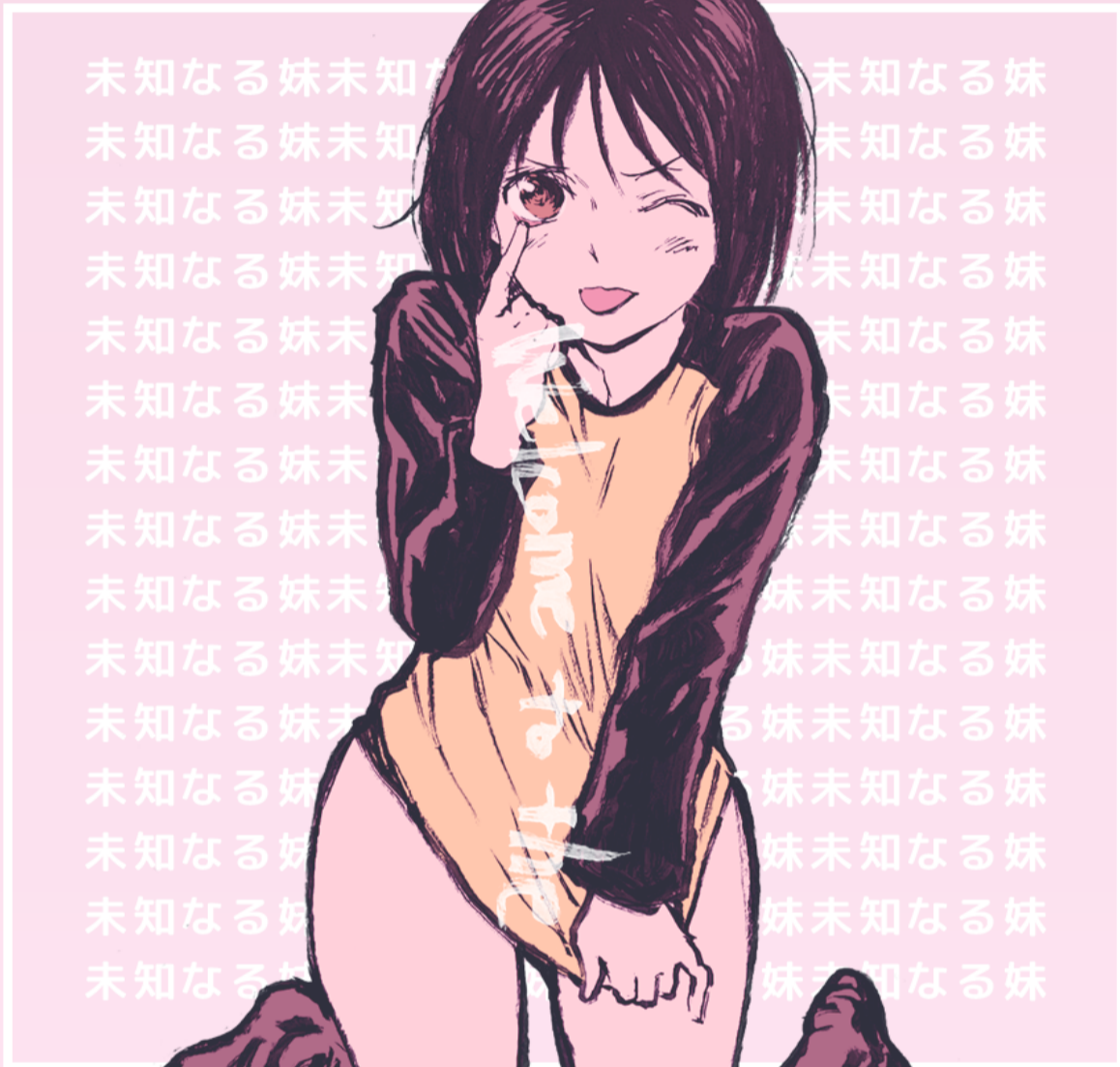


REBUILD of NIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONINIKIKUMONI WELCOME TO THE NHK!

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 a "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!



STORY
TATSUHIKO TAKIMOTO

ILLUSTRATION
KENZI OIWA

TRANSLATION & GRAPHIC DESIGN
YU/MAWARIWORKS

FIRST PUBLISHED IN
ELITES VOL. 4

WWW.TATSUHIKOTAKIMOTO.COM

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!

REBUILD of NIIRIKUMONIRIKUMONIRIKUMONIRIKUMONIRIKUMONI
WELCOME TO THE NHK!

#02 The Unnamed Little Sister and the Eternal Return

Part One

In front of me, there is a wall. Because I'm sleeping on my side in my futon, there is a wall.

I sighed looking at the pattern of the wallpaper.

“Haa..... I'm tired.”

This kind of drowsiness can't be killed with just a day or two of sleep. I'd need tens of thousands of years, no, hundreds of millions of years.

Nice and easy, without any worry of money. In this nice and safe room, for all eternity.

In actuality though, I have a ton of things I need to think about.

Soon enough, my allowance from my parents will stop. I'll have to make money somehow. And for that reason, I have to make it outside.

“.....”

However, there's also this saying about the north winds and the sun.

A traveler in the cold north winds would button his coat for defense. It's only natural for any living being. It's similar to how it's natural for me facing stress from "money problems" to protect myself from the harsh cold of reality.

