

Chapter 1-1
HAJIMERU

MARCH 30 - APRIL 02, 1985/ SHOWA 60

KAGOSHIMA

LOOK DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YOU.
WHAT IS THERE?
IF YOU SEE IT AS IT IS, YOU WILL NEVER GO WRONG.

* BASSUI TOKUSHO

.....

It was raining. For days. Nothing but rain! The view from the window on the seventh floor of the new prefectural police building at Kendō 218-gō was not really encouraging, despite the view of the mighty Sakurajima. Despite the promised start of the cherry blossom season and the accompanying hanami, all that was currently on the cards was dreariness and rain. On this Wednesday, the clouds lay heavy as lead over the coastal region and the old, currently so gray port city.

Well! It seemed that the Japanese weathermen were actually completely off the mark this time. Otherwise, the JMA's metrological essays have always been flawless.

But this time?

There was also a general air of boredom here in the office of the Sōsaikka, the First Investigative Division. The Kagoshima Prefectural Police's first criminal division for crimes of all kinds. Kajitani Ai, too, was a little sleepy and more or less moping. The brief memory of her training as a detective in Tōkyō at least brought a smile back to her face. But Kagoshima, despite its population of over 550,000, was more of a village than the Japanese capital.

No more and no less!

But it was no use. Absolutely nothing! If you want to make a career, you have to work in the furthest corners of the country. Although, there were certainly more desolate areas here in Nippon. Her smile now turned into a grin, because she actually quite liked this little corner of the world, after all, she had grown up here and when the order came to move out to the southwest, she was actually quite happy.

As I said, there were worse things in the land of the rising sun.

She had completed her police training and her studies in criminalistics with flying colors and honors. As a newly qualified keibu-ho, with the rank of police inspector, she took over as head of the Fūki-keisatsu, the vice squad, in January of this year.

At just 30 years old, she was one of the youngest female police officers in a leadership position in the entire country. Her unit only consisted of four officers, but still! Before Ai could give free rein to her thoughts, the door was flung open and Junsu-buchō Ikimura Kenji stormed into her office. Before the young superior could react, the servant saluted briefly and reported.

"Kajitani-keibu-ho! We have a case! A female body was found this morning on Sakurajima. Workers found the remains in Kitadake below the caldera. And before you ask. Watanabe-keibu has rejected the case for the homicide squad, as this was a woman who, in his opinion, was probably a prostitute. That would make it a case for Fūki-keisatsu. So for us. He also informs us that his unit has better things to do at the moment than to pay any attention to this subordinate event."

That was perfect! As if stung by a tarantula, the 165cm of concentrated female power leapt out of the office chair. Her jet-black, proud and profound eyes literally stood out from her even face, which was framed by her jet-black hair. Her slender, elegant and graceful silhouette now loomed large and fearsome in front of her coworker. Ai was a femme fatale through and through and loved to make a grand entrance. She had esprit, ambition, pride but also a very tough side. Despite all her femininity, her masculine streak came to the fore in such situations.

And massively!

Her deep, rumbling voice provided a fitting background to her outbursts of anger. In situations like this, it was always better not to irritate her any further, or even better just to get out of the way. *"Kuso! Ano baka Watanabe desu! Shi-ne desu! What a bloody idiot! He should go to hell! Damn!"*

Poor Ikimura now had to deal with all the resentment of his superiors, which he had never experienced before. The forty-two-year-old police sergeant was more than flabbergasted; his boss had a reputation for being descended from a samurai family and going over dead bodies in her career. After this grim speech, there definitely seemed to be no doubt about this fact. The poor bearer of the news had sheer horror written all over his face; this woman was not one to be messed with. When Ai saw her coworker's face, she had to smile and mentally shifted down a few gears. As quickly as she flew off the handle, she had herself under control again. But in order to maintain her samurai's aura, she returned to the sergeant with only a slightly restrained edge.

"What about the coroner? Is he already informed and on his way? Or does he also have higher duties to perform? Similar to Watanabe-baka?" "Kajitani-keibu-ho!" Kenji pushed around: *"Hai! You've got it. We should take the remains to his laboratory pronto. He wouldn't go to Sakuraj in this weather ..."*

Before he could finish speaking, another torrent of curses and insults poured over him. The phrase *"Don't kill the messenger!"* briefly came to his mind, which was not always observed in the old feudal times of the Japanese empire. He fervently hoped that this fury in front of him would not revive the old samurai virtues. The superior now replied in a more moderate tone:

"OK, then we're on our own. Round up the team, including Kobayashi-Junsa-chō. Tell them to pack all the forensic tools! Then we'll do the forensics on our own. Would you please inform the car pool that we're moving out. In other words, transfer to the port, crossing and an off-road vehicle with local experts on site."

