola Tesla also greatly influenced his research.

He used to look, as if detached, at the cathode projector, and then visit (as Ain assumed) the financial district of Kabutocho, returning with large sums of money in his breast pockets. Here, in the basement of Djunikai, he could create anything, because he did not experience a shortage of funds. But even knowing the future, Takeshita could not predict Ain's actions.

Ain, whose benevolence had been exhausted by the man's utter reluctance to leave the house, entered a small interior part of the low-ceilinged room, which she decided to occupy as her own. Machine parts, wires and other parts were scattered all over the floor, and in the center Ain had piled up a pile of teeth, pulleys, and wires half her height. Having begun to conjure over them, Ain even forgot to cook Takeshite's food and completely focused on her work. What was Ain doing? He had no idea.

Aristocrat of Surugadai

Junior Lieutenant Enoki walked along the busy Asakusa Street in his casual clothes. Recently, ordinary people were less and less loyal to the military, and it was impossible even to get on a tram without hiding a weapon. All because of the fruitless Siberian military expedition, which became a waste of taxes for ordinary citizens. In his heart, Enoki was in solidarity with them, but did not express his opinion out loud. The government began to actively disarm the army, but this did not concern the Military Research Laboratory, to which the junior lieutenant belonged, and Enoki grimly wondered how much more he would be associated with it.

It was from there, from Shinjuku Toyama, that he was sent to Asakusa, and not at all in order to have fun with local women from Junikai. No, the senior officer instructed him to find out the reason for the high consumption of electricity in

close proximity to the building. Such an expense really seemed strange. The radio station in Djunikai has not yet been built. There was an experimental station in Tokyo owned by the Daibe Ministry of Communications, which organized its tests there. And another one in Choshi. Both facilities were built by the Navy and required huge amounts of electricity to function. However, there were no such objects in Asakusa.

Come to think of it, only the Junikai building was tall enough to conduct electricity. Enoki knew about this firsthand: it so happened that, heading from Hiroshima to the capital, he visited Djunikai and even climbed to the very top. The stairs were decorated with illustrations of beautiful women, and they also sold souvenirs from different regions. Therefore, Enoki was sure that there was no object of interest nearby.

Nevertheless, approaching Djunikai, Enoki saw people leaving the building, although no one had lived there before in his memory. Two came out: a man of about thirty with a gloomy expression on his face and a girl about half her age. "Who could have brought a child to such a place?" - Enoki was surprised, watching the building until lunchtime, but then he noticed that another person began to follow the strange couple. After these two, a man came out, pulling a hunting hat up to his eyebrows, as if trying to hide his face. Isn't he from military intelligence?



That is, he has to keep an eye on Russian spies ... "What is he doing here? Why does he need this man? " Enoki was surprised again and also followed them. There was a report about a strangely behaving man from Junikai, and that man was undoubtedly ... Takeshita.

The couple got on the tram - Enoki did not lag behind - after which they reached Surugadai. There, the junior lieutenant finally noticed that the soldier with the sharp eyes that had pursued them earlier had disappeared. Who is he and what does he want? Enoki wondered to himself. Meanwhile, Takeshita and the girl walked through the gates of the large mansion. Looking at the nameplate with the owner's name, Enoki was surprised.

Viscount Fuenokoji Kimiyasu. His main residence was located in Sanbancho, but this house, which stood at the intersection of the Kanda and Surugadai districts, was also not empty. The newly built detached house was western style. The visitor had the impression that he found himself in a fashionable hotel in New York. Instead of a viscount, a woman of Russian blood by the name of Varvara Andreeva lived here, and it seems that this house was built just for her.

"This woman's skin is as white as a dead man's.

Takeshita glared at Ain, who was making an indecent comment.

- Ayn, don't stare at her like that.

- But...

Fuenokoji to Kimiyasu smiled.

- This lady fled here from Harbin; she is of Russian origin.

It seems that Varvara did not know Japanese, but realized that the conversation was about her, and got up from the sofa. To this the Viscount, without turning round, said coldly:

- Varya, will you dance?

- Now?

Looks like the Viscount told her to dance. Varvara immediately blushed with shame and embarrassment, but began to spin like a piece of clay on a potter's wheel.

Finally exhausted, Varvara stopped. The viscount himself did not turn in her direction, continuing to look at the only visible point outside the window. He took pleasure in forcing her to do what she considered disrespectful to the lady; at least, disrespectful in the life that she, being of noble blood, led earlier.

- Where she came from, the Chinese seized power. All the soldiers were killed.

Takeshita decided to take the chance and change the subject, and at the same time defuse the awkward silence.

- And ... her husband, by the way, is now detained. I took her under my wing, because she knows how to dance ballet.

Most recently, the world famous ballerina Anna Pavlova came to Japan; she danced in front of a full audience.

- Before we get down to business, I would like to discuss one unpleasant moment.

Takeshita didn't beat around the bush and immediately asked a question.

- Unpleasant? And what is it?

- You have attracted attention before. Even at the highest level interested in your actions. But for the military to chase you, this is the first time ...

- Okay, I'll find out. And, if it is within my competence, I will do so that the surveillance was withdrawn.

- Thank you.

- Okay, then let's move on to today's question. Although it was more correct would call it tomorrow. Haha.

"Hara Takashi will be killed very soon. 4th November at Tokyo station.

Hearing this, Viscount Fuenokoji narrowed his eyes, and his gaze became hard.

"The killer is a railroad employee named Koichiro Nakaoka. The essence in that he is the grandson of Shintaro Nakaoka.

Takeshita could not predict the very distant future. Usually it was limited to a few days.

The information he received from the device in the Junikai basement was passed on by Takeshita to the viscount. And almost always, with the exception of minor details, it turned out to be accurate.

Ayn, meanwhile, was bored.



Takeshita passed the information to the viscount for about an hour, after which the viscount, tired of listening, handed him a bag of money and he and Ain were escorted out of the room.

On their way out, they again encountered Barbara. Takeshita exchanged no more than a couple of words in English with her, but that changed her face. For some reason, Ain felt angry.

From Surugadai, they did not go directly to Asakusa. Instead, Takeshita and Ain got off at Ginzi Station and from there took the subway. Ain thought it was pretty handy. As they walked in the shade of the willow branches along the brick-paved path, Takeshita noticed that they seemed to be in a European city, and this made him a little uncomfortable. Ain, though nothing

I didn't feel this way, noted that the atmosphere here was different from Asakusa, and this made her constantly look around.



Takeshite remembered a time when he lived in America and there was a natural disaster on the west coast. He involuntarily narrowed his eyes and then noticed a man who was walking behind them. However, there was no sense of danger from the pursuer, and Takeshita decided to speak to him.

- You often catch our eye. Came here for shopping, I suppose?

In surprise, Enoki even dropped his cigarette.

- Who is he?

- Ah ... I, um ...

"Hmm, looks like you're not intelligence. And not a military police officer. But at the same time clearly military.

The junior lieutenant decided not to hide and revealed the reason why he was watching Takeshita.

Then they went to a pub where they served beer, and soon they were already hotly discussing some technical gibberish, forgetting about everything.

Although Ain had a great opportunity to visit Ginza with Takeshita, it all boiled down to a boring conversation to death.

At some point, Enoki looked around suspiciously and, lowering his voice, warned Takeshita:

- What you are doing in Djunikai can be detected by the military. Strong electricity consumption is recorded. If in Tokyo your actions are regarded as a threat, they can take action.

- Wouldn't what you have just said harm your position?

- As a scientist, I am very interested in what you are doing. And me would not want to be disturbed.

The junior lieutenant glanced at Ain. "What a strange girl," He thought.

- Who can interfere?

Electric girl against tanks

A rumble from a forest near Tokyo heralded the appearance of small, crudely shaped military tanks. Unlike the rhomboid tanks of the United Kingdom, which were recently submitted for army trials, these were smaller - like those made in the west of France. But despite their size, combat vehicles easily cut through the thicket, felling countless trees along the way and crushing home-made huts every now and then under their tracks. The owners of the huts could not complain to anyone: they built their huts illegally, and no one cared that they were also illegally deprived of their homes.

All residents in the district were told that new models would be tested. Citizens' complaints were not taken into account. Hearing about this, Junior Lieutenant Enoki was simply amazed.

- I don't understand. Why test here if there is a specially designated landfill in Aoyama?

Hearing Enoki's displeased voice, the man standing next to him flinched and turned around. Just like the junior lieutenant, he was in civilian clothes, but he also wore a hunting hat.

"They are funded by the twentieth battalion cavalry.

Is that all he has to say?

- A-ha-ha, it's clear, it means that influential people in this district had to do something. not to your liking.

The man in the hunting hat lifted the corners of his lips slightly and nodded in agreement.

- Are you from the military police? I am Enoki, from the military research laboratories.

"Soldier, Sergeant Yamanoi.

- It looks like you are spying on a man who lives in the Djunikai building.

Enoki continued to use polite speech when addressing Yamanoi, who, although older, was lower in rank.

- Usually tests are carried out before military operations on the mainland, but ... It makes no sense to drive tanks to the city.

- Maybe they think that, sitting in tanks, they won't have to cross swords ...

Enoki tilted his head thoughtfully.

- Does Takeshita live alone? There's a girl with him.

- Girl?

- Yes. Well, the one who lives with him. Do you know?

This time, Yamanoi shook his head.

- No idea. I haven't seen her myself.

Enoki was about to say that she was with Takeshita when the sergeant was following them, but Yamanoi decided to change the subject:

- Perhaps it has something to do with the mysterious electricity consumption in Djunikai building ... Not so long ago, there was one device in the basement of the building ... I don't even know how to name it ... it resembles a person in shape, but it is clearly some kind of mechanism, about three and a half meters long ... In general , this strange thing described circles, as if walking.

Hearing this, Enoki was extremely surprised. Maybe this is one of the mechanisms created by Takeshita?

At that very moment, a bright flash of light appeared before his eyes.

- That girl.

Mysterious glow in front of the tank. And in the center of this glow stood Ain ... Enoki saw this scene very clearly, although Yamanoi could not see anything. When the lights went out, the tanks lost control and started firing machine guns at each other. This incredible incident was never reported in the newspapers, but Enoki saw it with his own eyes.