Right..... You'd need the warmth of the sun over the coldness of the north winds to get me out.

"I'll wait for something good to happen outside."

You could get me out with a positive motivator like that, right?

I say that, but I trashed my chance to prove this theory by my own hands.

"That's right..... No matter how good a thing there might be, I just, I just....."

I reached my hands into the trash. Digging around, I soon pulled out my "Anything Ticket."

This dream-like ticket would make mysterious high school girl, Nakahara Misaki, do anything I wanted.

"....."

Thinking about the infinite possibilities, my hands trembled with excitement.

However, when I had the chance to activate it..... I failed to call out to Misaki-chan at the bench in front of the station. This ticket is now nothing more than burnable trash.

"Haa. I'm so useless..... I'm useless, useless, useless!"

"Geez. That's just like you, Satou-kun."

"Woah!"

Looking back, Misaki-chan was crouching next to my futon.

For some reason, she was wearing a sailor uniform. It was weird as hell.

“I’ve been listening to you talk to yourself for a while, but you really can’t be helped, can you?”

“Wh- What do you mean I can’t be helped? I’m perfectly competent, you know.”

“Satou-kun..... You want to try it again, don’t you? A trial for the Anything Ticket.”

“T- Try again? We can still do that?”

“I kind of regret our trial from last time. Calling me out in the city in broad daylight is too high of a hurdle for you. It’s like telling a kindergartener to go out to the streets of Mexico alone. If you forced someone incompetent to do something difficult, it’d only make them feel more worthless. That’s why I’ll be a little more careful about the difficulty level this time.”

Misaki-chan took the ticket from me and wrote something on the back with a pen from her school bag.

“S- Seriously.....? 4PM, the day after tomorrow, I sit next to you on the bench at Taiki Park? If I clear this, I can use the Anything Ticket? Is something so easy really okay?”

Misaki-chan nodded.

“Well, you know, I always thought people were all equal. That’s why I thought I had to treat you like an equal too, Satou-kun.”

Misaki-chan brushed away the trash from the floor, making a space to sit.

“But, well. That was unrealistic. Even if it’s harsh, we have to face the truth. Satou-kun, you can’t do anything a normal person can do. You’re below normal. That’s why you and I aren’t equal. That’s the reality of the situation.....”

“D- Don’t screw with me! Even I can make it to that park with the big tree the day after tomorrow with a 15 minute walk!”

“Well, I don’t think so.”

Misaki-chan looked at me with a serious face.

“I mean, Satou-kun, have you ever once succeeded in anything since we’ve met?”

“Succeeded.....? I mean, there was that time.....”

I couldn’t think of anything off the top of my head. I searched left and right for some sort of vision of me succeeding.

My memories of the past swirled in my brain.

Within these countless memories running like film strips were also stuff I never experienced.

Stuff like me jumping off a cliff at an uninhabited island..... or dashing into the Sea of Japan in the winter.

“Ugh..... Not again.”

“What’s wrong, Satou-kun? You’re turning pale!”

The thing is, my head’s been aching these past few days.

That’s just the usual, but I’ve been feeling particularly bad after smoking the tobacco from Yamazaki’s rapper friend.

If I spaced out, mysterious memories that have nothing to do with my life right now show up. And in these memories, there was a 100% chance I’d be frustrated or failing in some way.

It’s because of that, I’ve been boosted with the weight of several thousand years of weariness.

I let out a big sigh and sat surrounded by garbage in my futon.

“Maybe it’s like you said, Misaki-chan. I’m always failing.....”

Misaki-chan had a huge grin, maybe pleased her theory was confirmed.

“Right? You think so too, don’t you?”

“Ahh..... If I’m going to keep failing in life, I might as well just jump off a cliff somewhere.”

“Hahaha. Don’t feel bad. Let’s fix the small things one by one.”

“That’s no good! I have to hurry up and get my life back on track! Come on..... Come on.....”

Escaping my futon and looking for something to do, I dug through the pile of trash on the floor.

I’m sure there was some sort of important document in here. I have to find it so I can rebuild my life.....

It was then Misaki strongly gripped my hand holding the sheet.

“Stop. Look.”

“What are you doing? I have to fill this out and submit it right away.”

“That’s a college timetable. You quit so long ago, that has nothing to do with you anymore.”

“Th- Then, I’ll just have to come up with a plan that’ll actually fix my life..... Come on..... Come on.....”

I turned over the faded timetable, placed it between the convenience store bentos on the table, and wrote the ideal morning routine.

- Wake up at 5AM. (Get up early for effective time usage.)
- Meditate. (Imagine the ideal future.)
- A high protein breakfast. (Eggs and chicken. Fruits and vegetables too.)
- Light exercise. (Jogging and stretching.)

- Reading. (10 pages of a good book.)
- Journal. (Write a constructive schedule.)

“Perfect! Now I can be saved!”

“Satou-kun! Hey, Satou-kun!”

“Wh- What is it.....?”

“That’s impossible, you know.”

“.....”

“You can’t do a single one of those things, Satou-kun.”

“I- If I don’t try, we won’t know. If I give up here, I’ll be a hikikomori for the rest of my life!”

But Misaki-chan took a deep breath and spoke quietly.

“What’s wrong with that?”

I broke down.

