

REBUILD of NIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONI
WELCOME TO THE NHK!

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STORY: TATSUHIKO TAKIMOTO • ILLUSTRATION: KENZI OIWA

The existence of the evil organization of "NHK", I happened to find it. All the reasons why I dropped out from the university, being unemployed and "Hikikomori" - homicidal young person - are due to NHK's conspiracy. I'll keep fighting till the day I will beat the vice organization. But one day, an assassin from a religious group show up to kill me. She is a neat and beautiful girl, Misaki-chan, with a parasol. Who is she? What can save our future contaminated with eroticism, violence, and drug? Love, courage or friendship? This is an ultimate Hikikomori sequel!

The background features a light blue gradient with white line art. On the left, a girl with long hair is shown from the chest up, holding a guitar. On the right, a boy's face is visible, looking upwards. A large white cross is positioned on the right side of the page.

STORY
TATSUHIKO TAKIMOTO

ILLUSTRATION
KENZI OIWA

TRANSLATION & GRAPHIC DESIGN
YU/MAWARIWORKS

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#6 The Park Like Always

Part One

Summer has ended. Outside the apartment windows, the trees were getting redder by the day.

In the midst of this, the problems I've been putting off were piling up to the point they'd burst.

First, was the issue with Yamazaki's family.

“If you're just there playing around in Tokyo, get your ass back and take over the ranch. What's that? You ain't just playing? If that thing you're making ain't playing, show me you can make a million with it.”

“Dad pissed me off so much on the phone the other day, I yelled right back at him ‘Fine, I'll show you! If I get serious, I can make a million easy!’ That's why it's not enough to just finish this. Our hypnovoice needs to be a million yen moneymaker!”

“Hahaha..... But you don't have to take that promise so seriously. Let's just go with the flow, and keep this lax lifestyle going as long as we can.”

“Satou-san!”

Yamazaki slammed his fist at the folding table.

Today's meeting wasn't through VR equipment. I was face to face in my room with that certain glasses wearing vocational student. It was highly realistic.

Sitting on the floor, I chided Yamazaki as I turned my upper body away reflectively.

"Hey, hey, you'll damage the table. You shouldn't gesture so violently out here in reality."

"S- Sorry. Anyway, I have something I need to say, Satou-san."

"Go ahead."

"Satou-san. You're already giving up, aren't you? You don't think we can make a million yen at all."

"Well, yeah."

With his face flushed red, Yamazaki slammed at the table once more. The can of Strong Zero went flying from the impact.

"That's the thing with you! It's because you, a main member of our project, keep thinking like a loser, you can't visualize us making money! Just look at yourself!"

"Sorry, sorry. But you know, just calm down and think about it. One million is a hundred times ten thousand yen."

I gestured how thick that much money would be. Yamazaki's face turned pale.

"Th- That is a lot of money for us right now. But unless we get that much, my dad would be right! We really are just playing around here in Tokyo!"

"Kanagawa, to be exact. But even if he says we're playing, it's not like we're having fun or anything. Hell, I wish we were having fun."

"What's with that sober face!? I'm giving it my all facing dad's challenge. Kids have to overcome their parents someday. Don't you understand?"

“I get it, I get it. Go do your best then.”

This wasn't my problem, so I dismissed this heated bickering with Yamazaki.

Yamazaki looked down, clenching his fists.

“I'm serious here. If I don't make a million in a month, I'll be back home with my parents.”

“A life feeding grass to cows isn't so bad. Right?”

“Your allowances have stopped too, haven't they, Satou-san? Just how are you going to pay next month's rent?”

“How the hell should I know!? There's no way I'd know something like that!”

“So understand! Right now, what we need is money. Let's make it that million yen.”

“.....”

“Say it with me. ‘I will make a million yen.’”

“I- I- I'll.....”

“Make a million yen.”

“Ma- Ma.....”

It's like my vocal organs were refusing to make such an absurd declaration.

Yamazaki stared at me from a close distance as he shouted.

“Make!”

“Ma- Ma.....”

“Make a million!”

“A..... million.....”

“Let’s do it, Satou-san! Make! A million!”

“Make..... a mil..... million.....”

“We’ll make it with our erotic hypnovoice! The world is anticipating our erotic hypnovoice!”

“Th- That’s right..... Now that you mention it, we’re facing the world here. There are over 8 billion people on this planet, and at least 1 in 10 should be interested. We have 800 million potential customers!”

“Right. We can earn a million in seconds.”

“China, India, Africa, the Middle East..... It’s scary thinking about how many customers we’d have on a global scale.”

“Say it! ‘I’ll make a million!’”

“I’ll make a million!”

“Let’s make it! A million!”

“Ohh, kane wo kasegun da!”

*

However, whenever I try to do something positive, it always ends up the opposite.

When I try to fix my sleep cycle between day and night, it screws my schedule up further.

When I try to research a company to find a job, I end up even more afraid of society.

When I try to break free from my porn addiction, I end up watching more porn than ever.

Just like that, my subconscious has a mechanism that throws every attempt to fix my life to a minus.

This time too, my desire to “make a million yen” makes it hard for me to start working.

Even though there’s still a mountain of stuff left to finish.

It takes a lot of work to finish a single project to the point it’s marketable. Yamazaki does a bulk of the work, but he still assigns a lot of tasks to me.

Overwhelmed by the number of tasks in my to-do list, I panicked about not knowing where to start and ended up continuing my game on my smartphone.

Later that night, in front of the game’s screen, a reminder message popped in from Yamazaki.

“Satou-san. How’s that trailer we’re supposed to upload today going?”

“Sorry. I’m still editing it.”

“What are you doing!? It’s just a promotional video, so hurry the hell up with it!”

“Just a promotional video,” he says, but nowadays, the quality of advertising is more important than the product itself if we’re talking sales strategies.

Especially for people like us who have a sales goal but no track record, we’d need a compelling PV that’d make people shout “This is it!” We need an idea so good, it could be called a revelation.

As I returned to gaming on my smartphone, I searched the back of my head for a PV idea.

However, I just couldn’t summarize the appeal of our concept in a way that’d sell to the world.

In the first place, did our project even have a “selling point”?

The more I thought, the more each part of our project's commercial value seemed questionable.

Our erotic scenario written by Senpai. Well, it was pretty lewd. There was a certain intensity to the sexual fantasies she's been nurturing in her heart for decades. However, Senpai was still new as a scenario writer. Her expression was far from sophisticated, and being completely blunt, it was amateur.

Because it was embarrassing to have such an amateurish scenario read out loud, the voice sample Nanako sent a few days ago gave me empathetic shame and discomfort instead of turning me on.