Ain never went outside alone. Usually, when it was necessary to go somewhere, she went along with Takeshita. From the outside, it seemed that the man took care of the girl as a younger sister, but in reality it was not like that. Ain had several behaviors. Sometimes Takeshita cut her off

because she made too much noise, sometimes she chirped like a bird, and sometimes she didn't speak for days.

The man finally moved back enough not to hear the sounds of the wind instrument. The performer was a professional in his field, but, unfortunately, his entire repertoire was permeated with Dadaism. Walking around the pond in a circle, Takeshita lit a cigarette and, walking a little more, saw three people in front. A neurotic-looking man was talking to two foreigners.

- Already looking at the mechanism?

Takeshita stood covertly behind the nervous man. He whispered it so that no one else could hear.

- Did you say something?

The man was surprised by an unexpected voice.

All this time he stood at the postcard counter.

Ah ... no, just thinking out loud.

- I see. Today, I'll see, are you alone, sir?

- Eh?

- I remember that not so long ago you came here with a little mistress and bought several postcards.

The merchant wore black glasses. His eyes failed him, but he remembered the girl.

- Oh, yes. You have a good memory.

"Is that little lady your little sister, sir?"

- No, but ... you could say so.

- Excuse me for asking, I don't suspect you of anything, I just it seems that I have already heard her voice somewhere ...

Surprisingly, it was important for the man.

`` This girl ... worked as a servant in a liquor store in Djunikai. I took her from there.

- What ... but her voice is not like the one that was sold to prostitutes.

- Ayn ... Before the girl was in the store, she apparently was a homeless girl in the same place, in Asakusa.

- Clear. Well, I really heard about the strange girl who was seen there.

- Strange? Why?

- There were rumors about a girl with snow-white skin and an unfriendly face, which exuded threat. Representatives of the authorities repeatedly tried to seize her, but each time they fell to the ground, as if electrocuted, and she managed to escape.

- Electric shock? ..

- Yes. There was another rumor that a prostitute gave this girl her baby for supervision. After they found him all soiled, he suffocated. Yes ... such strange things.

Takeshita thought deeply.

- Her voice reminded me of that girl's voice, but of course it seemed to me. I apologize.

- Ah ... I'll go, goodbye.

Continuing to ponder his words, Takeshita headed towards the Junikai building. But, no matter how much he walked past the taverns, he no longer heard the sounds of the bamboo flute. Returning to the basement of Djunikai, he found that Ain was nowhere to be found. "I'll ask everything when she comes back, but for now there is no point in arguing with myself," Takeshita decided.

However, Ain has not appeared in Djunikai for three months. As "that day" approached, Takeshita began to lose his composure. He tried to be even more careful than usual and not get involved in any showdown. At a meeting with Viscount Fuenokoji, he would have warned that it was dangerous to stay in Tokyo. He would have said the same to the youngest Enoki from the laboratory, and he could not tell anyone else. And no one would have believed Takeshita if he suddenly said in one of the taverns on the outskirts of the city, where he drank ad nauseam.

Coming out of the tavern, he looked around the frail hovels. "Very soon they will all be on fire. People will lose their homes, innocent citizens will be killed, and

their killers will become worse than beasts in their cruelty. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Great, just great!" - shouted Takeshita similar predictions. Ain must not have wanted to live with him. That she was gone for good, he no longer doubted. He just had to get used to his old life again, to life without Ain. But by persuading himself, he knew he was being deceived. "Ain no." This feeling was ... like a part of his flesh, a part of his being, suddenly disappeared.



Where did he first meet Ain? At the entrance to the alcohol store? No, isn't it on the way to Danko Hill? "By the way, I never climbed that hill ..." - with this thought, the man moved into the shadow of a six-story building, avoiding the bright sun.

Recently, fewer and fewer people have visited the opera house. Cinema was gaining more and more popularity, and now people did not come to Asakusa for the sake of visiting the theater. By the way, not so long ago, a famous novelist founded a film production company and even released one with his own script. Thanks to the cathode ray tube (or Brown tube) installed in the Junikai basement, Takeshita could look at images of foreign places and actors' faces in the dark. Although this activity did not give him much enthusiasm, he noticed that with the improvement of broadcast technology, the picture became clearer. Ain's company had

having fun like that. Still, in the dark, even with concentration, it was almost impossible to focus on the film.

In recent years, female actors have hardly appeared on the screen. Takeshita believed that there were few suitable actors in Japan and generally avoided Japanese-made films, not paying attention even to those that were lying in his room in the basement. Nevertheless, the dark scenes on the screen looked little like Japan. The film, titled "Blood and the Ghost," directed by a new little-known director, portrayed the actor in an insane perspective: standing in a distorted doorway, he was painted all over in white to look like a ghost. The picture seemed to imitate the German film "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari", which recently caused a violent reaction from the public ... in the general atmosphere and in the words of the narrator, that film was just guessed. Takeshita, as if caught in a net, could not tear himself away from the screen, even when the story had already disappeared and only broken scenes of some rooms remained.

- film? The whole world is a distorted picture ... "- such thoughts visited clouded mind of a man.

- Ain!

Ignoring what was happening, he called out her name.

Was it ... that was Ayn's face on the screen? She stood behind the actors, and they did not notice her. As in theatrical performances, they danced, and the girl just stood and hardly moved; she looked steadily towards the audience. No ... to the side ... to his side.

Takeshita was bewildered, but his only thought was right now to be in the nets of the screen, there ... When he got up and walked on wadded feet to the picture tube, someone caught his hand and his head was empty. When Takeshita regained consciousness after drinking, Ain was next to him.

- Am I dreaming?

Ain looked at him with wet eyes.

- Where have you been, Ain?

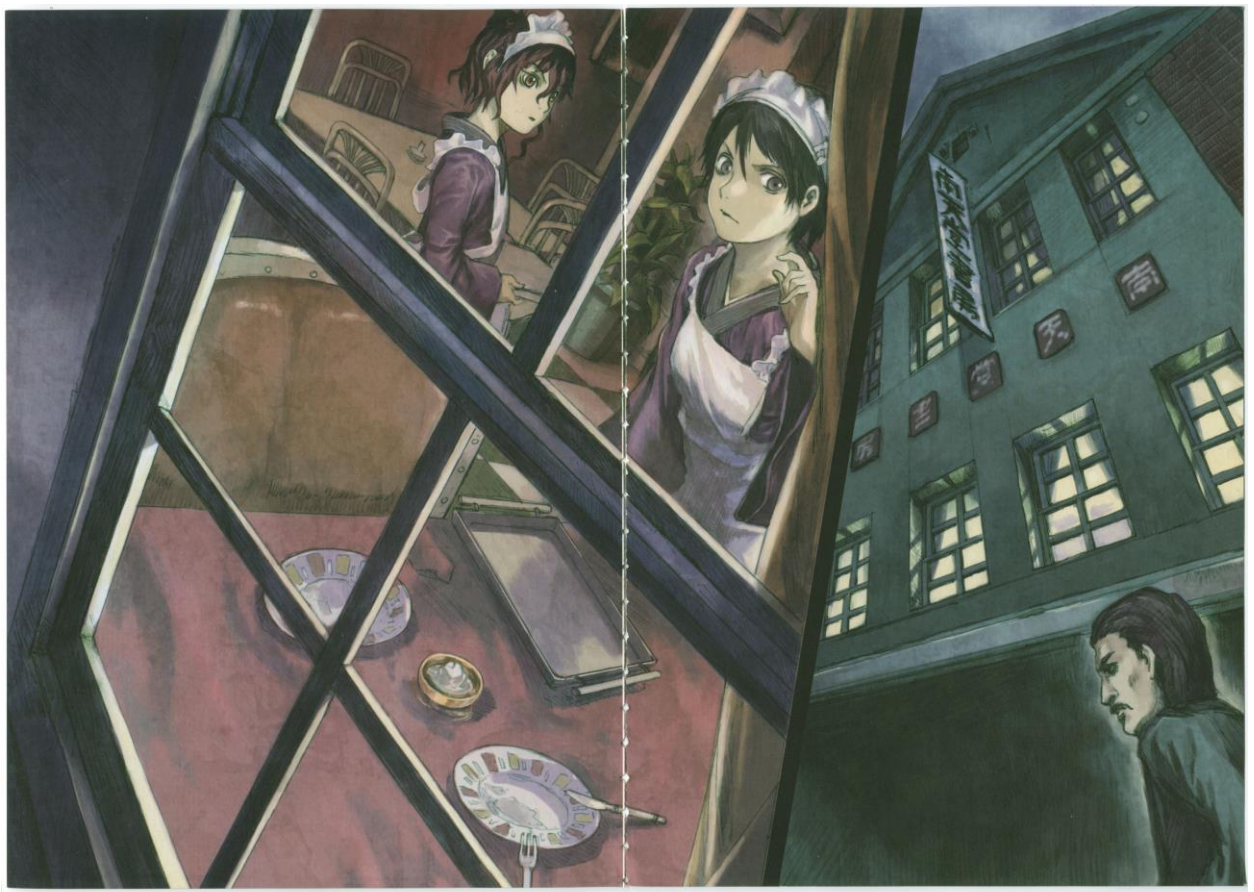
- "Disappeared" ... You've been here all this time, Ain.

Anarchist and Witch

At the foot of Danko Hill there was a shop selling used books and newspapers. The adjacent road led to the top of Khakusan, so in the cafe on

the second floor has always had visitors. Previously, it served ordinary Western food, but at some point anarchists-Bolsheviks, ideologists and Dadaists began to gather there: they drank a lot, discussed heatedly, made noise and started fights. Therefore, the shop now aroused persistent disgust among the doctors who lived in Hamarachi.

The second floor, among other things, housed the master's room and his study, as well as a small, empty triangular space. The workers wore the Russian "shirt" - they started doing this even earlier than at Nakamurai's company. It was decided that the waitresses would wear aprons over their kimonos. At first, the waitresses were chosen from among the actresses who danced in the productions, but recently the choice of girls for this position has been in doubt. Now the local girls are all a little tanned, looking like southerners, their faces are bright, their voices are hoarse, they are now and then whispering with young waiters in shirts, and a tart aroma of liquor hovers around them. Countless times in their presence the gramophone played the song Diaboro.



- I'm already so tired of this song.

"Just don't let it reach your ears.

- It's impossible.

"For you, perhaps Ain.

