

The Leap of Faith

By Stephanie Tunnell

If one were to fly high over Tokyo Bay and follow the Rainbow Bridge out to the sea shore, then one would stand before the artificial island of Odaiba. From an aerial view, the city district was a cramped one, with block buildings stacked upon block buildings. They appeared to rise out of the ocean like the swollen belly of a pregnant woman. Several streets, however, scattered across the island were dilapidated, eroding from water wear and neglect, making the bloated island appear to have dark scars that would never fully heal. A metro train, moving on a rickety metal rail attached to the Rainbow Bridge, jetted towards the old island and disappeared into the manmade, subterranean layers. In the center of Odaiba, buried waist high in apartment buildings and a squished market place was a beautiful Ferris wheel beaming with neon lights from pivot to carts.

Before the Ferris wheel was the smallest of apartments: four stories high and twenty rooms wide. On the third floor walkway stood three little girls. The one in the middle climbed over the railing, placed her tiny feet back on the ledge, and stretched out her arms along the railing. The other two girls watched her close at hand. The wind blew ever slightly, tossing their hair up like loose spider webs.

“This is so exciting!” said the girl on the right, “I can’t wait to see her jump.”

“Shut up, Mizu!” cried the girl on the left, “Don’t antagonize her.”

“I’m not, Asa.” replied Mizu longingly, “It was *her* idea anyway.”

Asa turned to the girl standing on the ledge.

“Sakurha, you don’t have to do this. It’s crazy. And dangerous.”

“So?” said Mizu, “It has to be a little dangerous; otherwise the leap of faith doesn’t work.”

“It’s an old cougars’ tale! How could jumping off a ledge into the arms of man bring two people together? What proof is there?”

“Science!” Mizu stuck up her chin, “When two people experience dangers together, their fear releases endorphins into their brain, which make them ‘feel good’ and they form an infinity for one another.”

“There’s no science in that cat-shit!” Asa shouted.

“Hey! My mother told me that ‘cat-shit’ and she’s a psychologist.”

“And you’re using her facts to justify a bad action. My mother never jumped off a ledge to make my father love her.”

Though the breeze had muffled the debate from reaching Sakurha’s ears, the last phrase echoed within her head: *my mother never...* And her thoughts took her away as she waited on that ledge.

Ever since Sakurha was old enough to remember, she and her mother had always lived by themselves. When she was five years old and knew what the word “family” meant, she asked her mother where her father was. “Don’t know,” her mother would reply as she stared at her handheld computer, “He was a sperm donor. I never met him.” Sakurha was never shocked by her mother’s ability to silence such discussions (she was very good at that); however it was the duration of such silences that began to eat away at their relationship.

From kindergarten on to sixth grade, there were only two instances of intimacy between her and her mother: the first were car rides, which were the only time they spent together outside the house. Sakurha would erratically change the radio station just so her mother would speak (usually to tell her to stop). The other instance was during meals, however these turned out as bitter as the former: Either her mother got a call from work, read the tabloids on the Internet, or wrote on her personal computer. The worst was when her mother would stare out the sliding door window to the large illuminated Ferris wheel outside their apartment. Its slow turning lights had a way of dazing her gaze, which said to Sakurha, “I’d rather look at nothing than look at you.” Sadly, this was the most common pastime at meals.

Sakurha didn't hate her mother for that. What she *did* hate about her mother was her career. Everyone saw her mother as the top regional reporter of Tokyo, who was quip, funny, and friendly until one had no choice but to mail her flowers or a gift basket.

Sakurha saw her both personally and professionally. She knew what her mother really was: the girl who spent hours at the mirror, practicing her laugh and smile; the girl who matched her outfits with the weather (blue for sunny, green for rain, and pink for winter); the girl who walked up and down the hallway, perfecting her stride, head nods, and hand gestures to gain "optimal audience attention" as her mother would say. And every night Sakurha, sitting alone in dark, would watch her mother on television. "It's all fake." She'd vehement to herself as her mother interviewed another witless official. "She's fake and everyone loves her for it."

That's *why* she stood on that ledge with her two friends close by. Sakurha didn't want love like a social firefly; a creature that glows beautifully at a distance yet up close is nothing but a skittering, oozing insect with a strange nature.

"I want someone to love me." Sakurha finally muttered, "And I'll love him. That way we'll never feel alone."