Then she added with her own profound smile. *"No offense Ikimura Junsa-buchō! Sometimes I'm a little quick-tempered, but my resentment is not directed at the bearer of the message. So! Pack everything up and, above all, put on something waterproof. You'll excuse me now, I can't go on an excursion in this elevator. I'll meet you at the exit in 15 minutes."*

With these words, the loyal sergeant was dismissed. Ai grinned quietly and took a quick look in the mirror at her office dressing room. Indeed! She couldn't leave like this.

Her outfit was still from last night and was more frivolously fashionable than appropriate for an investigation. This morning she hadn't found time to put on anything suitable for the office because she had once again woken up in a strange bed. Actually, she just wanted to go out for a drink and have some fun. However, there was an Australian DJ at Club Harbour 68. Not only was he a good DJ. No! This blonde hunk was also a perfect match for her. She was able to enjoy his manhood during his session.

Not only was he well-hung, but the two of them also harmonized very well sexually. The two quickies in the toilet facility not only gave Ai various intense orgasms, but also fueled her desire for more. The night was really something special.

The Aussie was good. Damn good!

What had begun in the club was intensified again in the hotel room. Every orifice was played with and she was finally able to satisfy her boundless desire once again. However, she always had to be a little careful in Kagoshima, as she was no longer in Tōkyō. Everything was more anonymous there and there were definitely more sexual opportunities than here in the village. She quickly swapped her white blouse, bolero, short plaid skirt, black stockings and high-heeled boots for a monochrome work outfit with matching shoes. She also added a rain cape and the inevitable wellies, which she would only put on when she got there. Dressed like this, she met the rest of her squad at the exit of the police building.

Ai used the five-minute drive to Kamoike Port, where a police boat was already waiting for her, for a short speech in the vehicle. Here, too, she gave free rein to her displeasure with the head of the homicide squad, albeit in a milder form. Arriving at the jetty, we immediately set off on the six-kilometre crossing to Noriji Port on Sakurajima. Fortunately, the sea was not too rough, but the rain and wind did their bit. The vehicle rocked quite a bit in the swell, which made the transfer to the island take longer. Despite Ai's intervention, the skipper quickly made it clear that "*Isogaba maware*" was the order of the day.

So hurry up and wait, or rather: safety first.

The supervisor took advantage of the thirty-minute crossing to take another close look at her protégés. The medium-sized Kenji, with his typical Japanese habitus, was joined by Kobayashi Miki, a forensic assistant with the rank of Hōigaku-joshu, and Tanaka Aki, also a sergeant, and rookie Itō Sadako as an officer.

Thinking about last night and her preferences, she now scrutinized the forensic technician intensely. Until now, Ai hadn't even noticed how attractive the 38-year-old Kobayashi was. She also looked a little sleepy today. Had she possibly seen her coworker at the club yesterday? Could it be that she was also leading a sweet little private double life?

The two women now exchanged a small, casual but furtive smile. Yes! This elegant, tall and athletic woman in her late thirties was definitely a booty call and more than worth a closer look. Ai briefly reminisced about her time in the metropolis. Of the time with Yumiko, her first! But also the time with Takabashi sensei and his wife Keiko. The two of them introduced her to the secrets of Shibari, to the pleasure of pain and boundless shamelessness. A certain tingling now ran through her body, good that she was not alone with Miki. She couldn't have guaranteed anything, she probably would have fallen on this woman and gotten what she wanted right now.

What she needed.

But there was also 32-year-old Aki. A damn athletic contemporary, quite tall for a Japanese and, unlike Ikimura, very good-looking. However, it would first be necessary to find out how good his actual package was. Her sex partner from Australia had already set the 'bar' quite high. She wouldn't settle for anything less at the moment.

Finally, there was the sample of the nestling. Just 22 years old, extremely petite and somehow a typical Kawai girl. Ai now looked at her more intensely, and similar to the sight of Kobayashi, she was also filled with pleasant feelings. The mere thought of eating little Sadako right here and initiating and guiding her into the depths of her lust made her let out a deep, lustful sigh.

A loud: "*Kiwotsukete!*" brought her back to the here and now. Even though the thought of perhaps having sex with her coworkers was more than stimulating, all attention was now back on the case. The upcoming landing maneuver also required a certain amount of concentration. After all, they didn't want to end up in the cold water on the last few meters of the crossing. Takata Junsachō was already standing on the quay; the now 64-year-old senior officer knew the area like no other. He had grown up here and had been serving on the island since 1941.