Ain ignored Takeshita's last offer with an uncomprehending look and sent it somewhere to the back of her mind.

- Listen, why, to come here, we always make a circle on the tram?

From Asakusa to here, as mentioned earlier, it was much closer just to climb Danko Hill. Maybe a weak old man would need a tram to get here, but Takeshita was quite healthy and hardy.

- Indeed, why? ..

Takeshita planned to pretend that everything was normal, but Ain wondered why they hadn't come to the store on foot. The answer to this question seemed difficult.

Takeshita, meanwhile, did not take his eyes off the stocky man who was sitting at a book by the window.

- What time is it?

Takeshita asked Ain without looking at her.

- No idea. I don't have a watch.

Ain answered, looking at the clock hanging on the wall.

There was a furious roar, and then a thin man ascended to the second floor. He had wide eyes, in which a strong will burned.

Ain realized that Takeshita was expecting this man.

- Oosugi ...

The man at the window exclaimed loudly.

The man, whose name was Oosugi, turned white, but after a second he smiled faintly and sat down again in his place.

He did not even turn towards Ain and Takeshita, who was unashamedly watching him.

"Haven't seen each other for a long time, Miyazaki.

- Yeah.

Sakae Oosugi called a silent waitress to the side and ordered wine.

- It's amazing that you drink alcohol here.

It was no surprise for Miyazaki Shigeo to see Oosugi here. There was a love triangle between Oosugi, his wife and partner Noe Ito. Although even the quadrangle, and later another member, Kamichika Ichiko, made a lot of noise by announcing this story. Miyazaki, who was then close to Oosugi, subsequently moved away from him and created his own independent school of anarchist literature.

"But I don't drink sake — a real poison. I can order beef.

- No thanks. I have to go soon.

Miyazaki sensed a strange determination in Oosugi's words.

Oosugi thought for a moment and smiled again.

- I'm not far. From here I will go to Arishima-sensei's house. How are you already guessed to lend money.

He took a deep breath through his nose and looked closely at Miyazaki.

Oosugi drained the wine he had brought in and put the money on the freshly cleaned table.

- Oosugi, let's hold on.

With a short nod in return, Oosugi was loudly sinking down.

Ain noticed that Takeshita was tense.

- What are you doing? ..

Takeshita suddenly stood up and, putting the coins on the table, rushed after Oosugi.

There was a tram stop at the top of Mount Shiroyama. When he got there, the man saw Oosugi in an Inverness coat and called out to him.

- Oosugi-san!

Oosugi stopped and turned around. It was clear that he didn't know Takeshita, and there was a sense of alertness in his gaze.

- Are you planning to borrow money from Arishima-sensei and go to Berlin?

Oosugi narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

- Are you also from Tocco?

"Who I am is not at all important. Please listen. You can get to Paris via Shanghai. However, you cannot cross the border. You will not be able to get to the anarchist convention and will have to return to Japan.

Ain, seeing how Takeshita was shaking a little, she began to tremble with fear.

"I see you have done an excellent investigation, young man. But that, where I go, it's up to me to decide.

- You misunderstood. Oosugi-san, when you return to Japan, you will not one. Noe Ito-san will be with you and ... other people will lose their lives. Therefore, you must never return.

Realizing that the man in front of him was not an organ, Oosugi softened his gaze.

"You look like you're worried about me. But don't worry.

Oosugi dropped his eyes. Soon a tram pulled up and he got on.

Takeshita didn't budge for a while. He understood. I understood that Sakae Oosugi simply would not attach importance to the words of a stranger who knew the future. But Takeshita couldn't help but warn him, could he?

The man shook his head in regret. Tears flowed from his eyes. While they moistened the ground one by one, Ain could only look forward with sadness.

She seemed to have slept for a very short time, but when she woke up and looked around, Ain did not see Takeshita anywhere. The man-designed mechanism was still moving, emitting a small hum. Brown's pipe was still working, showing a recording of the impending destruction.

Ain felt horror that he was not there. First of all, she was visited by anxiety that he could disappear from this world for some reason.

Maybe because she was so often angry with him, even after she regretted it?

The girl could not just sit back, and therefore left the basement room upstairs, and then outside.

Where to now? Where is he?

If he is not there, then Ain will disappear. Sadness and anxiety echoed in chest pain.

Even in the evening, after running through the entire Asakusa Park, Ain never saw Takeshita anywhere. Looking at the sky with despair and hopelessness, Ain noticed a man on the Djunikai observation deck. Looking closer, she realized that she was mistaken: the silhouette was not alone. There was someone else standing there.



Gathering to sneak up to those standing above, Ain quickly and quietly climbed the spiral staircase to the thirteenth floor. At that time, the site at the very top of the building was closed to the public, because the building was old and it was dangerous to be on it. Despite this, there were people who knew how to get to the very top: they used a window with a jammed bolt. Once on the upper landing, Ain turned to her ears, trying to catch the conversation between the two. From below, Ain decided that the second

the smaller figure was also a man, but now she was surprised to find that it was a young woman.

- You are now being watched by Tocco, the military police and the head of the military researchers of the Totsuka area. No wonder they are interested in your business.

- What to do. But they will accept my choice.

- But I don't understand why you, a newspaper reporter ... How are you there? ..

- Igarashi. Igarashi Mayumi. It all started last year when stocks Hoshiyama Pharmaceutical collapsed, and I found out that only one person had time to sell them and cash in.

After sneaking a little more, Ayn was able to make out the young reporter. With a bob cut, she looked like a teenage girl, but at the same time, she was wearing a man's suit - a strange sight. Despite this, she had expressive red lips, and Ain could not judge whether it was a natural shade or whether the woman had colored them. While the girl was looking at her, the woman and the man started a conversation on adult topics. Ain thought that she must have seen something that should not have been, and again held her breath. Then she noticed that behind her, it seems, was a long time ago, there was a stray black kitten, which began to approach the girl, looking into her face.

- And after that there were rumors that the same person came to Fuenokoji Kimiyasu to the house of an aristocrat - a well-known place in the area - they talked about something, and he received an award for these conversations. Another Chinese financier ...

- No, it wasn't me. It was Kita-san.

- Kita? Itsuki Kita? Ah, in charge of Japan's reform bill ...

- We didn't talk about anything important.

"But you are able to see the future.

- What I see is not accurate. I am not clairvoyant.

"Even if you don't have such a gift, you know what will happen next. At least the Viscount believes it.

- The quirks of the rich.

- Well, if the conversation was only about speculation on the stock exchange, then I would not have would be business ... But you recently started pacing around the area, and what you said could not fail to attract my attention. That a major catastrophe is about to happen in Tokyo - I heard you were talking about a major earthquake.

-

"A few years ago, the same was said in the Oomoto sect. Here I am I wonder, are you afraid of that?

- I do not care who and what thinks about propaganda, and I am not afraid of arrest. The only thing that scares me is the earthquake. I'm afraid of what will happen after.

- After? ..

- Several years ago I lived in the USA. When I returned to Japan, to San Francisco suffered a strong earthquake.

-

"The buildings were much stronger than those in Tokyo - and they were destroyed. The fire that followed was terrible. But even this was not the worst thing, but what happened to the hearts of people.

- Due to rumors, the mayor ordered the military to shoot people on the spot if they were suspected of looting.

- Can you imagine? Shoot people openly without trial or investigation. Countless ordinary citizens have died without any reason at the hands of real robbers, the military and the police.

- To make this happen again - and here ...

Hearing this, Ain finally understood what Takeshita had been experiencing all this time. His device showed the future, and that future was cut short by the coming disaster in Tokyo. Now he wanted to help — not for personal gain — that Ain knew for sure. However, the first person Takeshita decided to share information with was this woman, not Ain. Saddened, Ain squatted down to stroke the black kitten that came up to her, thinking to herself that the kitten must be lonely too.

Taking a deep breath of cigarette smoke, Mayumi quietly said to Takeshita:

"I also need to tell you something.

- What?

"It's not just Tocco and the military police who are watching you.

- Eh? .. What are you talking about?

- About the very top of the army. Remember when everyone talked about the emperor Kumazawa?

- Ah ... that man from Honshu who claimed to be a descendant of the Southern dynasty? Nobody believed him. Do you really believe that he is indeed a descendant of the emperors?

Mayumi exhaled slowly, then turned to Takeshita.

- That man from Honshu was never able to prove that he is who he is for gives out. Nevertheless, much of what he said interested some people in important positions.

Takeshita began to guess what she was driving at, which gave him goosebumps.

- You are not talking about those who now rule Japan ... but about those who wish to rule the country in wartime?

- TO Kumazawa now approached political activists, travelers as well as the military. This person has no proof of his origin, only ideas. And he did not commit any suspicious actions ... But only ... a person who really knows what will happen in the future ...

- If there is a person who knows what will happen next, then ...

Takeshita looked down gloomily at the base of the tower.

"Be careful, Takeshita-san.

Putting out the cigarette butt with her boot, Mayumi turned and started down the stairs. Hearing her fading footsteps, Ain, hugging the kitten, approached Takeshite from behind. Ain wanted to say something, but she just silently looked at Takeshita's face, which reflected despair.

In Asakusa Park, the permanent owner of the stall was loudly broadcasting, luring buyers. At a distance, at the entrance to the park, stood a stocky man. Listening to

ardent speech of the seller, he stared at the man living in the basement of the Junikai building.

"I knew you would surely ascend to my throne. It's so much like you. But this is sad. Please be careful.

Without saying anything more, the man with a loud voice moved deeper into the crowd. The wind blew - a messenger of great changes. The eye hidden under the headdress was as cold as glass. After some thought, Takeshita followed the man. Entering Nakamise, he lost sight of him. But that wasn't what surprised Takeshita. His legs froze by themselves.

- Better not to stop. Don't open your face here.

"You're right, Master Keith.

Kita Ikki slowed down a bit and, taking a step sideways on a diagonal, spoke:

- Why is Tocco chasing you? You don't look like a socialist, but ... Exactly ... you spread the rumor about a prophecy that spoke of the great earthquake in Tokyo.

Kita was aware of Takeshita's pursuit.

- If the prophecy said about an attack during earthquake, the main branch could have fought back, and you would have been honored as a celebrity and hidden in Kabuto out of harm's way. I think the whole point is that you prophesied without being an oracle of either Shinto or Buddhism.