"That a girl! Break from the norm!" cheered Mizu, "So which man are you gonna pick? What about him?" Mizu pointed to a passer-by down below. "He's young and attractive."

"Noka Takeda from apartment A203?" said Asa, "Not likely. He's an herbivore."

"Really? How can you tell?"

"He's wearing skinny jeans, a low cut shirt with a scarf, in June of all days. Plus he's wearing mascara. Herbivore's wear stylish clothing not to attract women but just to look good."

"What about him?" Mizu pointed to another passer-by.

"Another herbivore." Replied Asa.

"Oh! Come on! He's wearing a business suit. How can you tell he has the original syndrome?"

"It's pronounced 'eroginil syndrome' and because he's wearing five diamond rings and studded ear rings. Also he's carrying a cake."

“Maybe he bought it for a party.”

“I don’t see a brand sticker.” Mocked Asa, “I think he made it himself. Herbivores love making sweets. Sweets are there only pleasure.”

“Gah! Damn it!” Mizu shook her fists in the air, “It’s impossible to find a *real* man anymore. What am I gonna do after schooling? Work at the same job for fifty years only to come home to a bunch of winy cats?”

“You’re coming off a bit needy, Mizu.”

“Oh! I’m sorry,” she said sarcastically, “I just have a few daddy issues because a man hasn’t done more than open a door for me. Imagine, Asa, if your father never helped you. He never helped you with anything because he didn’t exist. He never said a word to you: never ‘good work in Algebra, Asa’ or ‘have fun at your band concert, Asa’ or ‘you look pretty today’; ‘love you, Asa.’ Imagine if *he* never existed and it was only you and your mother.”

“But my mother says those things to me too.” said Asa.

Mizu gave up and collapsed on to the railing and Sakurha’s arm. She felt the throb of her arm under Mizu’s chin and felt the press of her warm chest as it relaxed.

“You just won’t get it, Asa.” Mizu started again, “Life is different for test-tube-kids like Sakurha and I.”

“Well, try to explain. I’ll listen.” Said Asa. The breeze filled their silence for a moment.

“Since you have a mother *and* a father,” Mizu raised her head, “they can share the work equally, which allows them to have quality time with you. But when an only mother raises you, there is no quality time. My mom comes home from work, does all the chores, cooks our food, and then goes to bed.

“I never see her after that. When she does have some spare time she spends it with her books or colleagues. If I want to go to the movies, she gives me money but doesn’t come with me. If I want to go to the zoo, she signs me up for a stupid field trip but never tags along. Even though she’s my mom, she’s nothing but a drone.

“As long as I go to school and stay alive, she doesn’t think about me; doesn’t care how I feel...” Mizu had to stop because she was on the verge tears and whimpering. She didn’t want the others to see her like that.

“That’s why I’m doing the leap of faith.” Said Sakurha. Her sober voice startled the other two girls. Their heads recoiled from her as if surprised to see her there. “I don’t wanna end up a drone like *my* mother and raise a child in that loneliness. It’s unthinkable to me. I wanna raise a family like your parents Asa, who want to make each other happy, and their children. I want *that* or nothing at all.”

The three girls stood there quietly as another gust whipped up their hair and dresses. Their silence was due partly to Mizu, who was wiping the water from her eyes, and to Asa, who was rubbing the blush from her cheeks that rose from Sakurha’s professed envy.

“Okay,” said Asa, more composed, “but why use the leap of faith to start a family?”

“You already know the answer.” Barked Mizu, “Get with the twenty-second century!”

“Never mind. Better question: who do you want to ‘fall’ for, Sakurha? It seems like you’ve thought a lot about this.”

“Hanzo...” muttered Sakurha.

“Hanzo Date?” Replied Asa.

“What!” mocked Mizu, “That pencil pusher who lives in A305?”

Hanzo lived three apartments across from Sakurha and her mother. He was a man in his mid-twenties; youthful but the signs of aging wrinkled his forehead. In a good way, thought Sakurha. He lived alone but was always in good spirits. He usually spent his evenings after work on his porch, tending to his garden or feeding milk to the stray cat that lived on the roof. When he would whistle the birds perched near by and joined him in song.

Sakurha would tiptoe on to her porch and sit on the bench to do her homework, but secretly spied on Hanzo all the while. She’d take quick glances at him. If he treats plants and animals so well, she thought, how well would he treat me? She took mental pictures of Hanzo and daydreamed she was over there with him: watering his lilies while he trimmed their leaves;

joining him in song as the birds flocked to them; and petting the stray cat's soft fur while he gave it warm milk.