“Being a hikikomori for the rest of your life. Even if you could work outside, you’d give up soon enough, go back to your room, and continue this life on repeat. Things are fine the way they are.”

“What do you know? Don’t just decide on someone’s life like that!”

“You feel like it’d happen too, don’t you?”

“Well, I guess.....”

It's completely unscientific and makes no sense, but I feel like I'm on my thousandth lap living as a hikikomori. Like I was stuck in a broken record, it feels impossible for me to escape this route.

Moreso, I feel so tired from these loops, I no longer have a strong dislike of this. Just tiredness, like I was surrounded by a thick fog.

"It's like an eternal return."

Misaki-chan took out an old paperback book from her school bag. The title read "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." Written by Friedrich Nietzsche.

"I noticed your lifestyle is in the same vein as a 'loop.' I thought there may be a hint to getting out hidden in this philosophy they call the 'Eternal Return.' I got it from the school library."

"D- Did you read it?"

"I'm in high school. I can read it pretty easily."

"Come to think of it, that uniform..... Have you gone back to going to school?"

"Going to school is no big deal, really. These past few months, I've just been charging up my spirit at home. For a high school student, going to school's perfectly normal."

"....."

"Now listen. In an eternal loop, what you need more than anything is the ability to affirm every moment. That's Nietzsche's philosophy. I'm busy with school and might need to take a break from our nighttime counselling. But to 'affirm'..... That's what you should pay attention to in the future, Satou-kun."

Saying that, Misaki-chan turned the hem of skirt and stood up.

"Ah, I put some food from my house in your fridge, so eat it with Yamazaki-kun, okay?"

Putting on her school shoes while opening the door, she turned back to me.

“And don’t forget, the day after tomorrow. I’m not expecting much, but I’ll be waiting on the bench at Taiki Park.”

Part Two

I got too worked up in front of Misaki-chan back there. Feeling ashamed while hiding in my futon, eventually, the sun set.

I managed to calm down by the time Yamazaki came back from vocational school.

“.....”

Let’s look back at the words Misaki-chan left behind.

“I noticed your lifestyle is in the same vein as a 'loop.'”

It’s true that my life seems like it’s been looping.

Waking up in the evening, eating hot pot with Yamazaki after he gets back from school, then working on the hypnovoice project that’s bound to fail anyway.

At night, I get a LINE call from Senpai. Talking with her is always off-tempo, thanks to her fatigue and prescription drugs. I’d answer her in a conversation that just won’t flow until the date changed.

Speaking of topics and feelings that don't mesh well, Senpai was my first love, in a way. An activity like talking to someone like her quietly shook my heart.

When Senpai dozed off even a bit, she would hang up without hesitating, but I’m the one who couldn’t sleep until morning. I continued playing on my phone until the morning light shined through the curtains to my room. And when

the sounds of the morning commute echoed through the window, I'd shut my eyes in my futon to escape society.

“.....”

Of course, I didn't want this miserable sort of life. Actually, I want to fight against this phase of repetition.

I'd think to myself “This isn't good!” “I have to use my time more wisely!”

However, no matter how much I fought this status quo, I'd continue reversing day to night, never going outside.

“.....”

It was then when Misaki-chan's words rang through my brain.

“In an eternal loop, what you need more than anything is the ability to affirm every moment.”

I don't think there's any basis to what she said.

Misaki-chan held “Nietzsche's philosophy book,” picking up phrases like “Eternal Return” and Loops,” but in reality, I don't think she can read something that complex.

She probably just watched some “Understanding Nietzsche in 5 Minutes” video on YouTube and picked up some smart-sounding keywords.

Despite all that though, I was strangely attracted to the idea of “affirming every moment.”

It was true even if I did the same thing as before, I'd get the same results. It was true that if I continued criticizing myself, I'd lose energy in both mind and spirit, and won't be able to move.

In the end, I'd waste the “Anything Ticket” yet again.

I'd have to avoid that no matter what.

Right..... This time, I'll use that ticket. Then I'll dive into an unknown experience I've never had before. For real this time.

For that reason.....

“Even if it's just for today, I'll stop thinking like this. Thinking negatively all the time isn't healthy.”

Getting hungry, I got out of the futon and opened the fridge.

“Oh. There's more veggies in here. Did Misaki-chan put them in while I was asleep?”

Taking some out as hot pot ingredients, I headed next door.

As I opened the door to Room 101, I saw Yamazaki's back, seemingly returning from vocational school. With an “Affirming and not denying” attitude, I called out to him.

“Yo, Yamazaki. How was school? Getting along with your pals?”

Yamazaki looked back and took out a hand-rolled cigarette from the bag on his shoulder.

“Look, Satou-san! I got another one from my rapper friend!”

I rejected that cannabis with all my being.

*

The pot boiled. Yamazaki's glasses clouded in the steam.

“Of course I’m not addicted. But aren’t you too caught up in the conventions of society, Satou-san? You know what my rapper friend said? ‘When comparing wins and losses, cannabis has more win.’”

Yamazaki shut up a bit while pouring out a Strong Zero. His face quickly turned red.

“Is it a win?”

In response, Yamazaki recited his rapper friend’s sales pitch.

The World Health Organization rates cannabis as less harmful than tobacco and alcohol.

Also, in Japan, people have been associated with cannabis since ancient times. It’s an indispensable plant for Shinto rituals.

