

Tetsuko: Prequel

written by David C. Matthews

Foreward

Back in 2013, I was planning to publish a print version of Tetsuko's "origin" story, which would, in addition to the comics already posted on the www.tetsuko.com website, also cover what happened the few days before the events of that fateful Saturday.

Well, chalk that up to another case of where my ambition was bigger than my ability to pull it off. After I'd written out the script for the story I wanted to tell, I found that the graphic novel I had planned would run, from the "new" beginning to the last panel of last posted page, to 58 pages!

...which I felt would've made the book much too expensive (especially on the print-on-demand system I was going to rely on to avoid steep initial print-run costs). So, yes, I've abandoned the idea of putting out the graphic novel.

But dammit, I still want to tell the story of the days leading to Tetsuko's transformation! So I decided I'd just write the story as if it was a novella.

You'll be officially introduced to a character who'll come to play an important role in Tetsuko's life, and finally find out exactly how Slade found out about Sonya's anti-aging formula - and the role Derek (*ptui!*) plays in that sordid affair.

Part 1

She stood before one of the large mirrors that covered the west wall of the gym, studying the motion of her arms as she lifted the barbell to her chest, then lowering it, trying to keep her form strict and correct. The blonde hair that fell to just below her shoulders was beginning to darken with gleaming sweat; her arms, face and chest (where it was visible above the neckline of her tank top) were also collecting beads of moisture, as she continued to grind out repetition after repetition with the heavy bar. At five feet seven inches tall, she possessed a slender yet voluptuous figure that bordered on "athletic"; the kind of figure that looked great in a skimpy bikini. Now, however, she wore pink gym shorts and a lavender spandex crop-top tank top which bared a midriff that was starting to hint at a developing "six-pack".

Like the other universities in the state of Florida's higher education system, the University of Florida - Orlando provided a well-equipped weight room for the members of its sports teams; but at any time that the football, basketball, or baseball teams weren't using the gym, it was open to all students who wanted to use it. And Tetsuko had been taking frequent advantage of it; for the past five months she'd been hitting the weights at least three days a week.

Even as a child growing up in Japan, the daughter of an American business executive and his wife who'd moved overseas when James Breckenridge was appointed to oversee his company's Asian operations, Tetsuko was athletic, "tomboyish" (or as the Japanese say, "*otenbasan*"). She was always challenging her classmates, especially the boys, to foot races and other contests of physical prowess. Once she'd dared the class bully to wrestle her; she had him pinned to the ground before horrified school officials stopped the match, giving her a stern warning that girls just didn't do things like that. (Her parents, though delivering a rote lecture in much the same vein, also confessed they were proud of her for sticking up for the bully's victims.)

Now, five years later and over seven thousand miles away, Tetsuko channeled her athletic impulses into more individual pursuits: cardio, karate, even belly dancing. And five months ago, on an impulse, she ventured into the campus weight room at UF-O, and picked a dumbbell off a nearby rack. She'd deliberately chosen a twenty-five pounder, almost certain she couldn't lift it - and was surprised to find she could actually curl it for three reps! That was the day she was "bitten by the iron bug", as the bodybuilders say.

This was the third workout in which she'd loaded her bar with iron plates weighing seventy-five pounds; added to the twenty-five pounds of the bar itself and the collars that held the plates in place, she was curling an even hundred pounds. For reps! She smiled in satisfaction at her reflection which showed her biceps swelling with every rep; she could even discern a slight bluish vein running across the back of each bicep. Then she noticed something else in the mirror: three hulking football players, who'd interrupted their own workouts to ogle hers.

She usually didn't mind being looked at when she was in the gym, but the intensity of their gazes discomfited her more than usual; whether out of disapproval of having to share their workout space with a female, or out of lust for her gleaming physique clad in tank top and shorts, she didn't know or care. She carried her barbell to a nearby rack, dropped it into an empty place, grabbed her gym bag and headed for the women's locker room, hoping she hadn't betrayed her discomfort to her watchers. *Glad I decided not to wear that bikini top after all!*

There was no one else in the locker room when she entered; despite the number of women's sports teams and solo athletes on campus, she saw very few other females using the weight room, or the locker room. Which Tetsuko actually preferred, as it gave her a little "private time" to undress and shower.

She stripped off her sweat-soaked tank top and shorts, and stood naked before the full-length mirror on the wall perpendicular to the shower stalls, assessing her progress. She noticed first that her grapefruit-sized breasts somehow stood out more proudly from her chest; she chalked that up to the fact that her pectoral muscles were beginning to thicken and widen. Not yet enough to be noticeable, but that would happen in time. Her thighs, as well, were starting to develop a nice curving "swoop" from hips to knees; not obviously bigger yet, but certainly more curvaceous.