Apart from his time as Kempeitai during the war, Sakurajima had always been his territory. Together with another officer and the station chief, they were the permanent crew of the post here on the island and looked after the needs of the approximately 4,500 inhabitants.

Waiting patiently and equipped with a police version of the Suzuki LJ 80, he welcomed the colleagues from the mainland and gave further brief information about the location of the body. The waiting vehicle, which looked more like a miniature version of an off-road vehicle, was now to take the team to the scene of the incident. However, this vehicle was only marginally larger than the 'normal' LJ, despite the extension of the rear body.

The four rear seats, arranged at right angles to the direction of travel, didn't provide any real comfort and brought the passengers very close together. The highest-ranking passenger quickly gave the order to sit up, taking pity on the long Aki, who was allowed to sit next to the driver, but had to carry most of the equipment on his lap.

The rest of the team went into the rear compartment. Ai now sat close to Sadako and directly opposite her Hōigaku-joshu, physical contact was now more than a given, because there is room in even the smallest cabin, but not in an LJ 80. Poor Kenji was the last to get in and squeezed into the remaining gap.

The wild ride began. Takata set off with full signal and horn use and gave the 41 wild horses free rein. Their route took them along the well-maintained Kokudō 224-gō and 26-gō to the Oshu Elementary School, from where they first passed through urban areas, but shortly after passing Ontake Shrine, their path changed character.

What now followed were narrow, winding and increasingly poorly maintained single roads that meandered through the still dense mixed forest in the direction of the deployment site. The route led over bridges and watercourses which, due to the rain, carried the rainfall away from the volcanic cone like torrents - very impressive, but also very dangerous.

The bumping, lurching and sliding over the rain-soaked surface put the crew of the vehicle to the test again. Same weather, same circumstances, but now with solid ground under the wheels instead of sea. But the result was similar. While the men of the team once again had to contend with the adversity, the ladies of the team enjoyed the daring ride. First and foremost Ai, but it also seemed as if Miki was taking advantage of the driving conditions to get up close and personal.

On the tight bends, she literally slid into her boss's lap, resulting in unexpected and well-orchestrated 'purely accidental' erotic touching, which both women clearly enjoyed. With a cheeky grin, the 38-year-old now addressed her superior briefly, directly but discreetly.

"Kajitani-san, could it be that I saw you at Club Harbour 68 last night? I found your performance with the DJ in the Powder Room very stimulating. But it's a pity you didn't ask me to join you, we would certainly have harmonized well. But maybe we can make up for it sometime. Just the two of us."

This announcement, or rather pick-up line, was exactly to Ai's taste. She had been right about her coworker's little double life. With her seductive and profound smile, she replied briefly with a:

"Saturday night at my place. 19:00 JST."

The invitee smiled at her and said: *"I'm delighted and hope I can stay until Monday morning"*.

The higher-ranking girl briefly considered whether an affair with a coworker would be a good idea. But damn it, she had her needs that had to be satisfied and Kobayashi was just the right person. Sure, there was always a risk with such office escapades, but 'no risk no fun'. It was worth a try and it would certainly be worth it.

Takata Junsu-chō's *"Koko ni imasu!"* snapped Ai out of her thoughts. *"From now on, it's all on foot!"*

After a forty-minute drive, they reached the end of a semi-paved road. The area around where the police Suzuki was parked was actually quite idyllic. The forest had not yet completely thinned out, but the low Japanese pines provided no real protection against the rain, which was now beginning to fall again. The view down to the island, the bay and Kagoshima itself should be breathtaking on good days with better weather conditions.

But certainly not today. Everything was gray in gray, cheerless and, above all, wet. Equipped with the gear and under the expert guidance of the local policeman, they reached a scree field below the caldera after another twenty minutes of quite steep and arduous climbing. It was a desolate and godforsaken piece of earth within sight of the mighty Sakurajima vent. The smell of sulphur and other gases escaping from the volcano was already clearly audible here. This was accompanied by a strangely high temperature, which somehow drove the humidity even higher. Moving across this eroded lava field presented the team with unexpected problems; every step further towards the crater became more uncomfortable, steeper and more strenuous.

The pelting rain and the fog that came with it made this place more than surreal and somehow mystical and shuddering. It was as if they were ascending into the land of the kami. A strangely early onset of darkness, caused by the thick clouds of fog and ash clouds emerging from the maw, made the scenario even more spooky and threatening.

Everything negative seemed possible in this place. A place, repulsive and hostile to life. A place predestined for crime. But then! Now the time had come. Now they had reached it.

The place where the body was found.

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