And packaging the audio was Yamazaki's 2D bishoujo illustration. He aimed for something that wouldn't lose to AI, but there was so much humanity, the unnaturalness was front and center. Day by day, it looked more like the outsider art of Henry Darger.

The scenario was no good, the voices were no good, and the art was no good. In short, we were in a situation where all sides of our content were no good. Our last ray of hope was in this promotional video I was making.

“.....”

In other words, Yamazaki's future depends on the quality of what I'll be putting together in iMovie. And not just Yamazaki, but Senpai's future too.

If this video isn't good enough, the hypnovoice wouldn't sell, and Senpai would be heartbroken.

“It's because my scenario was no good that it didn't sell.”

Senpai would put down her pen if she realized that.

And if Senpai lost that outlet for her sexual fantasies, she'd start shooting dirty porn videos again.

Eventually, the boss of Senpai's company would find her Pornhub uploads, and she'd be treated like a slave by her senpai, colleagues, and kouhai.

In order to avoid that horrible fate, I had to do whatever it took to create a PV that'd move customers.

However..... Could I?

Me, doing a job on that scale?

“.....”

I felt a pressure I never felt before, as this was no longer just about myself. The stress from carrying the lives of others dropped my capabilities, which were next to zero to begin with, down into the negatives.

Every time I started to work, I made frequent mistakes, and felt like I was going backwards instead of forward.

With the video materials scattered across the computer, and not properly labeled so even the search bar didn't help, I just couldn't find what I needed.

Opening folders manually, just when I thought I found the right file, it was an older version. Then when I found the newer version later, I discovered it was already overwritten with the older data.

“What the hell? I just don't get it.....”

Every time I got impatient and operated the computer without thinking, I'd lose an important file somewhere.

Come to think of it, this is how I lost my college registration form and failed to get credit too.

“.....”

Even a guy like me feels like he found a few precious things in life up until now. I just couldn't remember what they were or how I lost them.

I have to hurry up, pick them up, and put them back together.

However, all I was doing now was forcing puzzle pieces that don't fit together, making some lifeless strangely distorted promotional video.

Blood dripped from Yamazaki's face when he came to my room checking on how I was doing.

“What the hell is this video, Satou-san?”

“What do you mean.....? It's our PV. I did my best making it.”

“I- I just don't get it. This pitch black screen, these voice samples fragmented to the point where you can't make out what language it is, these bishoujo illustrations that feel like they're placed subliminally..... This is a trailer for a horror game!”

“Ha, haha..... I know, I know. It's a joke. A joke. I'll get to making a proper promotional video now.”

I started a new project on iMovie.

“.....”

Just as I thought Yamazaki returned to his room, he returned with a pen tablet and a full set of equipment as he sat down in front of the table.

“Let's work together.”

“.....Sure, I guess.”

I looked away and glanced at the laptop.

Dead at night was the echoing sound of a pen scraping against a table. However, progress on my end did not budge in the slightest. Even after an hour and even after two.

“.....”

Reason being, the scenario, voices, and illustrations for our project were all too worthless to stand tall in society.

Somehow, I had to disguise this worthlessness. However, it was just so bad, there was no way I could fool anyone. Because I was worthless.

“Hey..... Even if we work like this, it's not going to work out.”

I closed the laptop.

Yamazaki put down his pen, glaring at me.

“Ha, there you go again. You’re always running away, Satou-san.”

“I- I’m not running away. I’m just facing reality.....”

“Ahh, geez, fine! You don’t have to do anything, Satou-san.”

Yamazaki took the laptop from me and placed it next to his own, resuming the work on iMovie.

I fearfully walked around behind Yamazaki and watched him work.

“That’s pretty skilled, man. Drawing a cute girl on your pen tablet while editing a video on iMovie. Will the quality be okay though?”

“Don’t you worry about me. You don’t have to think about this project anymore, Satou-san.”

It seemed like Yamazaki’s anger had hit its limit and I just received the notice I was out of the team.

However, it’s because I was serious about the project in my own way that I was working so slow.

I felt upset at Yamazaki who didn’t understand and took my job away so ruthlessly.

I took it out on him with sarcasm.

“Ha, fine. If you say so, I’m never going to think about this project again. I’m just going to smile and laugh, without ever thinking about reality.”

“Sure. At the very least, have a good face around me so you don’t ruin the atmosphere.”

“Yeah, you got it. Hey, if you’re going out of your way to tell me that, I’m really not going to look at reality at all. Are you okay with that?”

“Absolutely. You don’t have to look at reality at all. That would only bring us down.”

“But..... like..... if I’m not looking at that, what should I look at?”

“Look at whatever you want, Satou-san. After all, it’s all just an illusion anyway. That’s what our lives are.”

Perhaps because it’s been a long night, Yamazaki was muttering an overly nihilistic outlook on life as he tapped at his keyboard and ran his pen across his tablet. Beside him, I folded my arms searching for “what I wanted to see.”

What I wanted to see.

What kind of vision did I have for my life?

“.....”

In the end, I didn’t particularly have any hopes or dreams for the future.

All I had was a passive wish that this current lifestyle could continue to linger on forever.

“.....”

For the time being, I fantasized that the work Yamazaki was doing was going well. I hoped the project would work out and that this lifestyle would last just a little bit longer.

Part Two

The moment I stopped working, everything started going smoothly.

Yamazaki drew bonus illustrations to upload, constantly promoting the hypnovoice on various SNS sites.

Little by little, people started following our channels.

“But even at this pace, there’s no way we’d hit a million. If only there was a way we could gather more people. I know, Yamazaki. You’ve drawn a ton of illustrations up until now, haven’t you? Let’s upload those.”

“Wh- What are you saying? Hell no! Those are just for practice. They’re not at the quality I can share them publicly!”

I saw Yamazaki’s self-consciousness as a creator. With the ease of being free from actual work, I tried to persuade him.

“I think your drawings are pretty cute. Almost what you can call outsider art..... No, rather, the lack of realism in the sexual expression would be a hit nowadays. These huge eyes and gloomy colors are great!”

“Y- You think!?”

Yamazaki’s face shined brightly.

Were people who have never been praised by others that vulnerable to compliments?

Unable to resist my compliments, ignoring the crudeness of the drawings and focusing only on their charm, Yamazaki vigorously began uploading art of girls with unbalanced limbs and giant eyes on social media.

Surprisingly, he started getting likes little by little. The art seemed to charm people as mentally out of balance as the artist.

Of course, there were also posts that got no likes that got ignored, or received harsh comments like “Gross” or “This guy should go to a mental health clinic as soon as possible.” They heartbroke Yamazaki to the point he considered stopping his uploads.