Furthermore, overseas, major companies like Microsoft are entering the cannabis business one after another. It’d be a big blow to Japan’s economy not to catch up.

As a matter of fact, the founders of some of the world’s most successful companies, like Apple and Tesla, were all heavy cannabis users.

To begin with, the great cultures and ideas of modern society are born from an altered state of consciousness when using hallucinogens like cannabis. The long-standing decline in Japan’s economy and culture comes from the stubborn denial of an altered state of consciousness, which is essential to the healthy evolution of mankind.

“What the hell’s an altered state of consciousness?”

“The human consciousness is pushed to a small region and restricted. An altered state is when that limiter is removed and our reality is widened.”

“I don’t really get it, but if our consciousness had a limiter, there’s probably a reason, isn’t there? Wouldn’t taking it off be dangerous? To begin with, no matter how you twist it, a crime is a crime.”

“Ahh, damn it! You just have to deny everything I say, don’t you!?”

Yamazaki screamed and slammed the Strong Zero on the table.

“All you bastards always deny my plans, without trying to understand my innovation!”

“.....S- Sorry.”

It seems he accumulated a ton of stress from vocation school again. At this rate, I’m on route to listening to this drunkard’s ramblings until midnight. I tried not to disagree and affirm.

“Right, I totally get it, Yamazaki-kun. Your innovation.”

“What do you know about my innovation?”

“W- Well..... You know, that. The plan to make the 'hypnovoices.' That was great. Really feels cutting-edge.”

“Right!? You could work your ass off trying to make a game, but it’ll only end up clickbait for some e-celeb’s livestream. But by nature, 'hypnovoices' are something you have to experience for yourself.”

“You’re right! There’s no point in watching a YouTube video where someone else is tripping out.”

“Hahaha..... Just like life. If you don’t experience it yourself, you’ll never truly understand it.”

“Ahh, yeah..... Life sure is deep.....”

I was swept away by the atmosphere, and for some reason, felt a bit nostalgic.

In Yamazaki’s room, echoing with the sound of the boiling pot, I closed my eyes and basked in the moment.

“But those dumb bitches!”

“Woah!” I opened my eyes as Yamazaki crushed his Strong Zero can.

“Why wouldn’t she join our revolutionary project when I went through the trouble of calling her!?”

“C- Calm down, Yamazaki-kun. Calm down!”

I wiped that zero-calorie alcoholic cola pouring from the crushed Strong Zero can, and calmed Yamazaki down.

Yamazaki regained a bit of light in his eye as he explained what happened in school.

Let me summarize.

Yamazaki invited Nanako, an acquaintance from the voice acting department, to the hypnovoice project. She turned him down with all her being.

“That’s what happened.”

Yamazaki’s red face nodded.

“How did you invite that Nanako girl anyway?”

“Well, first, I approached her eating lunch with her friend in the voice acting classroom.”

“Ohh, pretty brave. I sure as hell can’t do that. Then?”

“Money is the important thing in business, after all. I went and offered 30,000 yen.”

“.....”

“Then Nanako and her friend looked at me like I was doing something dirty, so I hurried and explained the project. But even then.....!”

“You were rejected, huh? But if we showed her the project materials, maybe she’d understand. Like what we’re trying to do.”

“I showed her! The plan we wrote on that very piece of A4 paper! She absolutely understood what our project was! And on top of that, she looked at me in disgust and said 'Running away? How lame.'”

“.....”

Thinking about it though, Nanako was 100% right. We ran away from making games and went with the more fun goal of making “adult orientated hypnovoices.”

It’d look lame to an outsider. Hell, it looks lame to us. In other words, Nanako’s words were no doubt the truth and that hurt.

“Ha, haha, what a stupid bitch. That woman doesn’t get a thing.”

“Yeah. She doesn’t get a thing!”

“We’d like to make games forever too! But the times have changed!”

“As expected of you, Satou-san! You do get it, don’t you!? That’s right! We’re pioneers and reformers who respond quickly to change!”

“That’s right, Yamazaki! Tomorrow, when you go to school, you can show that stuck-up bitch, Nanako, what real innovation is!”

Yamazaki drank the whole Strong Zero in one gulp and picked up his smartphone.

“No need to wait that long! Let’s tell her right now!”

Heading off to call Nanako on LINE, that backbone theory we had was set ablaze.

From the speaker, Nanako’s voice was..... nice and persuasive, as expected of someone from the voice acting department.

“Forget the talk. If you want me to join, show me a prototype, not a proposal.”

“Th- That’s not really.....”

“Then give up. I’m not going to spare my precious time on a project you don’t even have a prototype for.”

Yamazaki's shoulders fell. He tried to reach his finger to the hang up button on his smartphone.

I caught him just in time.

“If that's the case, let's make it then! The prototype!”

“Sa- Satou-san!”

“.....Satou-san? Ahh, Yamazaki's Senpai. I hear your name a lot. You're the one badly influencing him, aren't you?”

“I- I think you're misunderstanding something. I, no we, we have a big dream.”

“Dream? Don't be stupid. Dreams won't put money on the table.”

“Ahh. Of course, it's not just a dream. And hey, you can't just forget about dreams. Dreams and reality..... People need that balance to live. Our solution to create that balance is 'adult orientated hypovoices'!”

“Then let me ask..... Where are the dreams in doing naughty voices?”