Yes, Sakurha desperately wanted to be with him. Though she didn't know *how*. She realized she hadn't never *ever* confronted a man her entire life.

The answer finally came to her while watching a half-hour news report (from her mother of all people) about a new trend popping up in Japan. The story disgusted her at first, being that her mother was the narrator. But when the story finished, Sakurha could not help but clasp her hands from her cheeks to contain her smile.

After World War III, Japan experienced a huge gap to its gender ratio: for every man there were five women. To make matters worse, the chemical weapons used in the old war polluted the environment, creating an awful disease in men known as the *erognil syndrome*: half of all male babies acquired this defect and were not cognitively nor physically stimulated to sexual arousal. So it was considered a divine miracle if a city had one wed-locked woman for every ten women. The rest usually went to the sperm clinic to be inseminated and then later conceive.

Four decades passed and a massive group of hardy, strong, and incredibly lonely workingwomen began to shape the culture's trends. Of the many maladaptive ones was the *Leap of Faith*, which was started by an Internet sensation around a photo taken during the war. The picture depicted a male student on a skyscraper balcony with outstretched arms, ready to catch a female student who was in mid-leap from an adjacent, war-torn skyscraper that had toppled into his building. The Internet told that after the war the two students married, owing their deep-seeded love to the hardships and dangers they endured together during the war days.

And with the second-wave baby-boomers reaching adulthood, women everywhere began mimicking the story as a contest for love. One woman, wanting the attention of the local pool's lifeguard, jumped off the roof right into his lookout tower. Three other women at a nightclub jumped off a high rise at the same time to see if one of them would be caught by the only male clubber there. Even a newly wed couple reenacted the scene on two skyscrapers to express their love to their guests (of course, there was a safety net).

The act immediately romanticized the naive Sakurha. That's how I want to meet Hanzo, she brooded; in the flight of danger so quick only compassion could react.

The evening grew dim at the apartment complex before the three girls spoke again.

"Look!" Mizu pointed, "There he is!"

Young Hanzo Date emerged from the subway stairs across the street with a cup of coffee in one hand and his backpack slung over one shoulder. He poked his glasses back to the bridge of his nose and crossed the road towards the apartments. His golden wristwatch glittered softly in the light of dusk.

"Remember to yell the magic word before you jump," Mizu whispered to Sakurha, "otherwise he'll think you're committing suicide." (Which was not uncommon in those days)

"You don't have to do this, Sakurha." Pleaded Asa one last time. "There are other ways..." Whether it was her words or the impending moment, Sakurha's heart began pounding out a dozen fears.

The drop is pretty high, Sakurha thought. The wind might blow me off course. What if I don't jump far enough and crash into the metal railings below? Or jump too far and land into the street? She remembered one story of a college student who leapt from her dorm window but her catcher had had headphones in his ears. He hadn't seen nor heard her cry as she slammed on to the concrete walkway behind him. The student had to wear a body cast for a month. What if *that* happens to me, she thought, or what if he doesn't want to catch me? Her knees buckled at the idea and she tightly gripped the railing with sweaty palms.

Sakurha's point of no return had arrived as Hanzo casually walked toward the three girls three stories above him. She kept opening her mouth to speak but nothing larger than a squeak came out. Desperate, she looked to Mizu, who merely smiled back at her worried face.

"Hey Hanzo!" Mizu screamed so loud even the low traffic was muffled.

Hanzo stopped and looked up to the source while in the middle of a sip of coffee. It was Sakurha he locked eyes with first. Their long gaze filled her with such strength that all her fears flew away. She straightened her posture and inhaled deeply.

“Kamikazi!” She yelled as she hopped perfectly and gracefully from the ledge. She smiled, as she knew she was right under him. She enjoyed the weightlessness of her body in the air like a sparrow in first flight... Then gravity took hold and threw her down so fast the skirt of her dress went over her face. She screamed into her cloudy, linen prison as she fell three stories below.

Hanzo was smart though. He knew why little Sakurha jumped off the ledge. He knew what her *shout* meant. He had watched the *Leap of Faith* special with top regional reporter of Japan, Sansa Iwagami a week ago (but only because he thought Sansa was attractive). He whipped his coffee and backpack away and raised his arms up in one swift motion. But before he could root his posture, Sakurha crashed into him with such momentum they were flung to the ground. Their landing rung with the sound of Hanzo’s head smacking into the metal railing behind him. The ringing lasted awhile until the breeze swept it away.