I looked for the few "good points" shining behind Yamazaki's poor drawings, praising him about them over and over again.

“The way her ribs stick out is really hot.”

“Y- You get it, don't you!? That's what I put the most focus on!”

Yamazaki continued uploading. As a result, our project gradually began finding customers.

However, the most vital point of our hypnvoice was the voice, which Nanako was not providing. According to what I vaguely heard from Yamazaki, she wasn't satisfied with the quality. She was recording on repeat at the studio every day.

Several days later, the new voice samples finally came our way. However, listening to them, they were stiffer than the first batch, losing the softness and moisture.

As an erotic hypnvoice, this was unusable. Our project would fail. And that would lead to the collapse of my comfortable hikikomori lifestyle.

That future I feared all so much..... I shook off that vision I saw where I was a security guard waving a baton under the cold sky, and focused on only what I wanted to see.

I ignored the bad points of Nanako's voice sample and tried seeing the good in it.

However, no matter what degree I heard it in, it was stiff. Too stiff.

Actually, it almost sounded manly.

“Manly..... I know! Why don't we have Nanako voice a male character?”

I yelled instinctively in my room.

To begin with, the lead character in Senpai's scenario was a woman being attacked by a man. If Nanako were to voice the man, it'd be a perfect fit.

While I presented this idea to Yamazaki at work, He looked up from his tablet and nodded vigorously.

“That might just work. Nanako’s usually wears boyish clothes anyway, and she might have wanted to play the male character from the very start.”

“But, if we’re going that route, who should we get to voice the girl?”

“The scenario writer..... In other words, why don’t we ask our Senpai? She has a pretty good voice.”

“Right.....”

After hesitating for a while, I asked Senpai if she’d be interested in being a voice actress.

She immediately responded saying “OK, sounds interesting. Let me have a go at it!”

Perhaps Senpai didn’t just want to express herself through writing, but in a physical way too.

Well, it’s probably healthier than shooting porn videos.

Yamazaki looked up from his smartphone.

“Nanako gave me her OK too. I’ll take Senpai to the studio Nanako records at tomorrow.”

“I’ll leave it to you.”

I left the rest to Yamazaki and waited for the recording to finish. Several days passed and we didn't receive the recordings at all.

“Hey, Yamazaki. What’s going on here?”

“I don’t know either. The day we met, Senpai and Nanako hit it off right away, but kicked me out when they started recording.”

That’s easy enough to understand. It would be hard to read outloud porn with a disgusting guy like Yamazaki around.

“But anyway, it’s bad for the schedule if this keeps up.”

“Should I call Senpai?”

I nervously gave her a call. After a bit, she picked up.

Asking about the progress, she replied that she was currently working on recording and editing simultaneously.

“Editing? Don’t tell me you’re even going out of your way to edit, Senpai.”

“I am. I wrote the scenario, so I want it to be exactly how I intended it to be.”

Behind Senpai’s response, I heard a voice I heard so many times editing, I was sick of it.

“Is that..... Nanako’s voice? Is Nanako there too?”

“Y- Yes. Nanako-chan came to my place to hang out and we’re working together right now. Ah, Nanako-chan stop. Stop it, stop it..... Ah.....”

Right now, Senpai and Nanako weren’t at the studio, but Senpai’s house. At that, I heard something rubbing on the sheets. It seemed like Senpai and Nanako were in bed together.

“.....”

I stopped thinking about it and hung up.

I won’t tell Yamazaki that Nanako’s been going to Senpai’s house.

I haven’t mentioned it, but Yamazaki seemed to have a crush on Nanako. I wouldn’t want to destroy his brain in such a complicated way.

*

A few days later, Senpai sent me the audio of the first chapter.

In the midst of listening with Yamazaki, I realized there was hot blood dripping from my nose.

I was so stimulated, my blood flow had disrupted, causing me to nosebleed.

“Sorry, let me pause for a sec. It’s just so stimulating, I feel like I’m going to go mad.”

“Hahaha, I’m surprised how delicate you are, Satou-san. This level of erotica is nothing to someone who’s listened to as many hypnovoices as me.....”

That moment, Yamazaki’s smartwatch started alarming.

“What’s wrong?”

“It says my heart rate’s become abnormal. Ugh.....”

Yamazaki’s face went pale. Apparently, it excited him so much, it affected his heart.

He fell down with his hand clinging to his chest, reaching out at the trackpad to stop the audio.

After holding my nose with tissue paper a bit longer, I too fell to the ground, trying to regulate my autonomic nervous system.

“.....”

The naughty sounds woven together by Nanako and Senpai stimulated me to an unprecedented level, but once the coldness of the floor calmed me down, a different kind of excitement built inside me.

As my nosebleed stopped, Yamazaki and I immediately got up at the same time.

“We’re going to make it!”

“Hell yeah, we are! We’re going to make it!”

For the first time, I was feeling “confident.”

Up until now, while writing nonsensical novels or hypnovoices that had no target audience, I had this feeling "ideas were coming to me." However, I never felt such a tangible, almost physical, response from the perspective of our future customers.

“Alright, Yamazaki! Let’s keep this up!”

“Right, Satou-san! But watch out. You shouldn’t get involved in the actual work. Just make sure you keep up this ‘good atmosphere.’”

“Yeah, you got it!”

The closer things got to completion, the more my innate "power to fail" would grow.

The more determined I got to accomplish something, the less our chances of actually succeeding would become.

Therefore, it’d be better for me to forget about my goals and stay as far away from actually working as possible.

“Even so.....”

Yamazaki started working in my room instead of his, perhaps because he thought someone watching him would push him. Work messages from Nanako and Senpai also kept alerting me on my phone.

In a situation like this, ignoring the project became difficult. As soon as I let my guard down, I found myself worrying about progress and quality, and broke out my negative aura. That would be contagious to everyone involved and slam the brakes on their progress.

“If it’s come to this, I better focus on working on something completely unrelated.”

Speaking of work completely unrelated to the hypnovoice project, there was writing “Life With My Little Sister,” as requested by Misaki-chan.

“Life With My Little Sister”

This was the text I originally wrote for the hypnovoice scenario. However, since Yamazaki didn't approve of my profound sexual expression, it was rejected and removed entirely.

That said, Misaki-chan found value in it, and bought it for 15 M Coins. She offered the same amount again if I continued writing.

“If I assemble 30 M Coins, I could exchange them for an 'Anything Ticket' and command Misaki-chan to do anything I want.”

Of course, M Coins were nothing more than game center coins with the letter M written on them by pen, and Anything Tickets were nothing more than pieces of paper. However, Misaki-chan followed every order I've given so far, even if she complained.