- You are well informed.

- This land is subject to strong earthquakes every few decades.

Unsurprisingly, the cycle would soon repeat itself. Even in the air there was something ... reminiscent of a foreboding of trouble.

- So something can be done for sure. So that...

- Useless. This is a maxim, isn't it?

- Many die - not only because of natural disasters. Ubiquitous brutal murders happen.

- Of course it is. You can even say that there is positive sides.

Takeshita was taken aback by Kita's strange mood.

- Who says that?

- I would like not to hear about it lately. "Ah, no use. Oh, no benefit. " Even in war, there is always a voice motivating to fight.

- This is an ineradicable dirty feeling - the confidence that any war you can win.

- Right. The things of the rich go to fertilize the land, the poor become even poorer. It would be nice to once again break our world after the Meiji restoration and start from scratch ... And you want to eliminate those who think?

Takeshite sounded like a sharp irony, and he laughed out loud.

- What's the matter? Did I say something funny?

- No, it sounded like you, Mr. Keith, sympathize revolutionary ideology.

- Well, maybe so ... And the general public, and some military officers are worried about the current situation. For many, the coming earthquake will only play into the hands.

Takeshita turned serious. It was exactly like that. The government has already begun preparations.

- The meaning of the prophecy is that what happened will unfairly affect everyone. Those who have had plans of their own will suffer the most. However, I know the exact time. And I think that you may be able to leave in time, if there is a need for that.

Keith twitched at the last words.

- Mr. Kita, you too? .. Your wife rejected the gods and listened prophecy.

-. Do you know that too?

Takeshita has not given the details to anyone yet. However, Kita was the kind of person who could understand and comprehend the date and time.

- Fifteen days after the great earthquake, the army will kidnap and will kill the anarchists Sakae Oosugi and Noe Ito. The executor, a major of the military police, will be held accountable.

Even a man like Kita listened to him without a word.

- Many other socialists will be captured and foreigners will be sentenced to imprisonment. About you, Kita-sir, you will carry out an attack at Oosugi's funeral and steal the remains ...

- Enough.

Kita turned a little pale, but continued to control himself. However, the man continued:

- Soon after the earthquake, the Taisho era will be replaced by the Showa era. Until the government will repeatedly try to rectify the situation, but more and more military officers will rise up to fight, seeking a military coup, and you ...

- Hey, that's enough!

He froze and pierced Takeshita with a cold demonic gaze.

- If you know the future in such details ...

-

- Like you, I have no choice but to look with despair in my eyes to its accomplishment ...

- Sorry.

- It makes no sense for us to see each other. That's why if the Oosugi family returns to Japan, they better stay away from Tokyo.

- I told them.

- Here's how. Of course, you shouldn't worry ... Than worry about others, better take care of yourself.

- Hmm ...

- Djunikai is the base. If there is any equipment in that place, thanks to which you find out the future, then ... they will probably try to take possession of it ...

Suddenly Takeshita was seized with anxiety. Still, Kita had a strong intuition. Finally, freed after talking with him, Takeshita headed towards Junikai. The integrity of the device was of little concern to him. After all, the equipment could always be reassembled. However, Ain ...

As expected, his room in Djunikai was devastated. Someone took the kinescope and the input device, but the main part of the device was moved under the bed and therefore survived. But the man still had a heavy heart, and he decided to look into the next room ... There, surrounded by missing details, Ain slept peacefully.

- Ain ...

No one would dare to touch Ain. There was a calm smile on her face, as if she had good dreams. Taking a deep breath, the man sat down next to her and gently stroked her head.

Ain flying across the sky

Say what you like, but the grinding of the working mechanism terribly got on her nerves. Ain wanted to close her eyes and cover her ears with her hands. But then there would be no point in getting on the plane. Therefore, Ain resignedly sat in her seat, which was too large for her, and desperately peered into the sky, feeling the gusts of wind on her face.

The aircraft was of German production - Taube - it made a completely different impression than French or American aircraft, which looked like birdcages. The aircraft was decorated with an image of an eagle spreading its wings. The Taube had a large engine and could fit two people in its cockpit. In the strategic battle for the Qingdao Fortress, these aircraft were superior to the Avions Farman aircraft. In a hurry, the Navy recruited Taube, who belonged to the private hinterland, but the German forces surrendered without waiting for reinforcements. Ain became one of the few people who had a chance to fly such a Taube.

The pilot was Iwabe Tokuko, a female pilot who was inspired by American pilot Stinson Diver. Mr Diver arrived in Japan from the United States about five years ago and immediately showed

high aerobatics. After his noble estate was ruined, he fulfilled his old dream and became a pilot.



At times, Ain stopped hearing anything. It started in May, and from time to time Ain seemed to be stunned. In addition to the flight itself, it was inconvenient for her to sit in an airplane seat. However, she herself wanted to fly.

In the basement of Junikai, Ain created a mechanical device and gave it the name "Father". She devoted all her time to him. By that time, Father was almost, but still not completely finished — the steam valves in the electric machine were still open.

- Ain.

Ain turned around in surprise.

Takeshita rarely spoke to her himself.

- What?

- Well, would you like to go to some place?

- Why is that?

- It's just ... You dreamed of going somewhere, right? Maybe in other parts Tokyo, or in the Tohoku region. Or in other countries.

-

Ain thought hard. She never imagined herself to be somewhere far from Takeshita.

- For example, if you decide to leave, then I would not mind following later. behind you.

- Ah ... Okay.

Takeshita looked at her softly. Ain had never seen him like this and was frightened.

It always seemed to Ain that she would stay with Takeshita forever, and that was exactly what she wanted ... However, obviously, it was going to be over soon.

Takeshita fell silent, as if by his silence urging Ain to come to terms.

-. Okay. I do not care...

- Ain, I want to fly into the sky.

- Into the sky?..

Despite the fact that there were few planes at that time, not everyone was allowed to fly.

However, Takeshita, as soon as the request came, took Ain and took her to Aoyama's training center a few days later.

There he turned to Tokuko, the female pilot:

"It's better if I don't fly with you." Please take care of this child. If possible, let her fly over Asakusa — I think she would be happy.

Tokuko eyed him suspiciously.

- Taking care of 'this child' ... You ... Okay, I get it.

Ain was dumbfounded that they would not fly together, and looked reproachfully at Takeshita.

- You promised to always be by my side.

"We don't have time for this. In addition, the front seat will fit only one person. And you have always dreamed of flying in the sky. You will definitely like it.

After being given a helmet and motorcycle glasses, Ayn sat in the front seat of Taube, behind the control panel.

- I need to ask you something.

Ain looked desperately at the man.

- What?

- Could you hurry back to Djunikai? We will fly over the tower. And you will wave your hand to me.

- Hmm. I'm not sure if I can make it in time. But I'll try.

Ayn immediately ran to the plane with a twinkle in her eyes.

Finally Taube with Ain on board reached the center of Asakusa Park. The Junikai building towered in front of Lake Kheutan. There were no other high-rise buildings nearby. Ain was agitated by the expectation and did not take her eyes off the observation deck. Taube flew slowly around the tower, but there was no one there. At the time, Takeshita was in the guest room at Viscount Fuenokoji's house.

- Now he is going to Shanghai.

Varya spoke to him in English with a subtle accent.

- Is that how it is? I've heard about it.

"That's why I came here.

Varya closed the curtains and the room became dark. She took off her clothes, and her snow-white back was revealed to the man.

Countless red scars ran across her beautiful, pale, ceramic-colored skin.

- Do not misunderstand me. I don't let him just like me intimidate. I do the same with him.

- I don't want to go into details.

A strong scent of perfume dug into his nostrils as he held the woman's cold, tiny, European body.

In his hands, Varya's body began to heat up.

She bit his earlobe.

- Whose side are you on? On the side of those who are being tortured?

Takeshita was unable to answer.

Takeshita stroked all over her body with his cold fingers and was greatly surprised that Wari's body looked like a rough log. And her voice penetrated into his clouded consciousness, which had gone into contemplation of his own sensations.

- There is a person who wants to talk to you. See him for me.

-

Even opening his eyes, Takeshita could not tell where he was taken. But he knew it was the result of his own actions.

Perhaps this narrow room was a basement. Unlike his room in Junikai, this place was damp and uncomfortable. Looking at the dimly lit walls, he noticed that they were covered with cotton for soundproofing. He wanted to break free, break free and run away, but he understood that he could not oppose anything to those strong people who had brought him here. After a while the door creaked and two men entered the room. Both were foreigners; one was about the same age as Takeshita, and the other was in his fifties.

The younger addressed Takeshita in visible Japanese accents:

"Mr. Takeshita, please forgive me for such treatment.

Takeshita had wondered what this meeting should look like before. Varya tried to meet with the Bolsheviks, who now held power

in her homeland. To live on, she had no choice but to help them.

- We are sure that we have studied the whole situation.

Comrades ... Nikola Tesla, whose ideological student is Mr. Takeshita, was from Hungary. Perhaps they are close to the Russians, but it is by no means reasonable to equate them right away.

- So what do you want from me?

- You have a device that can tell what will happen in the future. You were able to create it thanks to our comrades. Therefore, we are entitled to this equipment. You agree, right?

"I don't know what to say," Takeshita replied in English.

An elderly man slapped him with a disgruntled look. "I wonder if he took part in the Russian-Japanese war?" Thought Takeshita.

- We can take you to our country. However, your equipment is not yet completed.

-. Why did you decide so?..

- If you had created such a device, you would not have lived like this.

There was a grain of truth in their reasoning. Indeed, a person who got the opportunity to see the future would not vegetate in such conditions, but would begin to profit from it ...

- In our country, we made a revolution. Of course, thanks to our comrades who created the idea. Any revolution needs documents that symbolize the idea.

- Declaration of the Communist Party.

- Japan also has such a document. Right?

Obviously, it was not about the Constitution of the Great Japanese Empire. Takeshita shook his head.

- It's a metaphor. I'm talking about the Rishsho Ankoku-Ron theory.

Takeshita did not immediately understand what the young Russian guy was talking about. "A treatise on the establishment of peace in the country" ... It was written by the Buddhist monk Nichiren, foreshadowing the national collapse in the text. This was his appeal to the believers. Now there were more people who believed in Nichiren's prophecy than ever ... However, Takeshita, realizing that the equipment from Junikai was not available to him, decided not to voice this thought.