Then, she did something she almost had a mind to do out in the workout room had not those *kinniku-baka* been watching: she raised her arms and flexed her recently-worked biceps.

Even she was somewhat surprised as muscles the size of her fists leaped up on the tops of her upper arms! No smooth bulges they were, either; they looked as though she'd somehow slid rocks under her skin. With her left hand she squeezed and

prodded her right bicep: it felt as hard as a rock as well. She relaxed her biceps, and watched them disappear into arms that were barely bigger now, maybe half an inch or so, than when she first started lifting. *I bet if I measured them they'd be three inches bigger when I flex them!* she thought.

Well, I can't spend the rest of the afternoon admiring myself in the mirror. She dug her towel out of her gym bag, laid it across the bench, grabbed her body wash, and stepped into the shower stall.

After adjusting the water temperature to her liking, Tetsuko stepped under the stream and just stood there for a moment, luxuriating in the hot water spraying out of the shower head, letting it bathe her body and wash the sweat of her workout away. She closed her eyes and thought, *Mmm, nothing feels better than a hot shower after a workout.* Well, she giggled, *almost* nothing, remembering that the shower head in her apartment was attached to a hose, so she could aim the water at any part of her body she wanted... She reached for her bottle of body wash, squirted some into the palm of her hand, and lathered her chest and breasts.

Part 2

Dressed now in a cute pink halter top that emphasized her tanned shoulders and arms, and blue denim short shorts that complemented her long, curvaceous legs, Tetsuko practically skipped out of the gym. She had no more classes today, and time to study before her date tonight. Fresh from a fulfilling workout and shower, and the warm sun caressing her skin, she felt like nothing could bring her down.

Then she heard a voice behind her. "Tetsuko! Hey, Tetsuko!" *David*. Her shoulders slumped a bit; the day had been going so well until now...

She couldn't quite put her finger on what it was about Daisuke Matsutani - who preferred the nickname "David" - that made her prefer that he not be around. He wasn't precisely ugly; in fact, in Japan, the land of his father's birth, his mixed Asian and Caucasian features would be considered quite exotic. And he wasn't obnoxiously abrasive in personality; if anything, he was so earnest in his desire to be friendly and helpful that he reminded her of a puppy dog, eager to please for the reward of a pat on the head. Whatever it was, though, she couldn't bring herself to tell him to simply leave her alone. He was one of the first people she'd met when she first arrived in America. They were both freshmen at Boone High School, and Tetsuko was somewhat bewildered by the much looser structure of American education after the regimentation and discipline of schools in Japan; the fact that David could speak some *Nihon-go* (although not as fluently as Tetsuko herself) enabled him to help her over the rougher spots of her transition to American teenage life.

But although there was nothing in his manners or his treatment of her that she could object to - except perhaps for (or maybe because of) the fact that he was a little too quiet and meek for his own good - she simply wasn't romantically attracted to him. So she put him firmly in the "friend zone", and was determined that he would stay there.

So when she heard him calling her name, she put on a carefully crafted smile - friendly but not too inviting - and a carefully crafted tone of voice - courteous but not too warm. "Hi, David."

David stopped a few paces away, almost breathless. "I'm glad I caught up with you," he panted, brandishing a sheaf of papers. "I've got those notes you asked for. For Professor Vikram's biology class."

"Oh! Oh, that's right, I did ask you for a copy of your notes."

Tetsuko took the proffered papers. They'd been torn out of a spiral-bound notebook, and were covered with words and chemical symbols written in ballpoint ink. She looked over the pages. "David, you didn't have to give me *your* notes, I'd have been happy with copies."

"Those *are* copies!"

She perused the papers again. "You copied these out in longhand?!"

When she looked up at David again, she saw that he'd put his hand behind his head; even though he was born and raised in America, he'd adopted several Japanese mannerisms from his father, including this classic gesture of embarrassment. "Well, it helped me study them again."

She glanced down at the notes again, now subtly awed at the amount of work that David had gone to on her behalf. When she looked up at him again, there was genuine gratitude in her smile and her voice. "Thank you, David. This should really be helpful! And I really appreciate the trouble you went to."

"I-it was no trouble," he replied with a nervous laugh. He started to back away. "Well, I, ah - I have to get going! See you around!" And he trotted off as if suddenly afraid to be in her presence any longer.