Sakurha was lost within her dress for a time; sweat pouring from her face. Did I make it, she thought. Am I alive? Am I hurt? Where’s Hanzo? How do I get out here? She crawled through the fabric of her dress and emerged back into the street.

She lay on top of Hanzo; so close their noses touched. She looked into his rapidly blinking eyes and smelled the tough grain and sweet cream coming from his breath. She felt the warmth of his arms around her waist and her back as she relaxed; reviling in the success of her leap of faith.

“Thank you, Hanzo. You saved me.” She said with a smile. An invisible force pulled her face close to his and her lips pressed softly against his.

Suddenly, Hanzo jerked violently and threw Sakurha off of him. She scrapped the naked part of her butt on the concrete. He frantically wrapped his arms around the railing’s legs and shouted at Sakurha.

“The fuck your chickens burning the balls! No pillows in beer: bitch riding! Bullshit!”

Tears began falling from Sakurha’s cheeks as she started to cry like a child confused about a situation rather than an actual sadness she felt from Hanzo’s insults. She curled into herself as Hanzo staggered to his feet. Knees shaking and shoulders slouching, he looked around himself.

“Ringing? Singing; lingering; minging; bringing...” he trailed off as Asa and Mizu ran down the apartment stairs to Sakurha.

“You did it!” Yelled Mizu, “That was awesome!”

“Oh my God!” said Asa kneeling to Sakurha, “Are you al’right?”

“Courses she’s al’right. Hanzo caught her.” Mizu leaned in, “Did you remember to kiss him?”

“Cunt party!” Hanzo yelled before Sakurha could answer. He was crouched over with his arms on his knees for support.

“What?!” Asa was abashed.

“What did you call me, pencil-pusher!” Mizu yelled angrily. She marched up to him, placed her palms on his collarbones, and pushed him down. He collapsed without trying to brace himself. “It’s not every day a pretty girl falls into your arms and you call her a mean word. Well, what do you have to say for yourself?”

Hanzo lurched to his side and puked a froth of black liquid with remnants of shrimp and noodles that had been blending in his stomach since lunch.

“Ewww.” Spouted Mizu and Asa.

Hanzo feverishly crawled to the apartment stairs. The girls didn’t help him, and merely side stepped out of his path.

“You picked a weird guy to leap for, Sakurha,” frowned Mizu, “If you had kissed ‘em I bet he’d vomit in your mouth. Ha!”

“That’s gross, Mizu.” Asa turned to Sakurha, “Lets get away from him. He’s not right in the head.”

“Yeah...” Mizu turned to the company, “Lets go to the market and get some ice-cream.”

“B-but I leapt to him...” Sakurha stuttered.

“Yeah and he wasn’t strong enough,” badgered Mizu, “otherwise you’d still be in his arms. Trust me, we’re all a little disappointed.”

Asa helped Sakurha up as she grabbed the railing for support. She felt something cold and wet stick to her hand as she rose. She looked and saw a small streak of blood across her palm.

“Sad...” Added Mizu, “I thought the leap of faith would have worked.” She began walking down the street towards the strip malls. “Lets get some ice cream. That’ll cheer us up.” Asa followed her, pulling Sakurha with her. “C’mon. Lets leave him alone.”

As the three girls walked away, Sakurha couldn’t take her eyes off of Hanzo. He crawled lamely up the apartment stairs on all fours like a sick dog. She saw the back of his white collar was stained in little bead drops of red. Then he turned the corner and was gone.

That night, Sakurha lay in her bed wide-awake. Her thoughts spun to the faint glow of the Ferris wheel outside her window. Why didn’t the leap of faith work, she thought. Did I not jump high enough? Far enough? Was Hanzo not ready? Was he truly sick and couldn’t catch me? Was it because my friends were there?

She finally exhausted every question without answers and realized she was thirsty. She got up and went to the kitchen for some milk. As she put her used glass in the sink and returned through the living room, she noticed the blue and red lights flashing outside her front window.

She opened the front door and saw half the apartment’s residents on the walkway, including her mother and Mizu’s mother. Mizu’s mother was talking to a feminine police officer and firefighter while her mother video-recorded them with her hand-held computer. She wore that perfect, fake smile upon her face that she practiced for hours in front of the mirror.