“Th..... They'll change the world.”

“Haa?”

“I- I have a dream. A dream that will change the world!”

That great vision I got the other day smoking cannabis suddenly hit me.

Right, right. Back in the day, youths died easily expressing themselves through rock music.

“It's because the world up until now has been lacking in kindness! The more you try to be yourself, the higher the pressure gets! You need the warmth of the sun to protect yourself from the cold of the north winds!”

“.....”

"However, you can't just request kindness from others. People only care about themselves! So people have to create kindness and comfort from within themselves. The solution to that is 'adult orientated hypnovoices'!"

"I- I don't really get it but..... I guess you have a point. Not doing it for money but dreams, huh....."

"Satou-san! You were thinking pretty deeply about this!"

"Yeah. It's not like I'm just hikikomori-ing around all day. I think things through quite a bit."

"If it's like that, I can join. But you'll need to show me a prototype first. The deadline is..... right. How about the day after tomorrow?"

"Satou-san....."

Yamazaki looked my way. Up until now, I would scream something like "Like hell that's long enough!"

However..... not to deny, but affirm..... that was today's goal. I looked at Yamazaki and gave a strong nod.

Part Three

Returning to my room, I started working on the prototype for the adult orientated hypovoice.

For the time being, I tossed the cigarettes I confiscated from Yamazaki's room to the trash, got in my futon, and typed into my smartphone's memo pad.

"SE: Cicada cries, sounds of the wind"

The stage is the good old Japanese countryside.

“Little Sister’s Voice: Onii-chan. Tonight’s the night of the summer festival!”

I only noticed while typing myself, but this seems to be the setup.

“‘Little Sister’ and ‘Summer Festival,’ huh. Not bad, I guess.....”

If I said this was no good, I’d just keep rejecting my other ideas. The deadline is near. I have to cherish this brief moment of inspiration.

At that, I added more sound effects that gave off that summer festival vibe.

“SE: Sounds of the fireworks, festival music”

I felt like I slept away the events known as “summer festivals” and the joy that came with it. The fact that it’s no longer within my reach got me feeling sentimental to the point my chest hurt.

But..... we can heal this feeling, both mine and the listeners, with this hypnovoice.

“Little Sister’s Voice: Come on, Onii-chan! Let’s go to the summer festival!”

By the navigation of our little sister, listeners will create a vision of the summer festival within their hearts. This gentle and nostalgic atmosphere of the inner summer festival, “uchinaru natsu matsuri” if you will, will fill these holes in our hearts that can’t be fulfilled by real life. Of course, at the end, there’ll be the forbidden adult situation deep in the forest behind the shrine.

“D- Damn, I’m good..... Nice, let’s write this in detail.”

However, my hands writing the scenario stopped there.

Why.....

Was it writer’s block? I don’t know why, but I couldn’t write another line.

Panicking, I got a call from Senpai.

“Satou-kun. How are you?”

“Pretty bad, honestly. And you?”

I asked back, but Senpai's voice was pretty dark to begin with. I already knew this was one of her depression days.

“.....”

As usual, she remained silent.

Was it a problem with her lover, Jougasaki? Or something to do with work? Maybe both?

Whatever it may be, her negative energy was transmitted through the call. I'm already full of anxiety to begin with. Any more of this and I don't think I can live.

I spoke about my issues to change the mood.

“You know, right now, I'm making an adult orientated hypnovoice with Yamazaki, but I can't get this scenario down at all.”

“Haa..... You never change, do you, Satou-kun? I envy that life of yours.”

“I- I'm changing. I promised to meet someone outside tomorrow evening, and I'll definitely do it.”

“You say that, but you're not going to make it, are you?”

“H- How would you know? Well, I guess you got a point. Got any tips?”

“Right..... Well, even like this, I am the president of the Literature Club. I can give you as many writing tips as you'd like.”

Come to think of it..... I haven't thought about it as of late, but Senpai, Yamazaki, and I were all in the same high school literature club.

In the club room of that old school building, we were self-degrading ourselves just playing trump every day.

The only literary activity we did was write a little text for a booklet to sell at the annual school festival.

I wrote a diary, Yamazaki wrote a game review, and Senpai wrote a poem. Looking back, not one of us wrote a novel.

It seemed the “Light Novel Club” in Room 4 was taking writing novels seriously, but we had the arrogant thought of “True literature is not writing novels at all.”

What kind of constructive ideas can the president of a delinquent club like that come up with?

She didn’t feel credible at all, but she sounded strangely confident.

“Relax. I can come up with something good.”

“Anything will do, so I’ll leave it to you.”

“Well, first, about this..... adult orientated hypnovoice scenario? Tell me what you’ve done so far.”

Hearing that outloud, I felt embarrassed.

“What’s with the silence? Porn’s literature too so you don’t have to feel shy about it.”

“E- Even if you say that.....”

“Listen, Satou-kun. You know writers? It’s their job to expose and embarrass them to the world.”

Senpai pushed the views of a certain creator from the Showa era.

It can’t be helped.

I worked up the courage and told Senpai about the idea I had.

“Well, um..... It’s a setup where a little sister invites you to a summer festival.....”

“That won’t work. It’s too old-fashion.”

“Wha.....”

As my heart took damage, that's when I remembered. That's right..... Even though she was in the Literature Club, she was good at criticizing other people's work.