With that track record in mind, the M Coins and “Anything Tickets” really did have dominance over Misaki-chan.

“.....”

I was conflicted.

Was it really okay to control a helpless high school girl with some coins and pieces of paper?

Well, in the first place, from a broader point of view, marriage, love, and other interactions in human society are also bound by coins and paper.

In a world like this, it was a given I'd be using the power of an “Anything Ticket” to give Misaki-chan orders.

For the most part, people with weak hearts feel more secure bound by the contracts of society over natural communication.

Misaki-chan herself wanted a relationship bound by contract.

That's why, next time, the right way to use the power of the “Anything Ticket” was to use it to make that girl, Misaki, an outlet for my desires.

For that purpose, I'd need to collect 15 more M Coins. For that purpose, I'd have to continue writing that text she requested..... "Life With My Little Sister."

"Alright..... Let's do this."

I completely forgot about the project everyone was working day and night to release.

At that, I was completely focused on doing unimaginable explicit acts to that neighborhood JK I just happened to know. I opened my text editor and began typing away at "Life With My Little Sister."

"Come to think of it, Misaki-chan told me to write the sequel to 'Life With My Little Sister' as a novel. Well, novels and scripts aren't that different. I can handle this."

I was gravely mistaken.

In the form of a script, the dialogue of the little sister and the protagonist were the main focus. However, in the form of a novel, I'd have to write sentences beyond just their lines.

"I- I see. I'll just have to write more scene descriptions."

Realizing that, I wrote descriptions of the surrounding countryside scenery one after another.

Misaki-chan would be the only one reading this text anyway, so I didn't have to think about how a broader audience would receive it. However, Misaki-chan did say she wanted to read uninteresting plain text.

I have to at least answer that request.

I used up 10 pages to describe the verandah of the Japanese house my little sister and I lived in.

Furthermore, I used up 20 pages to describe the flowers blooming in the garden.

Furthermore, I used up 30 pages to describe the shrine on the village outskirts where I was led to by my little sister's hand. Afterwards, I used 40 pages to describe the "secret cave" behind the shrine.

The cliff behind the shrine blocked our path. However, on closer inspection, there was a deep dark hole on the rocky surface waiting for us to enter.

Pulling my little sister's hand, we silently stepped into the cave.

After numerous trials, our adventure landed us at the cave's depths.

"We finally made it, Onii-chan."

"What is this place? It's so dark I can't see a thing."

"This is the secret cave. Deep inside your heart, Onii-chan, is a place you can't usually visit. A sacred spot hidden in the center of the universe."

"Sacred spot? I'm as far as you can get from sacred. A place that'd fit me would be the exact opposite."

"You're wrong. It's because you wanted me to bring you here I brought you. Now, let's go beyond this cave to the `Meadow of Destiny.'"

I was frightened and wanted to turn back. However, my little sister pulled me strongly and wouldn't let me escape.

"It's the final test to see if you'll choose to live a prosperous life over dying. To see if you're worthy of space-time fusion, Onii-chan. I wonder how it'll go."

Happily saying that, my little sister pulled me further and further into the cave.

After a while, the damp exposed rock walls became a smooth marble-like texture, as we entered a temple-like structure lined with columns on both sides.

Walking step by step with my head hanging down along the colonnade, dimly lit by torches, eventually, we saw a light in the distance.

It was the exit to the cave.

With every step, the light expanded until the view of the green meadow spread beyond us. We had passed through the cave.

My little sister pulled me by the hand, running out into the meadow, and then laid down on the soft grass.

As I rolled over next to my sister, a strange constellation that I had never seen before spread out above me, showering a lively phosphorescent light onto the meadow.

“Here you go.”

My little sister slightly rose up and handed me a white flower she had plucked from the meadow.

I accepted the flower as I laid down.

My little sister plucked a petal with her slender fingertips as she whispered into my ear.

“Life.”

She plucked another pedal.

“Death.”

I remembered.

This was flower fortune telling.

“Life • Death • Life • Death • Life • Death • Life • Death.....”

Petals fluttered down onto my face as I lay in the grass looking up at the starry sky.

“How nostalgic. I always longed to die even though I’m still alive.”

“Onii-chan , this is no time to act like it’s none of your business. Right next to life comes a sweet death. So choose again, choose your future.”

“Well..... It’s fine. There’s no need to rush. We just made it here, so let’s just take it easy.”

It always ends up badly when I take things too seriously. That’s why I put my hands behind my head as I prepared for a nap.

My little sister still continued the fortune telling, but eventually got bored. She tossed away the flower, and laid down next to me.

“Geez..... Okay. Fine. Let’s just say you chose a prosperous future. Let’s take one more step towards the space-time fusion. Maybe then you’ll notice some signs on a physical level.”

Struggling to steer the text back to literary fiction as it veered towards sci-fi, I used roughly 10 more pages to describe taking a nap in the “Meadow of Destiny.”

Lazily continuing the boring descriptions, I got sleepy. I compiled the text and sent it to Misaki-chan before passing out.

Part Three

With our work complete, we started selling on DLsite.

Unfortunately, we were unable to reach our goal of making a million yen.

“Guh.”

Yamazaki clenched his fist looking at the sales graph. While it was selling rapidly upon release, sales were now completely dead.

Noticing I’d soon be hit by an unpleasant stream of screaming and sobbing blaming me, I sheltered my valuables, my TV and VR headset, behind my back.

However, Yamazaki faced me with a refreshing smile.

“Thanks for everything, Satou-san.”

“O- Ohh.”

Could it be that Yamazaki was completely burnt out inside and this feeling of being refreshed was all that was left?

I cautiously tried to follow him up.

“M- Man, I’m going to miss you. When you’re back home with your folks.”

“It’s the first time I’ve slaved away this hard at anything.”

“Well, let’s forget about this mishap. How about we game today?”

I moved my tired body trying to turn on the game console. However, Yamazaki’s eyes were still shining.

“Everyone gave it their all starting this business..... We delivered a product filled with our ideas to customers..... And we enriched everyone’s sex lives. That sort of mission-driven lifestyle..... I’ll never forget this month for the rest of my life!”

I frowned.

He spoke pretentiously, but all we really did was pull some masturbation audio and try selling it online.

Not only that, in the process, Yamazaki got cuckolded as the classmate he had a crush on hooked up with a third party in some diverse way.

I was supposed to be crossing the line between man and woman with my crush, but somehow, we ended up with some bond as fellow creators I just don’t understand.

I think we lost more than we gained with this project.

Seeing Yamazaki’s uninformed congratulatory face started to set me off.

“.....”