“Hey Sakurha!” Mizu pushed her way through the crowd with Asa tagging behind her. “You missed everything! There were firefighters and their trucks; medics and an ambulance; and a half-dozen police men were here.”

“Why? What for?” Asked Sakurha.

“For who: Mr. Date.” Replied Asa

“Hanzo?”

“Yeah!” Said Mizu. “I told you he was sick or something. The medics had to tie him down on the stretcher because he was shaking so much. My mother says he got a major concussion.”

“It’s pronounced ‘concussion.’” Corrected Asa.

“Must you always correct me?”

“Only to make you look less naïve.”

“Anyway,” Mizu turned to Sakurha, “The medics are rushing Hanzo to the hospital right now. I hope his sickness isn’t contagious. I mean you touched that guy, Sakurha...”

Their conversation fell deaf to Sakurha then. A pit in her stomach grew and weighted on her like the time she carried two bowling balls on the last school trip. The gravity was all she could focus on as time lingered. First the firemen and police left in their respected cars; her mother and Mizu’s mother went back to their apartments; the crowd dispatched and finally Asa and Mizu left too, leaving Sakurha standing in front of Hanzo’s apartment door.

At first, she hesitated to enter the place because the police had wrapped the doorframe with yellow tape. When she saw that the door was slightly ajar, the heaviness inside her pulled her towards it. She slid under the police tape, carefully pushed the door back, and entered.

Inside, Sakurha wanted to say hello but stopped herself when the darkness and silence greeted her first. She crept softly down the hallway, her hand against the wall, as she moved toward the living room; where the only source of light was coming from. She emerged from the hallway and was bathed by the light of the Ferris wheel, which was right outside the sliding doors to Hanzo’s porch.

It’s beautiful, she thought, unlike *my* view of it. The angle makes the carts’ lights come in waves that keep me up at night. Here, the Ferris wheel is perfectly level with the porch. Hanzo must love watching its glow. I must watch it with him when he comes back.

She noticed something cold and sticky that connected her foot to the carpet. Looking down, she saw a trail of dark red dots that led to an adjacent room. She followed it.

She moved her arm up and down the dark room’s wall until she found its light switch. As the fluorescent bulb beamed its sterile light, revealing the bathroom, Sakurha’s eyes were drawn

to the linoleum floor. In its center was a pool of blood with the faintest imprint of a man's back, his arms thrown in random directions, and a circle for his head. Again the pit in her stomach grew heavy as it pulled her into the bathroom. She grabbed a towel from a rack, put it under the sink, ran water over it, and began to scrub furiously at the blood on the floor already dry and goopy. The white checker squares of the floor were smeared a rosy red with every stroke her little arms.

Don't worry Hanzo, she thought as she rang out the bloody towel and ran more water over it. When you get back, when you're all better, you won't have to worry about the mess. You'll return home and see that I cleaned it up. I'll say I'm sorry for jumping on you; for straining you when you were sick. Sakurha fell back down to the floor and scrub faster and harder. We'll look back and laugh at all this, she thought, and then we'll start over. We'll start over. We'll start over...

It was hours before Sakurha staggered out of the bathroom. The skirt of her nightgown had dark red blotches where she had knelt when cleaning. Her hands were wet and curled inward like a monkey's paw. And she hunched over, like an old woman having done many chores, as she scanned the room with tired eyes.

Though it was still dark the Ferris wheel's lights beamed through a single window, revealing that Sakurha had gone through the wrong door and had entered the bedroom instead of the living room. She focused on a single object in the corner -- completely thoughtless.

"Bed." She muttered as she walked towards the corner and climbed onto the single mattress. She fingered the sheets and nuzzled her head into the pillow until she lay comfortable like a cat rolled into a soft, furry ball. "It smells like him." And she drifted off into a black, dreamless sleep.

By the time she awoke it was morning. The sun shined through the Ferris wheel's motionless arms and the single window. Sakurha had her back to both but a tiny glare danced on her eyelids. She arose and saw the glare was coming from a golden wristwatch -- lying on the carpet -- brilliantly reflecting the sun's natural light. She quietly went to it, picked it up with two small fingers as if it was delicate as ash, and examined it front to back.