Tetsuko stared at his rapidly retreating back, puzzled. *That was weird*, she thought. *Usually he sticks around, trying to make small talk, or asking to walk me to my next class.* She shrugged. *Hmm. Maybe he's finally got the message that I don't consider him "boyfriend material".*

Not when I've got Derek...

"Derek! You better not be seeing another girl besides me!"

The young woman leaned against a wall beside the entrance to the Goren building. A handsome, sandy-haired hunk leaned over her, supporting himself on one hand on the wall behind her. "Aw, c'mon, Brittney, you know you're the only girl in my life! Why would I need anyone else?" he assured her.

"Yeah, well, I been seein' you hangin' around a lot with that blonde with the big tits and the Japanese name!" Brittney retorted.

"Her? Aah, she's just a friend," he replied with a dismissive wave of his hand. "Always asking to borrow my notes and shit. She wouldn't be able to pass any of her classes if it wasn't for me!"

"Well, okay." Brittney's face brightened. "So we still on for tonight?"

"Aw, damn, babe," Derek said in his most convincing "disappointed" voice, "I got a meeting with Professor Strauch tonight. Somethin' about this project we're doin' for Econ class."

"But, *Derek*, you *promised* -"

Just then Derek's cellphone sounded, an electronic bloop; a text message. "Just a moment, babe." He fished out his phone and checked the screen, careful not to let Brittney see it, just in case it was...

And sure enough: Tetsuko. Where R U? "Shit!" he exclaimed before he could catch himself.

"Who was that?" Brittney asked, suddenly suspicious again.

"Oh, that was... uh, that was Professor Strauch, reminding me of that meeting tonight. I can't skip out on it. I'm sorry."

"Me too," Brittney pouted. She took out her own cellphone to check the time. "I gotta get going," she added. "Call me sometime soon!"

"You bet!" Derek called out as she walked away. *Nice ass, he thought. Heh, she thinks "that blonde" has "big tits"? If I was after big tits I'd be bangin' that science professor I had last semester... what was her name? Gantry, something like that? Shit, each of her boobs was bigger than her head!* He checked his phone for the time, saw Tetsuko's text again. *Damn! I forgot I was supposed to meet her at the Student Center. Now I gotta listen to her whine like she does every time I'm just a teeny bit late...*

Twenty minutes!

Tetsuko checked her phone again, exasperated. *And he won't reply to my texts! Where is he, and what is he doing?!*

She leaned against the wall of the Student Center building, sighing in frustration. *I can't wait for him much longer. I've got studying to do before our date tonight! If he doesn't show up in another minute or two -*

Then she saw him across the quad, waving cheerily. "There he is, finally!" she muttered.

Derek strode up to her, all breezy cockiness, grabbed Tetsuko by the waist and kissed her before she realized it. "Hey, babe, how's it goin'?"

"Derek, you were supposed to be here twenty minutes ago! I was worried something had happened to you! Where were you?"

His smile faded just a bit, but he answered in the same jaunty tone, "Aw, had a meeting with Professor Strauch that ran long. That's all."

"Was it about that project you're supposed to do for your Economics class? How's that going?"

His reply was testier than perhaps he intended. "It's going all right, all right??"

"Well, you don't have to bite my head off, Derek! I'm just concerned about your grades -"

"Will you *shut* your fucking *mouth* about my goddam *grades?!'*" he shouted. "I don't need some mouthy bitch nagging me about my grades!"

Tetsuko's eyes flashed with anger. "*Fine!!'*" she spat. "Then I won't bother you about them any more. Or anything else!" She turned and stalked off.

Finally realizing he'd gone too far, Derek ran after her. "Aw, come on, babe, wait up!"

The only outward sign that Tetsuko had heard him was that she did slow her gait down, just a bit. Derek caught up with her in a few steps, and placed his hands on her shoulders; she allowed him to turn her around to face him.

"Listen, honey," he began, "I'm sorry I snapped at you like that. I... I'm under a lot of stress lately, what with school, and my job... I didn't mean to take it out on you."

Her anger mollified somewhat, Tetsuko gave him a small smile. "Well... okay."

"We still on for tonight, babe?"

"Sure. But I've got to get in some studying now, in case our date runs late tonight. I'll be over at your place about... four-thirty, okay?"

"Four-thirty it is!" That cocky smile had returned to his face.

Tetsuko turned to walk off. "See you then!" she called over her shoulder.