Right after joining the club, I showed this woman my very first novel. She pointed out one reason after the other why it was fundamentally awful. Ever since, I've been ashamed of my lack of talent and gave up on writing novels. Yamazaki, who joined the next year, followed the same route and got crushed as well.

At this rate, Senpai's needlessly sharp words will pick at my creative buds one by one. The adult hypnovoice project will die before the project even starts. I have to avoid this at all costs.

There are lives in this world I have to save with this project!

I stood up against Senpai to protect our tale.

"I- It's not old-fashion. It's a combination of the nostalgic countryside and a little sister that will heal the hearts of the listeners. In other words, a timeless standard....."

"Hehh. If you're confident, I'll listen then. Try reading it to me then. That hypnovoice."

"Me?"

"If you're so confident, do it. If you can't, it's old-fashioned. You're shy because it's old."

"O- O- O..... Onii-chan, wake up!"

"Onii-chan?"

"That's the listener. In other words, you're the big brother, Senpai."

"I see. I'll try to play the role then. Alright, continue..... Wait, hold on a sec."

On the other side of the call, I heard her pushing prescription drug tablets out of the sheet. That followed with the sound of swallowing and the squeaking of the bed.

She must have took them to calm down, then got in bed, closing her eyes in a dark room.

“Right..... I’m ready. You can start whenever.”

“O- O- O..... Onii-chan! Wake up, Onii-chan!”

“What? I might be in bed, but I am awake.”

“Um..... You don’t have to respond.”

“Ah, I see. I’ll just be quiet then.”

“Onii-chan! The summer festival is starting! Come on, let’s go!”

The little sister pulls her brother’s hand to the summer festival venue.

Fireworks bloom over the night sky.

Under that light, the little sister held her brother’s hand, trying to make him relax and feel good.

“Come on, Onii-chan! Take a deep breath while imagining the fireworks of the night sky!”

However.....

“I can’t seem to feel hypnotic at all. You’re not conveying the image of the summer festival at all. I can’t feel the reality.”

“.....”

“I felt like it might get better, but I give up. I just can’t feel anything where you want me to.”

Frustrated by that criticism, I dug through the trash and pulled out a cigarette butt. Luckily, I managed to salvage that unsmoked rolled cigarette.

I got a light and inhaled the thick smoke into my lungs.

The hypnosis session resumed.

“Onii-chan!”

“Whaaat?”

Maybe it was the work of her drugs, but Senpai's voice started to slow down.

“Onii-chan! Listen, Onii-chan!”

“Whaat? Is there something you want to say?”

“.....You too, Onii-chan. Is there something you want to say?”

“Right, well..... I haven't seen Satou-kun in a while. What kind of apartment does he live in? What kind of lifestyle is he living?”

“That's, well..... just the usual..... It's a one room apartment.....”

At that moment, ideas rushed into my brain like I'd been shot by lightning. Things like the countryside and summer festivals were too vague and unrealistic to me. That's why I couldn't provide a feeling of comfort and ease to the listener. It was only a weak foggy image.

That's why I had to use a stronger image. A new place for comfort and ease..... I needed to add that sort of image to bring the listener into a hypnotic state.

I conveyed that to the listener.

“Come on, Onii-chan. The festival is over, so let's go somewhere more relaxing.”

“Relaxing? Like where?”

“A small and dark room. Inside a futon.”

I did my best to convey to Senpai the image of this room I felt like I've been sleeping in for thousands of years.

I conveyed to Senpai my continuous memories of sleeping here day after day, from night to day.

I conveyed to Senpai that while everyone was working, I continued to sleep, shutting my eyes to everything that terrified me. In that, I kept sleeping for an eternity.

I kept sleeping until the day I could finally recover from this tiredness, never going outside, never facing the terrors of outside, in this endless recursion of time.

Part Four

The night had ended.

“.....”

I felt like I said something crazy stupid to Senpai last night. However, my memory was hazy, probably thanks to that cigarette I shouldn't have smoked.

Trapped in a haze, I continued to sleep in my futon, trying to block the memory of last night as best I could. Until the sun went down.

Yamazaki got a part time job in order to buy some recording equipment, so he should be late. I had a light dinner by myself, and dived back into the futon, closing my eyes.

It was then when.....

“It was great!”

I got a call from Senpai at midnight.

“Your hypnovoice from last night, Satou-kun! I haven’t slept that well in ages.”

“I..... What did I say again? I don’t really remember.”

Senpai enthusiastically told me about what I said last night.

Speechless, I prayed I could die for my shameful acts. What do you mean “Onii-chan”? Damn it all.

“What’s wrong, Satou-kun? Going all quiet like that. Well, more importantly, I have a favor to ask. Do you mind sending me that hypnovoice data?”

“N- No way. That’s a once in a lifetime thing. I’m never going to do anything like that ever again.”

“Haa..... You know, Satou-kun..... I really do have sleep problems.”

“You fall asleep talking to me every night, don’t you?”

“I wake up in the middle of the night after! Then I start worrying about work the next day, and my future, and I can’t sleep until it’s daylight! You might not realize it, being a hikikomori, but it’s hard work being in the working class.”

“.....Guh.”

“But I really slept like a baby last night. Of course, it’s not like I wanted to go to work, but even the train ride was more relaxing than usual.”

“.....”