We already released the final product, so it didn't matter if Yamazaki got brain damage. Should I tell him about Nanako and Senpai's relationship?

Nah..... Yamazaki's misogynistic nature would likely become even more twisted, and it'd ruin his life full-scale. I'll keep the relationship between our project's voice actress and scenario writer to myself.

For the time being, I turned my attention to something more practical.

“R- Right. I'll help you clean out your room. You do have to move out.”

“That'll be a big help.”

We headed to Yamazaki's room and began packing cardboard boxes with figures and old PC game packages he had displayed on his shelf.

Although it was his problem at the end of the day, as expected, it was sad saying goodbye.

I continued working in silence.

Yamazaki started muttering.

“Let me just say this. I'm not going home a loser.”

“Oh, yeah? You didn't manage to reach that deal with your parents so..... sounds like a loss, if you ask me.”

Yamazaki put down the cardboard box and looked at me.

“It's true I didn't manage to make a million.”

“Right? Yamazaki, you lost and you're going home.”

“No, you're wrong. I succeeded in meeting half the goal. That's why, I..... no, that's why we half won. Don't forget that.”

“What kind of argument is that? That sort of thinking is sad, so just shut up and pack.”

Yamazaki lifted the cardboard box from the floor and shoved it at me.

“Keep this in your room, Satou-san. I’ll persuade my dad to let me come back to this apartment. I swear.”

A few days later, Yamazaki went back to his parents' house in Hokkaido. A little while later, the room next door was cleaned and locked by the real estate company.

“.....”

In my room, I contemplated what to do next.

Without even thinking though, I knew what I had to do.

I felt bad for Yamazaki, but I’m going to need to get ready to move out of my room too. Sell and throw out all my stuff and move back to my parents. I’ve accomplished nothing in this city, and there’s no need for me to be here anymore. I can’t even pay this month’s rent.

“.....”

Just as I was getting ready, I got a call from Yamazaki from his parent’s house.

“I’d like to send the proceeds, so can you tell me your bank account number, Satou-san? Also, let me know Senpai’s number too.”

“S- Sure.”

When I contacted Senpai, she told me that she was already working on her next scenario. According to her, she was feeling creative and could still write as many stories as she wanted to. She also said she was having a good time recording with Nanako.

“.....”

I gave Yamazaki my and Senpai’s bank account numbers, and shortly after, received a bit over 100,000 yen.

“Hey. Is it really okay to give me this much? I didn’t do anything.”

“What are you saying? We’re splitting the money we made. Pretty soon, we’ll be planning our next project!”

Do you really intend on keeping up with this?

It did seem like everyone else from the project was motivated. However, my motivation was flying low.

Our project this time made me realize how incompetent I was. The more I got involved, the more we’d progress backwards.

“If we are starting another project, there’s pretty much nothing I can do.”

“What are you saying? This time, you kept everyone in touch, and motivated us when we were feeling down.”

It depends on how you look at it.

All I really did was stop looking at what I didn't want to see while looking at what I wanted to.

With the others, I just put what I wanted to see into words and threw it out there as I saw fit. Even if it happened to work this time, there was no guarantee next time it’d go well.

However, Yamazaki tickled my ego.

“What are you saying, manager? No, leader.....? I think that’s the role you took this time around.”

“Y- You think so? Well, I guess let’s leave it at that. Speaking of which, how are things going with you? You’re at home, right?”

“I don’t think they’re going to listen. To some extent, I’ll be taking over my family’s business. But I definitely won’t forget about YS Studio!”

For a while, Yamazaki spoke pretty dramatically, perhaps because he was drunk. After following his momentum and responding as I saw fit, I ended the call, laying into my futon.

“.....”

The sun soon set and my room was enveloped in darkness.

With the money I got from Yamazaki, I was somehow able to catch up on my rent. However, I didn't have enough for this month. Or even enough money for food.

Therefore, at some point, I'd have to move out of this apartment too. Then I'll become a hikikomori with my folks back home.

“.....”

I curled into my futon and imagined my bleak future. Strangely enough though, my mood did not sink that much.

I don't know why, but it didn't feel like a future that bleak was waiting for me. Maybe it's been the last few months, with the requests by Senpai to create hypnovoices for her to stabilize her mind.

Maybe it's the request by Misaki-chan to write her novels that are bland and boring, but hold a tranquil atmosphere lasting an eternity.

Creative activities like those may have affected my psyche and raised my mental stability somewhat.

At any rate, it was certain that even though I was moping around under the futon about my future, I didn't feel like dying all that bad.

Tired of worrying about it, I half got out of bed in the dark room and picked up my phone beside me.

“Oh. It's already time. I have to go.”

I left my room and headed for the neighborhood park.

At the park bench at night, Misaki-chan was waiting for me yet again.

“Geez, you're late.”

“Sorry. I've been busy recently.”

“You’ve just been bumming around, haven’t you?”

“N- Not really. I’ve been thinking about some stuff.”

“What kind of stuff?”

“Like my rent..... That’s right, my rent! I don’t think I can pay it this month.”

Up until now, I’ve been optimistically thinking about what will happen in the future, but maybe I just wasn’t thinking straight.

Talking to another person like Misaki-chan, I was suddenly snapped back to reality. The reality of the situation was, by all means, grim.

“I- I know..... I have to work. No, I don’t have anything to work on.....”

“If that’s the case, I have some great news.”

“I guess I just have to follow up with Yamazaki and move back home with my parents.....”

“Hey, listen! I said I got some great news!”

“Yeah, yeah. What, did you get a good grade on your test at school?”

“Close! You’re on the right track. Aren’t you clear-headed today.”

“Am I? Well, just hurry it up and just tell me what this good news is.”

“Test..... Selection..... Competition..... It’s a fact that you won. However, it’s not me who passed. It’s you, Satou-kun.”

“Haa? Since when was I taking a test? I’m living a life without evaluation. If there’s one thing good about life after college, it’s that it freed me from exams.”

“Even if you say that, Satou-kun, humans, as long as they live in society, are evaluated by other people. First, Satou-kun, you earned some high praise from me. Good job.”

“D- Did I do something? I mean.....”

“You wrote it, didn’t you? The novel I asked for.”

“Ahh, that, huh? I can write as many of those as you want.”

“I’ll be counting on that then. I’ll make a request for another one later. Before that though, here.”

Misaki-chan quickly placed 15 M Coins on the park table.

Remembering what the M Coins meant, I gulped.

Autumn was ending, and even though you could feel the winter atmosphere hitting the park this very moment, I felt like I suddenly broke into a fever.

With the M Coins I already had, I had 30 at my disposal, and converting this to an “Anything Ticket,” I could make the high school girl right in front of me do whatever I say.