"I thought so.

These words, heard from a foreigner, sounded very strange.

The Omoto Scripture was created by Nao Deguchi. According to one of the theories, the book contains the sayings of a god who came to Nao. Among those who accepted the end of the world scripture were many soldiers and scholars. When a great tribulation occurs, people do not distinguish between the truthful words and the lies of those who see the future.

Takeshita realized again how dangerous the equipment he had created and that he was now standing on the edge of the unknown, shrouded in darkness.

- Do you want to use the device for the benefit of the Japanese government?
However, when you are in danger, we will be your compatriots.
Remember this.

An elderly man grudgingly turned to Takeshita, as if scolding a child.

Ain was frightened.

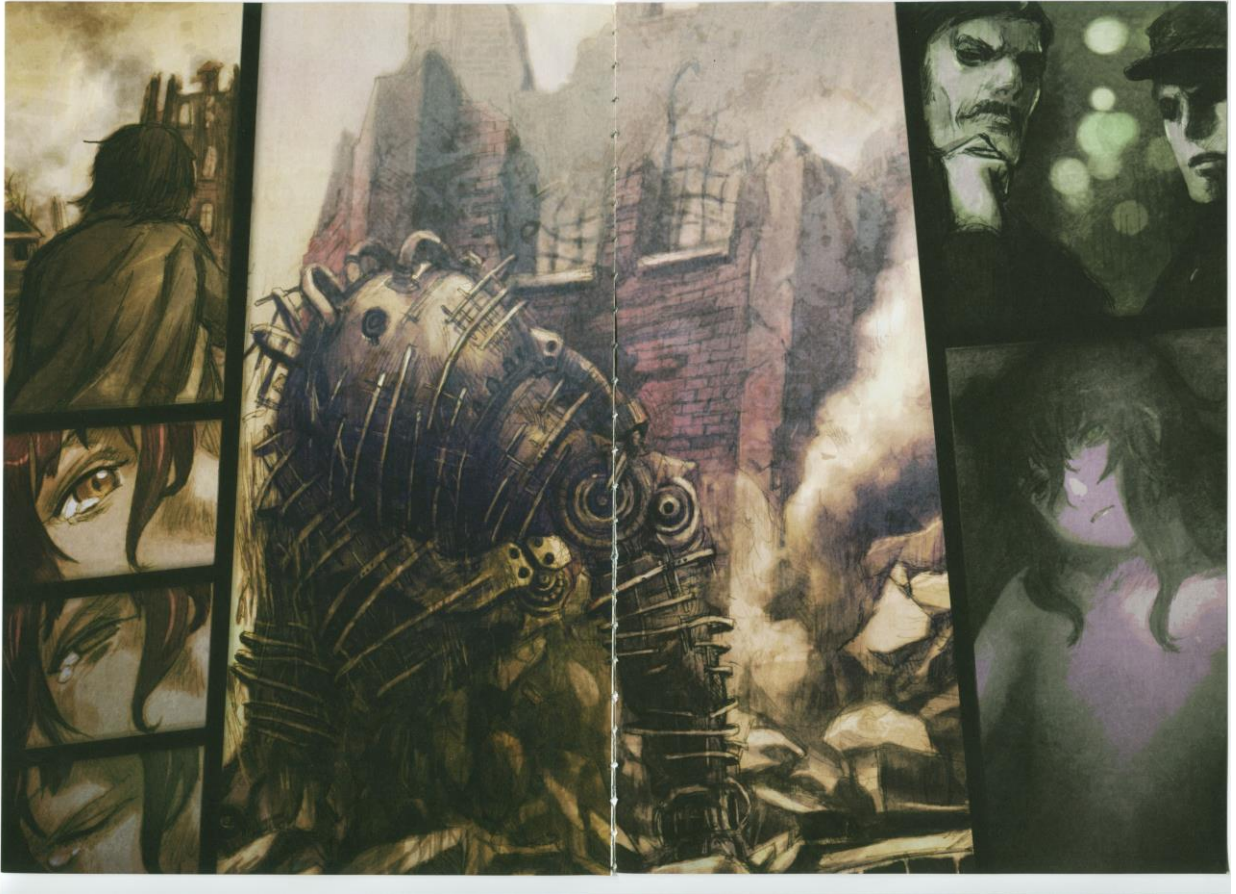
Ain felt that this nightmare would never end.

Takeshita will never return.

Ain's device called "Father" was almost complete, but to start the engine, a control command had to be passed to the input line. Takeshita had not been home for several days. He may never return again. Ain tried not to panic, but, lying on the bed, she kept coming back to the thought that she had been abandoned.

It became more and more difficult to distinguish between dream and reality. Was the ceiling in front of her eyes the ceiling of her room in Junikai or some other room? Someone came into her field of vision. But it was not Takeshita, but some strangers. Due to the blinding light, their faces were almost invisible. The men spoke in muffled voices.

- I wonder if this is the most important thing in the room? ..



- I do not know, but there is no doubt that the man received information from using some kind of device. And the device here is obviously not the main body. Let's see what we can get out of that person.

Ayn finally realized what those people were talking about. As soon as she decided to get up, the clothes suddenly slipped off her, and the girl realized that she was entangled with her arms and legs. Even that made Ain feel more sad than indignation. If he was here, how would he react to it?

- I guess some of this is ready ...

-. I don't see any trace ...

Ain had the thought that one of the men spoke as if at times he was not himself. He and one of his comrades also looked like people from the province of Suruga. It didn't matter now, though.

- How long will they keep him?

"It's useless to put pressure on him, so it'll be over soon."

- Get it back as soon as possible.

- Will be done.

Ain closed her eyes. If you close your eyes tightly, the light disappears. The next time she opens her eyes, he will already be there.



Prophecy day

The man was released the morning after his arrest. Of course, the torment he endured could not be compared with what the especially dangerous criminals who were detained for dissent had a chance to taste. However, there were bruises all over his body and he could not eat because of the pain. After what happened, he did not say a word. Female reporter Mayumi Igarashi and Lieutenant Enoki arrived to pick him up.

- He is OK?..

- If I had known in advance that it would be so, I would not have allowed it.

Two of them supported the staggering man. As soon as he recognized them, his gaze went blank.

"Wouldn't it be better to have a bite first?"

- What? You will not recognize me? I'm Enoki.

Enoki looked into the man's face. However, he only whispered in a choked whisper:

- What day is today?

- First. First of September.

All the paint has finally disappeared from the man's face.

- What time is it?

This time, Mayumi answered.

- Noon.

Suddenly, the man shook off the hands of his holders and tried to run away, but fell.

- What's the matter? What happened?..

However, the man, even after being called out, looked into the distance and rushed forward.

- Ain ... Ain is now in Djunikai.

- Ain ... Who is this?

The junior lieutenant recalled that he once saw Takeshita with the girl ... But she did not look like someone important.

- Ah ... Faster ... Damn!

- Why such a rush? Is it because of the interrogation?

Suddenly, the man grabbed Enoki by the collar forcibly.

- Hey, what time is it exactly?

- What?

- Ten past eleven. September 1st, Taisho era.

The man turned pale even more. The minute hand on the clock has not yet reached ten. No matter how in a hurry, but from here you will not have time to reach Djunikai in time. The man called out the girl's name. It is strange that he wasted energy on such a pointless occupation.

Bam ...

Ain sat down in shock. There was a jolt, and it was so sudden that she did not understand what had happened. The first wave started with small migrations. The room in Djunikai was already almost empty - the previous visitors took everything out - but the rest of the equipment fell to the floor from the shock. Things fell from the wall. One of the brick walls began to crumble.

- What happened?

There was a dull sound, and the top of the tower began to crumble. Ain finally came out of her stupor. She crawled into the next room, where the equipment was.

"Father, I don't want to leave you here.

Ain opened a small iron door behind the rig and slipped inside. It was crowded and she had to curl up into a ball. She closed the door to the outside world, after which she brought the device to life.

Zzzzz ...

Debris fell. The ceiling in the room began to crumble. The "Father," an unfinished mechanical device, stood up and picked up the wreckage.

The Junikai building was designed in the likeness of a water tower, and at first it was difficult for people to live in it. Due to a strong earthquake, the upper part collapsed, and the inner part collapsed completely. Around the tower were wooden shacks in a quaint labyrinth. During the day, they often cooked over an open fire, and a strong earthquake provoked many small fires, which then merged into one huge one.

The device, devoted only to the creator, crawled out from under the rubble, but there was not a single living soul around.

Some time after the earthquake, the army, fearing a collapse, completely dismantled Junikai in Asakusa. Prior to that, rescuers with engineers examined the ruins for several days and carried several corpses out of the gazebo,

which was hidden from view. The bursting fire burned all the grass. The fiery land made the world look like the Underworld.

It is unclear where Takeshita was before the fire. Obviously, the Djunikai building could not survive. However, he could not find Ain. Takeshita was unaware that she had created "Father". Taking a straw mat, the same one used by local tramps, the man laid it on the burnt grass and sat down to rest.

The people around were gossiping about different things. Rumors they were rumors.

Someone poisoned the water in the well.

Everything is as it was in the port of Kuva. Takeshita had no doubt that there was a person like him there, and that the rumors were the same as now.

In the port of Kuva, there were rumors about the disappearance of an entire prosperous Chinese city after the earthquake.

Rumors about the brutal killings of the Japanese have already gone beyond mere rumors.

The man sat in one place most of the time, but occasionally he got up and began to randomly walk around the area. They did not pay attention to him. Takeshita was only noticed by one person when he began to climb Dangozaku Hill. The fire on the hill died down, and it became relatively safe there, so the man moved there without fear.

For many years he avoided this "lion's slope".

At the top of the white mountain, at the very top of Dangozaku, there was a temple of heavenly bamboo. The man remembered the day when he and Ain rode the tram and he sat with her in a cafe on the second floor. Takeshita used to live here. However, since he left the country, he has not come here. This place pulled him into its web, forcing him to remember what he did not want to remember.

Even after a long absence, he felt nostalgic. This was the home of Dr. Oogai, who went to a nearby store for soba noodles. Slightly up the slope was the old puppeteer's house with a new cornice ... The image of Ain again surfaced in Takeshita's head, and his chest pinched. During the Meiji era, there were dozens of shops, where puppeteers presented their skillful chrysanthemum products to the common people. Over time, the skill of creating dolls from this material was lost. But there were still a few craftsmen left, and they continued to make dolls that looked like living dolls.