As Sakurha walked into the living room, heading towards the front door, she placed a note on top of the table. The golden watch dangled from her wrist up side down and strapped against the wooden surface as she released the paper. It read:

Dear Hanzo Date,

I'm sorry about what happened yesterday. Please forgive me twice more for I have entered your home, without permission, when you were not here and have taken your wristwatch. I only wish to keep it safe until you get better and return home. I promise to give it back.

Sincerely,

The girl three doors down at A302

And the little girl stood within the frame of the front door, looked back once to see the Ferris wheel outside, and then left.

Sakurha Iwagami never saw Hanzo Date again. She dearly kept the thought of him for a very, very long time. But as we know, time is the *great destroyer* of everything. So her thoughts became memories, memories faded into dreams, until the longing ache she had for Hanzo moved her less than watching a leaf fall from a tree. She still possessed his wristwatch, however, she only saw it as a memorabilia of childhood she had *always owned*.

Years passed. Decades passed. After college she found a solid career as a white smith at twenty-eight years old. She would do everything from crafting rings to fine-tuning watches for the rest of her life.

Every evening after work, Sakurha would buy a cup of coffee and drink it the entire walk home. She bought the apartment three doors down from her mother's place. She ate dinner with her mother before retiring to her own apartment.

As Sakurha left her mother's apartment a woman her age trotted down the walkway towards her. She wore a skin-tight, latex V-neck shirt that split down to her abdomen and a zebra stripped skirt that barely covered her rear and girdle straps that kept her stocking up. Her face was another dimension of its own: lips glossed bubble-gum pink; cheeks sparkling from glitter; neon green eye shadow; thick black eye-liner; and her hair styled back into a fan of rainbow colors like a peacock.

The scandalous woman waved, "Hey Sakurha!"

"Hey, Mizu." She replied with less gusto, "Where are you going?"

"Clubbing! I found this dance bar with a high male turn out. Wanna come?"

"No thanks. I'm kinda tired from work. I dealt with a dozen herbivores wanting stones changed or studs added or whatever shiny trend is happening now."

"Are you sure? Too bad." Mizu leaned in to whisper, "My mom and I have sin-thesized a drug that will sexually arouse herbivore men."

"Quite a discovery. Does it work?"

"I'm going to find out." Mizu held up pill between her fingers and gaily hummed. "Wish me luck." She said walking away.

"I wish you luck." said Sakurha (Unbeknownst to her, Mizu will be imprisoned three months later for multiple counts of rape and the illegal use of an unsanctioned drug. She is deported to the land of the sickos.)

Sakurha spent the first hour in her apartment cleaning her bathroom. With her shirtsleeves rolled up to her forearms, she mopped the linoleum floor many times before she was satisfied with its glossy reflection. Next she tended to her garden on the porch: watering the dozen technicolored lilies, trimming her four short bushes, and caring for her one lotus flower sitting alone on the bench. She would whistle while gardening however her tune always squeaked and her melody went random.

The stray cat that lived on the roof visited Sakurha. It frequently leapt on to her porch and meowed twice, signaling that he was hungry. She set a saucer of milk for him and he gleefully lapped it up. She sat down next to the feline and checked her hand-held computer.

“Asa had her third baby yesterday,” she said aloud, staring blankly at the screen, “and she’s enjoying the sunny beaches of Australia with her husband... Meanwhile I’m stuck her with cloudy days with no one else but *you*.” She meant to be lyrical for she truly loved the feline’s company, yet her voice was tired and came off bitter.

The sun went down behind her apartment. A dark blanket of night wrapped over them until the Ferris wheel was their only source of light. Sakurha leaned against the porch railing. Next to her, the stray cat was perched there too. She weakly held a glass of warm sake in one hand and a burning cigarette in the other. Even after a few sips, her head hung down and glazed at the alley below. She imagined the railing, already rusted from age, breaking. She imagined herself falling three stories down at terminal velocity, the weightless rush, the wind tossing her hair, and the crush as her skull split open across the damp concrete. The wonder of it arose her like a waking dream.

“I...” She drank her sake, “I think I’ll buy some maple vines...” She took a drag from her cigarette, “to cover up this ugly railing... maybe with some tomato vines... I can’t decide.” She turned to the stray cat. “What do you think, Hanzo?” The cat merely purred as he knew that word she had muttered to him a thousand times was his name.

And there the stray cat and work-worn woman stood, gazing longingly into each other. Their figures were nothing more than two black silhouettes surrounded in the colorful-light spangle of the large Ferris wheel turning slowly in the background.