Possibly unaware of my dirty thoughts, Misaki-chan continued on calmly.

“And this time, you also have a third party evaluation, Satou-kun. Here.”

Misaki-chan handed to me some piece of paper she hid behind her. She read what was written.

“Certified to: Satou Tatsuhiro-dono. Novel: ‘Life With My Little Sister’”

“C- Certified to?”

“As a result of a strict screening by the Selection Committee, the above work has been selected as the winner of the Special Prize of the 24th Michinoku Literary Award. Therefore, we hereby award it with a certificate of merit and a cash prize of 125,000 yen..... Here, take it.”

Accepting the certificate Misaki-chan pushed onto me, she started clapping.

“Congratulations, Satou-kun.”

“What’s with you?”

“I said it before, didn’t I? I cleaned up your work, and sent it to an affordable literary contest for you.”

“Contest? You mean like the Akutagawa or Naoki Awards?”

“No, nothing that big..... You know, Japan has many literary contests offered by local governments. There’s not much competition because most winners don’t become books, they don’t have to be too long, and you can even get prize money. Look.”

Misaki-chan took out a magazine titled "Public Offering Guide" from her bag, spread it out on the table, and pointed to a page with a sticky note on it.

“Let’s aim for the ‘Yamazato Ikiiki Literary Awards’ next. Write soon, okay.”

“I got it, I got it.”

Misaki-chan's talk about awards had to be a joke, and this certificate was probably another one of her handmade items.

However, this ink-written certificate did have an aura of authenticity.

“Ah, I’ll give you the money before I forget.”

Misaki-chan took out bills from her wallet and lined them on the table.

“Wh- What money?”

“It’s 125,000 yen. I had the prize money transferred to my account as your agent.”

Don’t tell me my novel really did win that local Michinoku Literary Award.

I didn’t care for some special award from some contest I never heard of. However, this money lined up on the table was just what I needed right now.

“Ha, haha..... What an elaborate joke.”

“Geez. I don’t have all the free time in the world like you, Satou-kun. I don’t have time to pull a prank on you. If you’re really doubting me, then.....”

Misaki-chan searched for the literary contest's homepage on her smartphone, tapped the link for the "24th Michinoku Literature Award Selection Results," and showed it to me.

"Special Award: Satou Tatsuhiro..... My name really is listed. That means....."

"Good for you, Satou-kun."

"I can pay my rent with this! Hell yeah!"

I gathered up the bills and started dashing to the nearest ATM machine at the convenience store. However, I was grabbed from behind by my belt and stumbled over.

"Ugh."

"Don't forget the M Coins!"

"Ah- Ahh..... Yeah, come to think of it."

I scooped up the M Coins from the table and put them in my pocket, running to the ATM machine again. However, again, I was grabbed from behind by my belt and stumbled over.

"Ugh."

"You saved up 30 M Coins! Don't you want to exchange them? For an 'Anything Ticket.'"

"Y- Yeah..... Now that you mention it."

I took out the 30 M coins from my pocket and handed them to Misaki-chan. Misaki-chan took out an "Anything Ticket" from her bag and handed it to me.

"So..... what will you do with it? This time I mean."

"Eh? Wh- What do you mean?"

"How you'll use the Anything Ticket. What should I do for you this time?"

From the darkness of the park, Misaki-chan stared like she was peering inside me.

“.....”

I’ve been thinking about how to use this ticket for a while now, but I was afraid to actually put my fantasies into words.

However, right now, Misaki-chan was clearly forcing me to make a decision.

She wasn’t letting me put off using the ticket. I had to decide what to use it on now.

“.....”

Gulping, I reviewed again how I could use the ticket one more time.

The first way was using the ticket to make this high school girl in front of me an outlet for my sexual desires. This was the straightest idea anyone could come up with and it’d only make sense.

The second way was using the ticket to make this high school girl in front of me a tool to satisfy my loneliness. To be more specific, I’d ask her to be my girlfriend. Using the ticket’s effectiveness for that, life would become more enjoyable, and the emptiness I’d feel regardless of if I was awake or asleep, 24 hours a day, might simmer down.

“What do you want? Hurry up and tell me.”

Misaki-chan pulled my belt from the front.

It couldn’t be helped.

I could only tell her my true feelings after contemplating this for so long.

I opened up my mind with determination.

“Alright. Listen up, Misaki-chan. I’m giving you an order with this ticket.”

“Sure. Ask me anything.”

“Continue this..... relationship with me.”

“Eh? Say that again?”

“Continue this relationship with me. Like this. Forever.”

“What? Why?”

“Like I said. I don’t want to change. I want to stay in this lukewarm comfort zone forever.”

““What do you mean by..... forever?”

“At least over a year. If we can, an eternity.”

“Th- There’s no way we can do that! Even the sun’s going to explode someday!”

“Is it no good? I want this relationship to last as long as it can.”

“It’s not like it’s no good, but..... I don’t know about that far in the future. I’m changing every day at some rapid speed.”

“I know. Even I’m changing every day as a hikikomori. But there’s something that’ll never change. No matter how many years or decades pass. Even if hundreds or thousands of years change, some things never change.”

“Are there really things like that in this world? Even this bench and table will soon be taken down because they’re getting old. We’re young now, but we’ll be older before we know it.”

At that moment, a vision of my life growing old with Misaki-chan flashed into my mind.

Me, who thought he had just started working part-time as a security guard, who was still swinging around a baton at the age of 30.

Misaki-chan, who graduated from college even though I thought she had just gotten admitted, who was now spending her days at work staring at Excel as an office worker.

The two of us would eventually have a child. I couldn't help but panic. Misaki-chan seemed extremely confident in childcare after reading some book titled "How to Prevent Your Child From Becoming a Hikikomori."

I don't know if the two of us were able to raise that kid, but eventually, we got old.

"Well, you do get older as you live."

"You wouldn't want to look at me when I'm a granny, would you?"

"Maybe I wouldn't. But recently, I learned something. A way to only look at the things I like. So I'll only look at things I want to look at."

"What is it that you want to look at?"

"What hasn't changed about you inside, Misaki-chan."

"Is there something like that in me?"

"Yeah, of course there is. Even if there were endless versions of you, Misaki-chan, there'd be something still the same. It's the same with me too."

"Don't spout nonsense like that! You know, I've always been trying to be serious....."

I gazed at Misaki-chan, and tried focusing on what I wanted to see.

In this girl I've been with for ages, I saw just that.

It's something probably nobody else can see.

However, inside this person was something I could see clearly.

I told her with all my heart.

"It's beautiful."

"Liar....."

“Maybe I am lying. But still, stay with me the same way you are now. Forever.”