No ... no more.

No matter how much he tried to hold back, Takeshita couldn't let go of the thoughts of the past. The first time he saw Ayn was at a liquor store. In exchange for a little money ... Although it was a trap for the educated ... The story of Takeshita was ... Although it's hard to believe.

It was then that he saw Ain for the first time.

Suddenly he went out into an open field, then looked into the puppeteer's workshop. The old puppeteer, it seems, had already left work, and the interior of the workshop, which was visible through the window, was empty. But Takeshita was noticed by someone. There was a girl's doll — exactly a bloody man. Although, upon closer examination, it became clear that she was not alive. Just a wooden figure in a light summer kimono.



Since then, Takeshita began to visit the workshop day and night. The doll did not move. It is not clear when she became an animate being for him. He wanted to run and become free, but he could not tear himself away from his own thoughts.

As a person who managed to understand the revelations of Tesla's genius, Takeshita was an intelligent and strong-willed person. But his mind was powerless to try to forget that girl. He was afraid that when he came and she suddenly found herself in a different outfit, he ... He did not want to be like that. All rational thoughts are gone.

One day, Takeshita broke down the door to the workshop, grabbed the doll and fled. In his hands, the doll shouted "thank you." Takeshita was surprised but delighted.

Conversation with Viscount Fuenokoji

"Speaking of this man, Takeshite. I don't remember how he came from United States, but I have an amazing story about him. Was he here by chance? - then the Viscount burst out laughing. - He's crazy about some kind of puppets. Mr. Dakwart said that Takeshita carries some kind of doll in his bag, walks and sometimes even talks to her. Of course, my wife and I also sometimes talked to the doll.

The story of female reporter Igarashi Mayumi

"Um, you see ... When Takeshita was released from Tokuze, I was asked to pick it up. At that time, I had not heard anything about the girl doll. But I interviewed a female pilot, Tokuko, who was asked by Takeshita to fly over Tokyo. And he also asked to take her into the cockpit a girl who was actually a doll. He called her Ain.

Conversation with Lieutenant Enoki of the Toyama Military Research Center

- As a matter of fact, I conducted research on radio weapons developed by the Navy from the Toyama Research Institute in Shinjuku. So, once I spotted the source of a strange radio emission, and I had to meet with Mr. Takeshita ... Did he have a daughter named Ain? Well, I saw her. A doll? .. So it is impolite to speak. She looked more like a human ... perhaps.

Takeshita was rushing up the slope of Dangozaku with all his might. His body screamed with fatigue, his heart seemed to break. He thought that if he stopped, his heart would freeze with him. These memories! .. If it was a nightmare, it would be better not to wake up. It would be better to never see this nightmare. Ain is gone. No, from the very beginning the girl did not exist. He didn't want to admit - but there was no other choice.

Showa era

No one knows exactly how and when Takeshita lost his Ain after the Great Earthquake. Perhaps he restored equipment from Djunikai, or perhaps he sank to the bottom and sank into oblivion.

After the earthquake, there appeared those who prophesied about the onset of a disaster. Takeshita was not alone in foreshadowing disaster. Some Sakamoto Satoshi and Koishikawa Imagami hung on Honjo Fukagawa a scroll - "Spiritual Covenant" - which said: "This year will be marked by many deaths." It was not long before the earthquake. Everyone who listened and did not sleep that day managed to escape.

The female reporter Mayumi heard about Takeshita's suspicious activities all over the island. However, she was mistaken, believing that in 1974 he returned to Tokyo.

In an area called Ikebukuro, the consequences of the disaster were minimal. This is understandable: at that time there was no urban development. Near Rikkyo, at the west exit, students and all sorts of strange young people gathered in the cafe-bar every night. This year there was an uprising caused by the military. The public understood how the state deals with their property. However, for young people it was a frivolous time when they could enjoy freedom without money.

Although Takeshita was no longer young, he felt very young at heart. The place to the west of the stop at Ikebukuro seemed very comfortable to him. He often sat at the far table on the opposite side of the bus stop. "So noisy," he said, and then for no apparent reason he dimmed: "No, I don't care." Sometimes he would find a secluded spot and sit, avoiding all conversation. The middle of the day was too busy for him. Takeshita addressed a person sitting next to him a little older than the noisy people around.

- Do you draw too?

Takeshita already knew that many of the westerners of the city were students who dreamed of becoming painters or sculptors. The man to whom Takeshita approached wore a beret, which made him think that he was an artistic person.

- I'm a poet.

- Here's how. Tell me why do you think people like to gather here artists?

The man hesitated to answer.

- Not far from here, next to Shiinamachi, an unplanned studio. Initially, there was a swamp. Then the homeowners started selling charcoal there and built a house for young artists.

- Here it is ...

- It's like Montmartre in Paris. A passion for art blurs the distinction between places.

The poet shook his head.

Just at that moment, a man with sharp facial features entered the cafe. Instead of a leg, he had a wooden prosthesis. Looking around the place, he muttered, "I'm disappointed."

The next day, Takeshita walked around Shiinamachi. The atelier did not particularly attract Takeshita, but after the poet's story he became curious. He wanted to go there at least once. The first thing he noticed was that the cornice was lined with a triangular roof of red cement tiles. During the daytime, a group of sculptors worked on their creations, but at night the west side was free of hustle and bustle.

Takeshita walked forward without much intention, but his gut told him that something was about to happen. In the studio where the sculptors worked, various plaster statues were placed in a circle. They were probably part of some past exhibition. Many of the sculptures were arrowheads or pale human bodies. The man stopped, peering into the plaster statue, and suddenly shock went through him. As if an icy palm touched my heart. He discovered something incredible in a plaster statue. It was a life-size statue of a girl. No matter how many times he denied it, he saw the image of a girl that no one else had ever seen. He spoke to himself. Ayn was also just a doll. Before the earthquake, he was convinced that she was a living girl. Ayn did not leave. It was not originally there.

Takeshita said this to himself countless times, but always, leaving the house, he unconsciously continued to look for her image. Takeshita stepped away from the plaster statue and looked out the window of another atelier. It seems that this room belonged to an abstractionist who was no stranger to surrealism. The owner was not inside. In the room, he saw a canvas - not an abstract canvas, but a realistic portrait.

Takeshita often wondered if he had become insane. After all, now he saw Ain on the canvas. He wanted to see her, and his mind showed him the desired illusion. This was not surprising. The man barely left his heavy thoughts and with a load on his heart tried to leave. Behind the farthest studio stood a bronze statue of a girl. The creation was completely different from the plaster statue. Takeshita looked at the statue for a while and carefully

I ran my fingertips over it, feeling the touch of cold bronze. It was ... no, not an illusion.

It was undoubtedly a sculpture of Ain.

He turned around. Ain was here.

Takeshita thought it must have been a blessing. Ain was still by his side. The thought made him feel warmer.

He turned and walked towards the city lights. The rest was already unimportant.

Junikai and the vicinity of Asakusa

[Ichiyanagi Hirotaka]

Asakusa as a symbol of the Meiji and Taise eras. "Junikai, Asakusa", scene "Despera"

What was this building? ..

Construction of the Tokyo Sky Tree is underway in Tokyo. They want to open it in the spring of 2012. When completed, this tower will become the tallest television tower in the world. It is said to be the second tallest structure in the world. Everyone is waiting for the moment when it will be possible to look at the city from the windows of the dome. But did you know that during the Meiji era, the neighboring Taito area had its own high-rise landmark? Of course, that building was orders of magnitude lower, but it had a similar effect on people.

Ryounkaku, better known as Asakusa Junikai

On November 11, 1873, hired foreign engineer Barton of Tokyo Imperial University designed an octagonal a twelve-story fifty-two-meter-high tower with brickwork and wooden floors - Ryounkaku, also called the "Eiffel Tower of Asakusa". A similar project in Tokyo was revolutionary - both in terms of the height of the building and in terms of the equipment involved. The building was equipped with the then state-of-the-art electric lifts. The entrance fee was eight yen for adults and four yen for children. Shops were arranged on every floor up to the ninth floor, and an observation deck was on the tenth floor. The eighth floor was accessible by elevator or stairs along the outer wall. Further it was necessary to climb a spiral staircase. The last two floors had terraces instead of windows. And at the very top, where the best views opened up, binoculars could be rented for a fee. In the Meiji era, in the twenties of the last century,

Izvestiya: Genre Painting, Issue No. 23 (23rd December) has the following description: "From the tenth to the twelfth floors, each has an observation room, without chairs, a thirty-fold telescope is provided" ("Reunkaku"). North of Shinjuku was the famous Yoshiwara quarter, which has existed since the Edo period. Many visitors seemed to climb the Ryounkaku to view the "red light district" through a telescope. Also in the description of the building there were the following points: "At night in the room on the eleventh floor there are five thousand arc lamps with candles and three lamps on each floor. One hundred and seventy-six windows offer beautiful views of the moonlit nights. "

At night, the Asakusa Tower probably stood out from the general background.

Ryounkaku quickly became a local landmark. They say that already in the third year after its opening, more than twenty thousand people visited it. As for the opening landscapes of the park ... Edogawa Rampo in "Traveler with a Picture" (June 1929, "New Youth") has the following passage: "Have you ever climbed this tower? Not? Oh, what a pity. Wonderful building. One could only marvel at what kind of magician had built it. According to rumors, the tower was designed by some Italian architect. I must say that in those days there were many curious attractions in Asakusa Park: spiderman, sword dance, balancing on a ball, street magicians, as well as a kinoscope ... Yes, and also the "Cryptomeria Labyrinth", where it was easy to get lost in the intricacies of green passages. And in the center of the park was a giant tower made of bricks. Truly, it was an amazing structure, more than eighty meters high, topped with an octagonal roof that looked like a Chinese hat. From anywhere in the city, wherever you were, you could see it. " This passage faithfully conveyed the impact the tower had on people.