“So please! Make it for my good night’s sleep! Satou-kun!”

“I- I mean.....”

While last night was surely some sort of coincidence, let’s say the hypnosis did help Senpai sleep. I’m not even sure if I could reproduce it.

What’s more, the first scenario I came up with, the “Little Sister Invitation to the Summer Festival,” was old-style, or as Senpai put it, old-fashioned.

“As a creator, I can’t let my Senpai listen to such an old-fashioned scenario. I’m sorry, I wasn’t right in the head yesterday. To have let you, the president, listen to something like that.”

“No. I’m the one who should apologize. I’m sorry for always making fun of your work..... back in high school.”

“So you were making fun of me!”

“Of course, I meant to give a legit critique. I think I just ended up spoiling your talents.”

“No, I’m not talented.”

“At the very least, you’re talented in helping me fall asleep! That why, please! Satou-kun, just do it for me!”

Of course, I tried to reject her. There were an endless amount of reasons why I should have rejected her. In the first place, I was trying to make an adult oriented hypnovoice. I wasn’t trying to help working members of society sleep well.

“.....”

However, Senpai did seem genuinely desperate.

“.....Fine. I’ll do it then.”

“Thanks! I’ll leave it to you, Satou-kun.”

“Don’t expect much of me.”

“Don’t worry. I’m sure I won’t criticize you. I’m not even the president anymore.”

Hearing that, I felt the years have really passed, and felt a bit sad.

“No, forget that. Actually, just criticize me as much as you want.”

“You’ll get hurt, won’t you? Satou-kun?”

“I’ll be careful not to get hurt.”

On the other side of the phone, Senpai laughed a bit and hung up. As the date changed, Yamazaki came home. I went to his room to borrow the equipment.

*

Yamazaki looked exhausted from work, but he pulled up the used equipment and notebook computer and lent them to me.

“This is the condenser mic and audio interface.”

“Con..... Condenser?”

“It’s a device that can record more expressively than a dynamic mic. You connect it to that notebook computer through the audio interface.”

“I see,” I said, not understanding at all.

“You’ll need to install a DAW..... that’s a music production app, digital audio workstation, to the computer. I’ll get that started.”

The Ableton Live logo showed up on the screen.

“It’s an edition that came as an addition to the audio interface, so the tracks are limited. That said, we’ll make it somehow if it’s just a simple hypnovoices.”

“Truck?”

I tried asking what a vehicle had to do with hypnovoices, but Yamazaki was busy connecting everything, starting the app installation.

“Put on these headphones first. Then say something into the mic.”

“Ahh, ahh, mic check.”

“This is the record button. This is the play button.”

As Yamazaki hit the buttons on the app, my voice played through the headphones.

“Nice, we can record the prototype like this. I’d like to help, but I’m beat from work, so sorry, I’m going to call it a night.”

Pushing the equipment to me, Yamazaki fell into his pipe bed like his soul just escaped him. I returned to my room with the equipment in both hands, pushed away the garbage, opened up my folding table, and set the gear.

As Yamazaki instructed, I hit the buttons on the app..... and started recording.

“O- Onii-chan!”

At that moment, a terrible embarrassment rushed through my spine. In my room at midnight, where my voice still echoed the room, I immediately clicked stop, erased the file, closed the app, and attempted throwing the computer out the window.

“.....”

However, I stopped myself at the last minute. I had to get this done to show Nanako the prototype and help Senpai have a good night’s sleep. Also, Yamazaki would kill me if I broke this computer he worked so hard for.

“Though..... it’s not like I can just do this. I have to stop thinking straight.”

I took out a Strong Zero from the fridge and tried to drink.

However, I stopped myself in the nick of time. I’d be on course to passing out if I started drinking alcohol here.

In the trash, I found that unused special cigarette, but stopped myself in the nick of time before lighting it.

There's no way you can do such hard computer work in an altered state of consciousness.

That's why..... no matter what, I had to do this without getting high.

“If I really am determined to do this..... let's just do it.”

I took the Strong Zero and cannabis joint off the table, and started making hypnovoices in the cleared space.

In a few hours, I think I managed to finish something surprisingly good.

At 3:00 in the morning, I sent Senpai and Yamazaki the exported file through LINE, leaned back, and sighed.

“Phew..... When then..... in celebration of a successful production well down..... Cheers!”

I pulled out Strong Zero tab, and poured the now-warm zero-calorie alcoholic drink down my throat. Lighting the cannabis joint, I inhaled the smoke into my lungs.

Setting Ableton Live on loop playing the hypnovoice I just created, the sounds poured into my brain from the headphones.

I closed my eyes lying on the futon.

That unnammed little sister pulled my hands from the inner summer festival, and into the eternal hikikomori space behind.

*

I woke up to a LINE call from Senpai.

When I checked the time, it was 3:00 in the afternoon..... The sun shined through the gap in my curtains and into my room full of garbage.

After working and partying alone last night, my head was a wreck.

I was a little hungry, but there was still time before Yamazaki returned from school.

That's why I refuse to get up.

I ignored Senpai's call and got back to the futon.

However, my smartphone continued vibrating.

It can't be helped.

"Fuahh, what do you want at this hour?"

"I have a little free time at work right now..... That's why I wanted to thank you."

I think she was in the office restroom. I could hear a stronger echo from Senpai's voice than usual.