But her anger, though somewhat abated, was not entirely gone. *Why's he always have to be so mean to me? Always yelling at me, calling me "bitch" and stuff? Can't he see that I care about him? He was so sweet when we first started.* She exhaled. *If he wasn't so good-looking I'd have left him by now!*

Now that she'd left, Derek could drop the fake smile. *What a bitch! Always nagging me about my grades, or how I should be treating her, or some shit... if she wasn't such a great piece of ass I wouldn't put up with her bullshit!*

Part 3

*O*h... *I want it so bad!* Tetsuko thought.

She'd picked up the menu, and turned straight to the "Burgers & Sandwiches" page; she was gazing longingly at the entry for the Monte Cristo sandwich. "A Hannigan's® favorite! Club sandwich with turkey, ham and provolone cheese, battered and fried, and dusted with powdered sugar. Served with raspberry preserves and your choice of side."

The Monte Cristo had quickly become Tetsuko's favorite food since her first taste of one, a few days after her arrival in the States to live with her Aunt Margaret. She'd quickly decided it was "the most evil food ever invented" and fell in love with it; but its combination of cheese, fried, and sugar (she always asked for extra powdered sugar) made it a very guilty pleasure.

Even tonight, even though she hadn't had one in a couple of months, she hesitated to order one, for fear that Derek would tell her (as he did the last time she had one) to "stop eating that shit, it'll make you fat!" So when the server came to their table to take their orders, she told him, "I'll have the grilled chicken salad, with light Italian."

"Very good, miss," the server replied, scribbling on his order pad. "And for you, sir?"

Derek, who apparently didn't care whether Tetsuko thought *he* was going to get fat off what he ate, said, "Gimme a deluxe Lucky Burger, well done, mustard, pickle and onion!"

"I'll get that right in for you. If you need anything else, just let me know!" the server said as he left.

Tetsuko unrolled her napkin, placing the silverware contained in it on the table. "Now, Derek, I can't stay out too late. I've got a test in Biology tomorrow, and I'd still like to get some studying in tonight."

"Aw, babe, don't worry," he reassured her, "it's just dinner and a movie. I'll have you home in plenty of time!" He took a swig of his Heineken.

Tetsuko reached around with her right hand to scratch an itch she felt between her shoulder blades. "Well, I hope so."

Derek's eyes suddenly bulged; he practically leaped out of his chair as he pointed frantically at Tetsuko. "*W-What the hell's that thing on your arm?!'*"

Her arm still up in mid-scratch, she glanced over at it, but saw nothing unusual. "My arm? What -"

"That muscle!!" She looked again; the effort of reaching behind her head had caused her bicep to swell up. Not as large as it had been earlier in the locker room, but Tetsuko wasn't putting in the exertion of deliberately flexing this time. And still it was, it seemed, big enough to cause Derek to freak out.

"C'mon, Derek, you know I've been working out -" she began.

Derek loudly interrupted her. "Well, *stop it!* I ain't going with no bitch who's got bigger muscles than *me!*"

Tetsuko frowned. "Geez, Derek, I'm a long way from -"

But once again she was interrupted; Derek was practically standing as he shoved his finger in her face. "Keep your damn voice down! You're embarrassing me!!"

"All right," intoned Tetsuko in a cold, quiet voice. "I won't say another word to you."

And she didn't. She spoke to the server, thanking him when her meal was brought, and when her diet Pepsi was refilled. But every attempt made by Derek to make conversation was met with a stony silence.

Finally, in the car heading for the movie theater, Derek said the magic words:

"I'm sorry for blowing up at you like that, babe. I shouldn't have yelled at you."

"Well... all right," Tetsuko murmured grudgingly. There was a lot more she wanted to say; how this was just the latest instance of his blowing a minor incident out of proportion, how they always seemed to be fighting every time they got together -

but she decided that pursuing the matter after he'd apologized would just start another row.

"So," Derek began, eager to lighten the mood with some small talk, "how are things going at the lab?"

Tetsuko was taken aback for an instant: *he's actually expressing an interest in what I'm doing?* "Well, Sonya - that is, Dr. Gannon - is working on an interesting experiment." She immediately regretted her utterance; Dr. Gannon, for whom Tetsuko worked as lab assistant and "girl Friday", had recently impressed upon her the importance of keeping what she saw at the laboratory to herself.

"Oh yeah? What is it?" inquired Derek.

"I'm... I'm sorry, Derek, I shouldn't have said anything. I really can't tell you."

"Aw, come on, babe, it's just me! Who'm I gonna tell? 'S not like I'm some secret agent for a world-wide terrorist organization."