Ordering that, I handed the Anything Ticket back to Misaki-chan.

Misaki-chan’s shoulders shook emotionally.

“If..... If that’s what you want, you don’t even need a ticket. Because I’ve always intended to be there for you. Always.”

Misaki-chan shoved the ticket back to me, and sat down on the bench, looking at the night sky.

I sat beside her and waited for her to calm down.

When her shoulders stopped shaking, Misaki-chan asked me if there was anything else I’d like to use the Anything Ticket for.

“Well..... Misaki-chan, has something been bothering you lately? You seem kind of down every time it becomes winter.”

The thing is, around this time of night during counseling, Misaki-chan had a tendency to sigh.

I had a feeling if I let this be, it’d lead to some big incident. If possible, I wanted to get to the root of this.

Misaki-chan refused to answer any of my questions. However, pestering her insensitively, she eventually opened her mouth.

“It’s almost..... the anniversary of her death.”

“Death? Did someone die?”

“My birth mother. When I was little, she died in an accident. I’ve never been there before, but I was wondering if I should visit her grave.”

“Alright. I’ll use the Anything Ticket on that. Let’s visit her grave.”

“No way.”

“Why not?”

“I’m scared. Like I’ll remember a lot of things before I came to this town.”

“I’ll be there with you, won’t I?”

“That’ll help, but..... No, I think I’ll go alone this year. The cemetery is far, so I’ll take the shinkansen. You don’t have that kind of money, do you, Satou-kun?”

I suddenly felt uneasy. Was it okay to let Misaki-chan visit her mother's grave on her own like that?

“If you mean money, it’s right here.....”

As I dug for the money in my pocket, Misaki-chan grabbed my hand, and took the Anything Ticket instead.

“It’s fine. You just stay at the mark waiting for me, Satou-kun. I think this is something I have to face alone.”

Misaki-chan handed me some self-help books from her bag and trotted out of the park.

The next day, Misaki-chan did not show up.

Part Four

After Misaki-chan returned north to her hometown, the air of the city suddenly turned cold.

Although I didn’t want to admit it, I might have gotten depressed by my loneliness.

Bumming around my apartment, I picked up my smartphone hoping to talk to someone.

Contrarily, at that moment, I received a message from Senpai.

“How are you, Satou-kun? I bet it’s getting cold over there. You need to stay warm. Okinawa is just barely swimmable.”

The message followed with a photo of Senpai at the resort beach in a swimsuit with Nanako entwined to her arm.

They used the proceeds Yamazaki sent to take a trip together.

For some reason, the combination of Senpai and a southern island made me feel uneasy.

However, the photo of them with floats and snorkels had an erotic level greater than Thanatos.

“Well..... Whatever. It’s not like it’s a lover’s suicide.”

I saved the picture, laid down on the futon, and went back to working alone in the cold of my apartment.

“.....”

Still, time was moving slowly.

I had a lot of free time, so I started cleaning my room.

There were endless places that needed tidying up.

The cardboard boxes of stuff Yamazaki left behind were mixed with my own junk, making my room, which was messy to begin with, now 100% more cluttered.

“.....”

First, I turn upside down one of Yamazaki’s cardboard boxes, and let the faded game packages drop onto the floor.

“Whoops, I shouldn’t handle them too roughly. Old games are vintage and can probably sell.”

I pushed over some junk to make a “Sellable Corner,” and in that space, stacked the sepia colored game packages.

In the midst of it, I stopped as something caught my eye.

Between the packages was a medium unfamiliar to me.

“What’s this? A CD-R, huh..... That old media format.”

Printed on the case were bishoujo characters that looked two generations older than Yamazaki’s art style.

It appeared to be printed on an old inkjet printer, with rough grain and color being faded in the sun. Still, I could tell it was a pretty bad drawing.

By the quality of the jacket, the data inside was probably a low-tier doujin game made by amateurs.

However, it seemed like the person of the distant past who made this indie bishoujo game was filled with a torrent of raw creativity.

“Something like this won’t sell, so I’ll dump it..... or keep it just in case.”

I put the CD-R in the “Keep Corner” next to the “Sellable Corner.”

Further sorting through Yamazaki’s cardboard boxes and my own stuff, I found more dated junk from god knows when.

First off, an ultra low-res digital camera I didn’t even know belonged to who. When I looked through the broken LCD screen with vertical lines on its back, I saw a photo of what appeared to be the gate of some elementary school.

Next, in a file were some sheets of paper tucked in. It was so faded in the sun, I couldn’t make out the text, but I could make out “Party A” and “Party B.” It was some sort of contract.

Finally, there were boxes of healthy food with holes in them. Labeled on the packaging was “Made from 100 percent natural ingredients with great care taken to ensure that no harmful chemicals were mixed during the manufacturing process.” Although they seemed quite old, they might still be edible.

I piled junk I couldn't bring myself to throw away for whatever the reason into the "Keep Corner," while sloppily categorizing the games that could sell.

It didn't seem like I'd be able to finish tonight.

It wasn't healthy to stay in my room all day long, so late at night, I headed to the park with a book I borrowed from Misaki-chan.

“.....”

Sitting on the bench with the streetlight, I read the self-help book I reread so many times, I almost had it memorized.

Tired of making out the letters, I looked up.

Beyond the trees of the park were the city lights shining.

Tired of looking at those lights, I shut my eyes meditating.

It was then I started aimlessly thinking about my future.

Over the years, I was enveloped by the night air time after time again coming to this park. That's why, being here a countless number of times, I feel like I've been struggling with a lot of things.

However, it felt like you were always next to me.

Even now.

“.....”

On the bench, I noticed the warmth of someone next to me, who'd be in touching distance if I moved even just slightly.

I left my eyes enveloped in darkness until this person returning from her trip to the city leaned her head on my shoulder.

Afterward

It's been more than 20 years since I've written the original "Welcome to the NHK!" With how much time has passed, it's hard to think of it as something I wrote myself.

In particular, since it's a work that had such an impact on men and women around the world, it's hard to really grasp the reality of it. It's hard to believe that I could have written such a masterpiece.

Despite being an old work I wrote back in 2001, I still receive messages of gratitude from around the world every day.

Comments like "This masterpiece saved my life," "Takimoto-sensei is an absolute genius," and "I feel like I finally understand myself thanks to this unbelievable depiction of human psychology."

When I meet people in real life, there'd be a fair chance they've heard of "Welcome to the NHK!" and would look at me with the same awe as they'd give the author of classical literature.

Of course, it's easy to deny such strong feelings. Novels are just words and the author's just some guy good at playing the keyboard.

At that though, I don't want to deny those illusions people cherish so much.