Ishizumi Harunosuke, who was called "Asakusa's hermit," stated in *The Asakusa Economy* (June 1933): "The audience was so amazed by Ryonkaku that they were undoubtedly proud of her. Some of the elevators in this building threatened the world with a coup. "

In *The Traveler with a Picture*, Ryounkaku's interior was described as follows: "... It was gloomy and damp inside, like in a crypt. There was a war with China, and the walls were hung with eerie, depicting battle scenes, oil paintings, then still quite a rarity. As if drenched in splashing blood, the canvases glowed ominously in the dim light that seeped through the windows. Spiral, like a snail's shell, the staircase led upward, loop by loop. Under the very roof there was an open area, fenced with a railing. Coming out of the gloom into the bright light, I involuntarily closed my eyes. The clouds floated directly overhead; I thought I could reach them with my hand. Below, the roofs of houses were randomly molded to each other, the fort was dark in the distance, and beyond it was Tokyo Bay. Directly below me I saw a small, like a dollhouse, a temple; among the tiny pavilion boxes, little men scurried about, from above, only legs and heads were distinguishable. Several visitors, quietly talking, admiringly admired the spread out view. The brother stood at a distance and stared through binoculars at the Kannon Temple. It was an amazing sight! "

Oil paintings depicting bloody battle scenes did not appear by chance. Even earlier, when the elevator ceased to be popular due to

for the high noise, the project "one hundred beauties" was developed. A hundred photographs of geisha from different parts of Tokyo were displayed inside the elevator, and customers were asked to choose the most beautiful one. After that, various projects with beautiful girls became the hallmark of Asakusa Junikai. For example, portraits of women from different eras, or photographs of a hundred beauties of Yoshiwara were hung there.

Later, when the Japanese-Chinese war broke out in the spring of the twenty-eighth year of the Meiji era, the lovely portraits on the twelfth floor were replaced by patriotic sketches under the general title "Victory at sea and on land." At that time, Djunikai acquired a gloomy aura, somewhat reminiscent of the Tower of London. Dark clouds were gradually gathering over Ryounkaku.

The thirtieth year of the Meiji era

The owner of the tower, due to a difficult financial situation, laid the tower in a pawnshop. One of the reasons for the outflow of visitors was the boom in the photo industry. In the Meiji's forties, the Asakusa exhibition halls, one by one, turned into photographic studios. At that time, Djunikai began to bring in too little money. Nevertheless, the tower continued to be a symbol of the entire entertainment district, so unique to Tokyo. Over the years, the view of the tower reflected in the Khatan pond has become popular with people. Djunikai, which appeared out of nowhere, became a symbol, filled the void of the red light district. Ishikawa Takuboku even had lines dedicated to this building: "I climbed Ryounkaku in Asakusa and could not breathe." (May 1942, Subaru)

The word "Djunikai" has become a conventional designation of the place "what is under Djunikai"

Near Djunikai. Caves

In 1971, Ishikawa Takuboku moved from Hokkaido to Tokyo due to poor living conditions and got a job as a proofreader for the Asahi newspaper. He quenched his depression by walking through the "Djunikai cave labyrinths", as well as "a cramped, dirty city full of disgusting voices" ("Diary in Latin").

A little later Takuboku, Saisei Muro also walked through the tower's labyrinths. Here is a description from his "Pale Cave" (October 9, "Eloquence"): "... With the onset of night, the number of drunkards increased. The booze and partying grew louder. Quarrels and skirmishes began. Sounds of blows, screams. Many sang the then popular song "Eh, this fruit shop ..." It was repeated all night long. "

By the way, Naomi from Junichiro Tanizaki's "Love of a Whore" (13/03/07, newspapers Osaka and Asahi, "Women") grew up in the "garbage lane" in the Shinjuku area near the temple in Asakusa. "Ry Punkaku Tower was very popular at the time. She was portrayed on postcards and posters. In addition, it, along with the Tokyo Tower and the Tokyo Sky Tree, is considered one of the three main towers of Tokyo. "

Nevertheless, the "cave under Djunikai" ceased to exist after the massive repressions of 1917 and 1923. Prostitutes disappeared into the darkness of Tokyo.

In 1907 the building was used as a theater. The main performances were Shinnai, Guiding, Kijutsu, Naniwabushi and Yasugibushi. This was partly because the rent was cheaper here than in other buildings in Asakusa. However, the value of the tower was still steadily declining. The interior of the building remained intact, and only the theater located in the basement gave it value. However, some literary critics still climbed to the very top, fascinated by the mysterious aura of Djunikai.

And finally her last day came. September 1, 1923. Day of the Great Kanto Earthquake. The whole area turned into a burnt field. Although Djunikai was crumbling from the inside, the outside of the tower retained its appearance. However, the dilapidated building was deemed dangerous. As a result, on September 23, the tower was twice blown up by the Akabane group, after which it ceased to exist.

Yasunari Kawabata in *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* described what happened during the explosion: "The collapse of Junikai - its suddenness - shocked everyone. In the calm after the earthquake, many architectural objects were destroyed. One of them was Djunikai. The realization of this lumped our throats. Overnight, what was valuable to us turned into a pile of bricks. I remember that then everyone wanted to cry. "

The explosion of the tower was an unprecedented event in Asakusa.

Asakusa as a labyrinth

Contemporary art and decadence. Many writers who came to Asakusa during the Taisho era were drawn to this place. I followed in their footsteps.

Get off at Asakusa Station on the Tokyo Ginza Subway Line. Turn right at the first exit and walk forward for a while.

Many tourists today take memorable photographs. Walk along Nakamise Street. For some reason, there are statues of frogs and kappas in a display case in an alley leading to Asakusa's main street.

Could it be the mascot of the Kappabashi shopping district? Walk through the Hodzomon Gate and enter the Sensoji Temple grounds. Then turn left and go forward. There you will find a monument dedicated to the distinguished people of the Asakusa Shadow Theater and silent films. Go through the sections ahead and follow the five-story street to the pagoda. Then walk straight down the street to the park and you will see the Asakusa Hall of Honor. On the northwest side of the street, directly across from the Hall of Performing Arts, is the sixth Broadway district. It was once the largest festival venue in Tokyo and has attracted many writers. Stand at the six-lane intersection in front of the Performing Arts Hall and look around. Looking north, you will see the whole of Asakusa.

Soon after the war, the Hatan pond appeared here. This is a huge pond that was dug in 1905 and covered over two thousand square meters.

In the area to your left, there used to be many entertainment venues that were not part of Asakusa.

Edogawa Rampo in *Asakusa's Hobby* (September 1926, *New Youth*) described the place next to the pond as follows: "In the center of the district, by the busiest street, there is a pond. Its surface was darkened by algae, and the stronger the contrast with the wisteria bridge that stretched over it. Moss grows on the shore and weeping willows hang like those descended from the canvas. From the side of the entertainment district, songs and dances are heard, but here there is peace. Everyone is standing on the bridge - modernly dressed, stylish, gorgeous - making small talk. Fascinating contrast. "

The surface of the pond reflected the symbol of Asakusa - the twelve-story Ryoukaku. If you stood facing the Hall of Performing Arts, then it would rise from the north side.

The Meiji government established the foundation of the Sensoji Temple in Asakusa Park in 1873. And eleven years later, in the eighteenth year of the Meiji era, Asakusa Park was divided into six districts. From about the same time, Asakusa became associated with the latest trends in science and art. For example, in 1923, the Japan Panorama Pavilion opened here, highlighting the events of the American Civil War. In November of the same year, the Ryoukaku was opened in the northern part of the sixth district. The tower was equipped with the first electric elevator in Japan at the time, and this became a hot topic of discussion. In addition, in 1905, an exhibition of dioramas was held at Panoramas. While in Asakusa Park

there were twenty-nine permanent buildings and nineteen temporary, and the total number of visitors reached fifty thousand people a year.

In the third and sixth districts, the first permanent cinema in Japan, Denkikan, was opened. This was in 1868. At the same time, Panoramas of Japan, Kinopanorama, Taiseikan and Sankatsukan, and an amusement park were gaining popularity. The end of the Meiji era was marked by the growing popularity of films about the Russian-Japanese war. A cinema panorama is a device that creates a projection from light beams, such as Niagara Falls or views of London.

The famous writer Soseki Natsume once visited the amusement park. Then, in 1907, he found himself a student in the person of Terada Torahiko, who returned from his studies in Germany. In "Memoirs of Teacher Soseki Natsume" (December 7 of the Showa era, volume 8, "Haiku Lecture Course") Terada describes the picture of that time as follows: park, though all this time he seemed annoyed. There, on a wooden horse, he was not at all cheerful. "

Perhaps those memories were so vivid that Soseki made the amusement park appear before the equinox week in his book (January-April 1945, Meiji era, Tokyo, Osaka and Asahi newspaper). However, this facility was closed in 1923 due to a lack of visitors.

The transformation of the six districts of Asakusa really happened very quickly. Changed architectural styles have become trendsetters.

Tanizaki Junichiro summed it up in Shark Men (January 9th of the Taisho era, Central Public Opinion): "What happened to the panorama? And with an amusement park? New photo studios are growing like mushrooms after rain, and who will now remember what was in their place? Where are Inoue Masao and Kinoshita Yasuko now? They dissolved like smoke from an illusion, swept away by a gust of wind - only a Buddhist temple, and flocks of pigeons, and the foundation of Djunikai remained! "

Kafou Nagai took some pictures of covered streets with shops in the Entertainment series (July 42, Meiji era). "The noise of the crowd, the bustle of the shops, the packed shelves. Among this splendor, the showcases, decorated with multi-colored lights, stood out. As soon as I saw it once, my heart surrendered to this radiance. I felt so light, as if a flower had blossomed inside me. "

The sight of those shimmering flowers and the delicate scent from the Sensoji Temple gave this extraordinary sense of inner purity.

This is how Asakusu described Sata Ineko in *My Map of Tokyo* (March 24 of the Showa era, the literary society of the new Japan): "The atmosphere of the sixth districts was constantly modernizing, but when I first got to six districts, I realized that I would never forget that atmosphere, that ephemeral lightness. Singing, various sounds ... Above the head, multi-colored fabrics covering the sky. Various signs, photos of events, prayer books, straw dolls. And "poisonous grass" is not just a hut. At the time, it all seemed so compelling. And here and there are poisonous plants. There were crowds of people at the entrance to each hut. "

Poisonous Herb is a serial newspaper novel. Kikuchi Yuho, Sekai Koboyashi, a naturalist photographer (Tenka), and Nikatsu Mukaijima photo studio together shot the film in 1917, which was released on March 11th.