"Thank me? What for?"

"Your hypnovoice."

"Y- You listened to it already?"

"Well, of course!"

I grew pale in embarrassment. While like that, Senpai spoke in excitement.

"I actually woke up around 3:00 last night. I was lying on the sofa thinking I wouldn't sleep until the sun came up when I got your hypnovoice, Satou-kun. I played it right away and it really worked! It's thanks to that I managed to fall asleep. I'll come to your house and thank you in person next time!"

The call cut off there.

She looked like she was doing better than ever. Let's just hope it's not some bipolar disorder.

“Whatever..... Back to bed.”

I put my phone by my bedside and positioned myself back to sleep. However, at that moment, my phone vibrated, as a message from Senpai displayed on screen.

“Didn't you have something to do this evening? Be careful not to be late.”

“Th- That's right.....!”

I totally forgot. I had to meet Misaki-chan at 4PM today at the bench in Taiki Park. If I did that, I'd be able to use the “Anything Ticket.”

I pulled off my pajamas and changed into outside clothes for the first time in ages, and found my crumpled “Anything Ticket” in the pile of garbage, shoving it in my pocket.

“.....”

I cleaned myself up in the bathroom.

However, it was then when my anxiety got to me.

The “Anything Ticket”..... That ticket that could order the mysterious high school girl, Nakahara Misaki, to do anything I wanted.

Up until now, it's been wasted because of my distorted lifestyle.

However, now that I've been woken up by Senpai's phone call, I can use it. I can give Nakahara Misaki some sort of ridiculous order.

“Th- This is no good. Using the ticket to make someone do my bidding..... is no good. I mean, in the first place, she's still in high school. Is it really okay to do something like that to a high school girl?”

I ignored my ethics, bursted through the door, and jumped into the sunlight for the first time in months.

*

However..... Misaki-chan never came, no matter how long I waited.

At the base of the giant tree, which seems to be what Taiki Park was named after, I sat, not looking at my smartphone, but thinking about how I could use the ticket.

In front of me, passed the pigeons and dogs with their owners.

However, never Nakahara Misaki..

Eventually, the sun set.

“.....”

It seems I couldn't use the ticket again after all.

“.....Haa.”

With a bit of relief, I got up from the bench and walked the night road back to my apartment. While poking at the hot pot with Yamazaki who just got back from school, I got a message from Misaki-chan on my phone.

She was waiting for me at the usual park.

Putting down my chopsticks, I sprinted to the usual place, far closer than Taiki.

Turning my eyes to the bench was a figure illuminated by a pale light.

It was Misaki-chan.

Not in a school uniform, but the plain T-shirt I was used to.

“Y- Yo.”

I sat down on the bench on the opposite side of the wooden table.

Misaki-chan stayed silent.

The atmosphere felt kind of heavy.

“.....”

There was strong humidity since it was the rainy season.

Even if you didn't do anything, you could work up a sweat.

Suddenly, Misaki opened her mouth looking down.

“I'm sorry. Today..... I couldn't make it to the meeting place.”

“W- Well, don't worry about it. Last time, I was the one who couldn't make it.”

“But a promise is a promise. If you really did make it to that big tree in the park today..... you can use the 'Anything Ticket' as a reward.”

“R- Really?”

“It can't be helped. It's a promise. I'm okay with accepting any order.”

If that's the case, I tried telling Misaki-chan what I thought I'd use the ticket for.

“But before that..... there's something I wanted to ask you.”

“What?” Misaki-chan asked, staring at me, blushing.

“Misaki-chan..... Are you actually going to school?”

“Th- That has nothing to do with you, Satou-kun!”

Misaki stood from the bench, slamming her hand onto the table yelling.

Looks like she doesn't go.

“What would a hikikomori like you know!? Normal people have all kinds of problems too, you know! In the first place, school’s just a waste of time!”

Standing from the bench, I saw there were tears in her eyes.

I sighed and spread the ticket to the table, making use of it’s effect.

“I’m ordering with this ticket. Go to school.”

Misaki-chan looked at me with her eyes wide, probably surprised by my request.

“.....”

Sitting back down, she leaned back looking at the night sky. I looked up too.

Above us was the June sky where there was no way the moon or stars would be spread.

Misaki-chan muttered.

“It’s boring, you know. Day after day.”

“Yeah, probably.”

“Haa..... Well..... Let’s get today’s counseling started.”

Misaki-chan sighed, turned the pages of her notebook from her bag, and started reading about life hacks.

I closed my eyes listening to the words I’ve heard so many times.



STORY OF HOMICIDAL YOUNG PERSON RETURNS

NEWWORLD

SECOND MISSION LOOPLOOPLOOPLOOP
LOOPLOOPLOOPLOOP

HYPNOVOICE
HYPNOVOICE **IMOUTO**

THE LITTLE SISTER AT THE SUMMER FESTIVAL

新・NHKによろこそ!

NEW EPISODE IS THE END. THANK YOU AND GOOD-BYE...REALLY?

NHK-RE

Copyright Notice

©2022 by Tatsuhiko Takimoto

All right reserved. Up to 300 words may be quoted as long as proper credit is given. Otherwise no part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without permission from author.

Twitter: @tatsuhikotkmt

Instagram: tatsuhikotkmt

Official Site: <https://tatsuhikotakimoto.com>