The value of a novel may be an illusion, but it was formed by the strong energy of the people involved and the readers.

I don't want to be modest saying "Nah, that book I wrote in my youth is no big deal." That's why I want to declare this here and now.

“Welcome to the NHK!,” which I wrote when I was 23 years old, is the work of a genius. It’s a novel that has the power to transcend time, gender, and race by appealing to the heart. Even after today, it’ll continue to move people around the world.

End of story!

At that, I’d like to forget about this, and start working on something else.

After “NHK,” I’ve completed many projects, all of which I’m proud of. For those impressed with “NHK,” please check those out. It’s tough to always be treated like the “NHK” guy.

I’m no enka singer!

But as life goes on, you can’t escape from the past. In particular, a past work you put a large deal of energy into.

Even if it feels redundant, every now and then, I feel like adding something new to a past work after digging it up.

Even if that work is so old I don’t feel like I’m the author anymore, I feel like adding some of today’s Reiwa energy to the passion of those days.

In doing so, I adhered to several points to be aware of.

To pay utmost respect to the original, and not write anything that would damage its value. To not make the shimmer in the original NHK fade out, but shine even brighter after reading Rebuild.

With prudence, I made sure to emphasize the spirit of “Welcome to the NHK!”

What is the spirit of “Welcome to the NHK!,” you ask?

That would be sex, drugs, and violence, reckless entertainment textures and current events, and as much of that crammed in as possible. And to entertain all the readers, I want to serve you with my heart and soul as the author.

For the longest time, it has been my greatest joy writing novels with the enjoyment of my readers in mind.

In order to further maximize that enjoyment and give new life to this world, I shut myself in my room, searching my psyche for new treasures no one's seen before.

What I found was the new stories I've been searching for my entire life. There is no greater joy than to present to my readers "Rebuild of Welcome to the NHK!" which has been granted this new shimmer.

Satou, Yamazaki, Misaki, Senpai. Please enjoy this newly written story of these nostalgic characters.

December 2023

Takimoto Tatsuhiko

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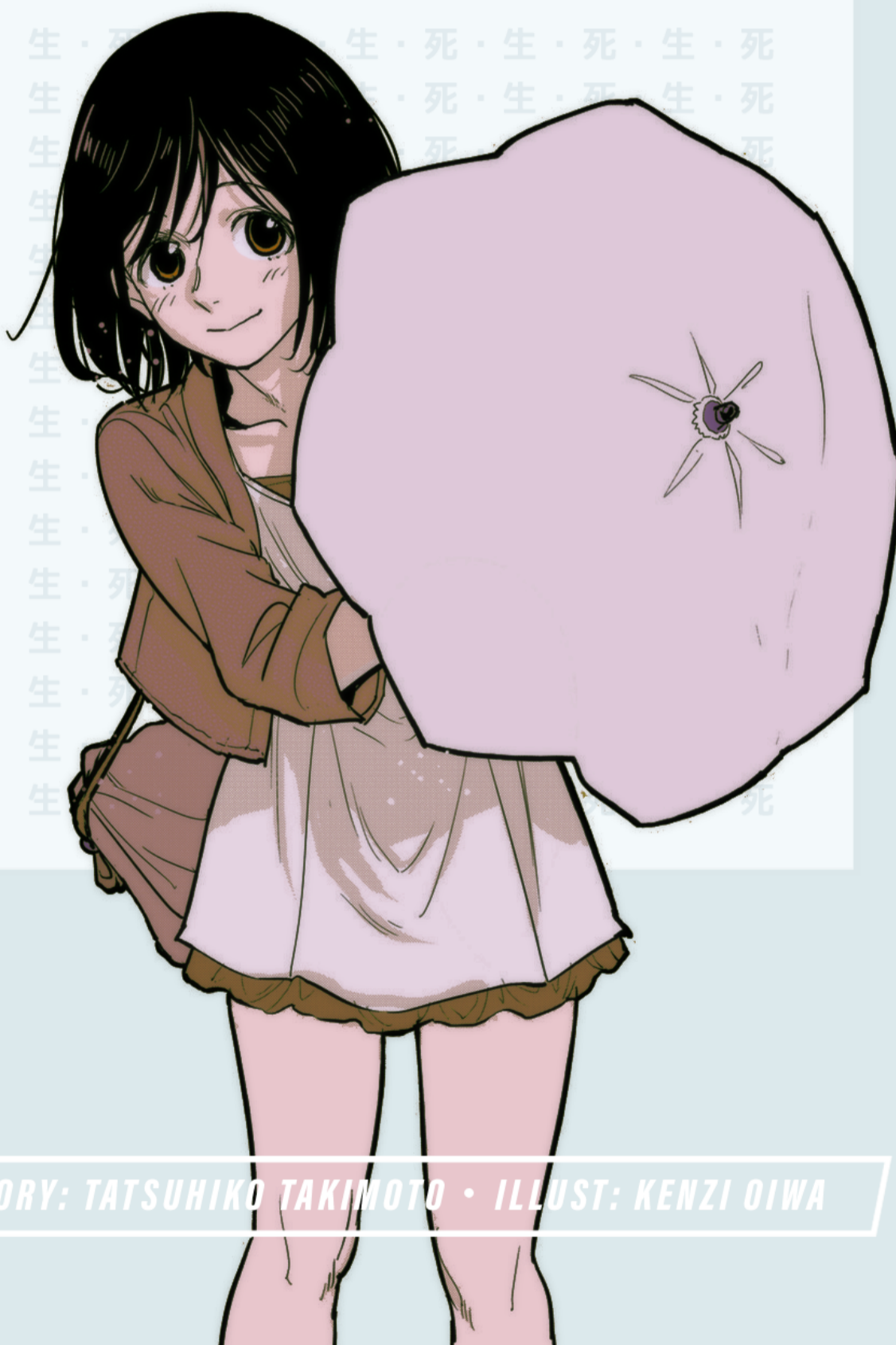
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REBUILD of NIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONI
WELCOME TO THE NHK!

新 ・ N H K に よ う こ そ !



STORY: TATSUHIKO TAKIMOTO • ILLUSTRATION: KENZI OIWA

The existence of the evil organization of "NHK", I happened to find it. All the reasons why I dropped out from the university, being unemployed and "Hikikomori" - homicidal young person - are due to NHK's conspiracy. I'll keep fighting till the day I will beat the vice organization. But one day, an assassin from a religious group show up to kill me. She is a neat and beautiful girl, Misaki-chan, with a parasol. Who is she? What can save our future contaminated with eroticism, violence, and drug? Love, courage or friendship? This is an ultimate Hikikomori sequel!