In Asakusa Roku-ku, Sanyukai showed a version of Kobayashi Shokai, a Taishokan version, and a studio version of Nikkatsu Mukaijima at the Opera House. Immediately after the screening of the film, views of the six districts began to be massively photographed and shown at competitions. Since the end of the Meiji era, the sixth district has become a special place in Japan. For the first time, foreign films were allowed to be screened along with Japanese films. In response to audiences, the films were distributed in six districts, but the films did not gain popularity in rural areas.

In six districts, people could watch any movie. Many of the writers attended events in the sixth district. The words of Junichiro Tanizaki deserve special attention. "Even if you live in Kugenum, you will definitely want to come to Tokyo on the 10th. If you don't come to Tokyo and see Asakusa Park, you are missing out on an incredible opportunity. "

In Asakusa Park, written by Tanizaki (September 7th year of the Taisho era), it is said that in 1923 he became an advisor, and the Amateur Music Club, Hinamatsuri Night, and Night of the Snakes helped his daughter-in-law Hayama Michiko debut as actresses.

The film *Jigomo Game*, which popularized gangster romance among the Asakusa children, was released in Japan in November 1907 at Asakusa Kinryukan.

Tatsuo Hori in *The Untouchable Child* (Showa Age 5, 4 Months, Literary Age) was enthusiastic about the game, saying, "Let's run behind the back of Goddess Kannon, along the pond and hide behind the hut." This work

also includes stories of siblings living in a room on the first floor of the Junikai Tower in Asakusa.

In addition, the premiere of the German expressionist work "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" was presented in Japan on May 14, 1923, when Kenji Mizoguchi's debut work "Blood and Spirit" was released on November 9, 1923.

When photography was actively developing, the genre was born, which was also very popular in the sixth district. This is Asakusa's opera.

In January 1963, the musical comedy "An Excursion to the Women's Army", which was ridiculed by Takagi Tokuko, saw only sold out. Opera has become a real boom in Asakusa. Morino Sawa, Sumiko Kawai and other famous personalities became enthusiastic fans, they were called "peragoro".

Asakusa in the present. Kuminarimon Gate

On weekends, many tourists, including those from overseas, visit Asakusa. However, it has already lost its status as the foremost area of Japan in terms of the arts ...

This is a complex word "opera". One of those who have been nicknamed "peragoro" is the socialist and proletarian literary writer Hirofumi Kaneko, author of *The Man Scattering Seeds* and *The Literary Front*.

Among the directors, performers, actors and spectators of Asakusa's opera there were many anarchists, socialists and literary figures. The police often sent detectives and spies to Kinryukan. It is said that graffiti was painted in a dressing room in Kinryukan with the words "Dogs and cats not allowed," alluding to the popular nickname of state bloodhounds.

Among the writers who made it to the Asakusa Opera and who often visited the theater were Tanizaki Junichiro, Imato Hikaru, Kawabata Yasunari, Uno Koji, Edogawa Rampo, Inagaki Asho, and Miyazawa Kenji. Miyazawa saw Asakusa's opera in 1923 when he came to Tokyo to take care of his sister Toshi. Subsequently, memories of that period were reflected in such works as "Camp of Famine" or "Polaroid Square". Uno Koji attended Akutagawa's production and visited the makeup room of the Japan Pavilion, which then functioned as a permanent opera house. However, modern Asakusa, full of magnificent areas and nooks and crannies, fell into ruin after the Great Kanto Earthquake on September 1, 1923. With the opening of the pavilion in December, the show was quickly restored, but it was

not the Asakusa show anymore. The district's opera house also quickly lost its appeal.

The Asakusa area, depicted in paintings by Kawabata Yasunari, Takami Jun, and Takeda Rintaro, full of entertainment, adventurous temperament and hot air, where the Edo, Meiji and Western eras are mixed, ceased to exist. After the earthquake, the Asakusa area was still trying to regain its former glory, but with the beginning of the Showa era, it gradually turned into a ghost area with a touch of retro. The Tokyo Entertainment Center moved to Ginza and then to Shinjuku.

Afterword

After publication in Animage, it was necessary to prepare an electronic version of the novel for publication in tankobon format. In addition, there was talk about the release of an anime series, and, although I decided to do everything carefully and not to rush, there were tight deadlines on all sides. Thoughts began to come to me that if I didn't give my best, I simply wouldn't have time. Time passed quickly, and everything had to be ready for launch by February of this year. In early March, we had a meeting to approve the terms of reference. And while I was engaged in the reconstruction of the text, an event occurred, which in the future will be called the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Now, as I write these lines, it is already April. More than two thousand deaths have already been confirmed as a result of the tsunami, although not even four weeks have passed since the incident. At the moment, about twelve thousand have died due to the earthquake, and more than fifteen thousand are considered missing. Damage to the municipal the Fukushima-Daichi power plant has resulted in radiation pollution. Radioactive substances were found in drinking water, vegetables, tea, meat and other products. The country is just beginning to slowly recover from what happened.

Against the backdrop of all these events, especially in the Tokyo region, the publication of the novel about the Great Earthquake "Desperate" aroused conflicting feelings. I knew I had a publishing decision to make, and as I wrote before, I tried to avoid all the hassle of working on the original Desperate anime series. But, before starting to closely engage in anime, it was necessary to release another tankobon. Five years ago, when we first started discussing work on a new project with Nakamura, we named it "DECO". Then we decided that the action would take place in the Taisho era and outlined the characters and the main story. From the name it is clear that at that time we planned to make the animation in the Art Deco style; then it seemed to me that this idea is very interesting. In general, by this I want to say

But, starting to collect materials about the Taisho era, we quickly realized that our presentation is very different from reality and we simply cannot do without an artist who could help convey the atmosphere to readers.

So we started working with Abe-kun. His participation was necessary, although we understood that this project would be completely different from "serial experiments Iain". Gradually, we came to an understanding about what Desperate would ultimately look like. But if we decided to write about the Taisho era, then how can we not mention the Great Earthquake? And as soon as we started collecting material about this event, we immediately realized that it was

should be central to the story. Again, while collecting material, I learned about the San Francisco earthquake that happened around the same time, and that's how I got the idea for this story.

At the same time, I was worried that we were creating an entertaining story based on real scary events that brought a lot of grief in the past. The Great Kanto Earthquake happened long before I was born. I knew about him only from the chronicles. Subsequently, I read various references from seventy years ago that described the disasters that befell the Kansai region. These were the latest mentions of the incident. It feels like over these seventy years we have tried to forget about what happened, like about a terrible dream, to erase it from our reality.

For me, as a person who was going to write about this, any grain of information was of great value. I confess, to my shame, that I myself did not know a lot until I began to study literature, as well as climb through thematic forums and discussions.

Among the participants in the forum were young writers - those who have recently made their debut or won a literary competition.

Just at that time, a new earthquake occurred. I was then in Tokyo and immediately rushed to find out how the other forum participants, from those who live nearby, were doing. Fortunately, no one was hurt. The news was spreading terrible news about the collapse of famous buildings. We sat with Abe and discussed what had happened, just there was a report about the accident on the railway.

We, the creators of *Desperate*, were deeply affected by what happened. Even being far from the main events, we were very worried.

But...

On March 11, 2011 there was an earthquake followed by the collapse of buildings. They were made of cement, reliable and durable, and fortunately, the tragedy of the Great Earthquake, when wooden houses burned like matches, did not happen. But this time the danger was not the fire, but the subsequent tsunami.

The footage shown on TV was terrifying - the wave was fast and incredibly high. We know from helicopter footage that the wave was over thirty-seven meters high. The wave did not touch residential areas and descended on the fields, but it's scary to imagine what would have happened if it had hit people's homes. On the day the earthquake struck, the whole nation was chained to TV screens, and information about more and more new events

received constantly ... I was especially struck by the fact that because of the tsunami the ship with oil turned over, and it spilled over the sea.

Thanks to the quick response of the ground police and firefighters, the worst was avoided. In addition, at this sad time for Japan, other countries helped us.

The collapse of buildings in Tokyo has caused a number of tragedies; there were also those who died. Definitely, our generation has never seen such a terrible disaster ... We simply did not understand how to live on and how what happened would affect our future. We were scared that the epicenter of an earthquake could happen in any other city and at any time.

Analyzing the consequences of what happened and comparing them with the events that happened in the Taisho era, I can note that only thanks to the prompt actions of the state, we did not see a catastrophe even worse. Yes, these days, the same Twitter allows you to spread information with great speed, and we took advantage of this. It's amazing how we save lives with the help of the Internet, and at the same time it is sad when we could not help those who had no connection and who could not ask for help over the phone. I have heard from many that they would like to watch only good news on TV, and this saddens me, as it saddens those who took advantage of a common misfortune to carry out their evil intentions.

However, on the whole, the Japanese acted in a collected manner, and I could not help but see this. Everything happened in real time, and I tracked all the news. Of course, the disaster that happened made me think deeply and compare it with the previous ones.

The information available to date, including the official data, does not seem complete to me. Perhaps they are hiding something on purpose to avoid general panic. But isn't it better to know the whole truth?

We know all about the Great Kanto Earthquake. This information is publicly available.

We must know and remember what happened. In Despere, disaster is a central theme, and it will surely resonate in the hearts of many. I wanted to write a story that would make everyone who read it think about how to prevent this from happening in the future.

We were born on a land that is often exposed to and suffers from similar natural disasters. It is our responsibility to do everything in order to

in the future, respond promptly and with a cool head to such incidents.

On the evening of March 11, an earthquake caught me at work. The tremors were very strong, and it seemed that they would never stop. I remember looking at the numerous books in my office, which were constantly falling off the shelves.

For my story, I decided to take the entourage of the Taisho era or the early Meiji era. Even if it didn't work out with the anime series, I wanted to publish at least a book.

Now I put all materials about the Taisho era into a far corner and start gathering information for a new project.

I want to thank everyone who helped me to implement my plan.

Everyone who helped me, those who worked with me on the release, including Abekun, those who prepared the releases for Animage: editors and publisher, producers and designers, and my entire team. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. This book would not have seen the light of day without you. Thank you.

4th April 2011. In honor of Chiaki Konaki's fiftieth birthday.