Tetsuko exhaled. "All right. So Dr. Gannon -"

Derek interrupted, "Hey, is she the one with the huge titties? I had her last semester for some science class."

And probably paid more attention to her chest than to her lectures. "Yes, that's her. She's on sabbatical for awhile, though, so she can catch up on some of her projects. So anyway, she's working on an anti-aging."

"An anti-what-ic??"

"Basically, it's an anti-aging formula," Tetsuko explained. "Sonya, I mean, Dr. Gannon, is trying to create a one-time formula that addresses all the factors that contribute to the aging of the human body."

"Wow, sounds like a tall order!"

"It is. The idea, basically, is that one shot of this stuff will extend a person's life to 200, even 250 years. And be as healthy and active at 200 as they are at 25!"

"Nice! Hey, let me know when I can get some of that stuff."

Tetsuko giggled. "Well, it'll be a long time before it's ready, but yeah, I'll tell you. If Dr. Gannon lets me!"

"Well, here we are," Derek said as they pulled into the Fashion Square mall parking lot. As they got out of the car, Tetsuko looked up at the theater marquee listing the movies playing at the multiplex. "Hey, *Meet Cute* is playing here! I want to see that, I've heard it's good."

"Aaah, goddam chick flick," muttered Derek.

Part 4

As they stood in line to buy their tickets, Tetsuko looked at the "Now Playing" posters on the nearby wall. Her eyes were drawn to the poster for the movie she wanted to see: *Meet Cute*. Against a pastel blue background, an attractive 20ish woman passed a guy whose slightly tousled hair and slightly goofy expression the Internet had dubbed "adorkable". As they passed each other, they looked back over their shoulders at each other. Tetsuko smiled at the tagline: "Sometimes it takes a second glance to recognize love at first sight."

Then she looked at the poster to the left, and her nose wrinkled in disgust. Against a stark black background was a closeup of a young woman, an evil-looking, cage-like device attached to her head, held in place with screws that apparently penetrated her skin, causing trickles of blood down her face. Her terrified expression seemed to indicate that she was seconds away from a horribly mutilating death. The tagline read, "From the new master of horror, Remy Samuels...", and below the disturbing image, the title of the movie was rendered in ugly, slashing, bleeding letters: *Rip Your Head Off!*

And just as she read the title, she heard Derek's voice tell the cashier, "Two for *Rip Your Head Off!*"

Her jaw dropped. "Derek, we're not watching *that*, are we?"

"Aw c'mon, babe, I been lookin' forward to this flick for a couple months now!" Derek answered, not-so-subtly pushing Tetsuko away from the ticket booth.

"But I thought we were seeing *Meet* -"

"Well, we're seein' *this*, okay? Already bought the tickets, so it's too late to change anything!" he shouted, waving the paper stubs in her face.

"But I hate these gory horror movies, Derek!" But her words went unanswered.

She tried to sit through the movie; she really did. But then the scene appearing in the poster came up, about twenty minutes into the movie. Certainly couldn't accuse the poster of false advertising; if anything, the scene was even more unnerving,

because the girl trapped in the device was sobbing and screaming to be released, crying for mercy, while the villain, heard as a disembodied, electronically filtered voice, gloated over her predicament.

She was imprisoned in an iron chair, rusty shackles clamped over her wrists and ankles. A large metal collar immobilized her neck, while a steel ring encircled her forehead, held in place by bolts screwed directly into her skin. Several devices that looked like hydraulic pistons were attached to ring and collar; blood flowed from the screws in the ring. A quick cutaway showed a black-gloved hand pressing a large red button on a control panel; another edit returned to the sight of the victim, as the pistons attached to the forehead ring began to extend, stretching the girl's neck.

It's just a movie, Tetsuko told herself. That's just a fake head with animatronic features, it's not real. Or maybe it's all just CGI... But the special effects wizards had done their job too well: in loving closeup, the skin around the girl's neck began to split and tear, exposing the muscles, tendons and blood vessels underneath. The veins ruptured, gushing forth blood (*fake blood! it's just fake blood!*) Derek began to chuckle; "here it comes..."

Finally, the girl's neck broke, sending her head flying out of the frame, accompanied by a veritable fountain of red blood. Tetsuko's head began to swim, as her vision splotted and her nausea grew. She could hear Derek guffawing, "Baw haw haw! That fuckin' thing ripped her goddam head right off! Haw haw, funniest goddam thing I ever seen!"

"I can't take any more!" Tetsuko exclaimed as she bolted out of her chair, desperately climbing over the other viewers along their row with a hastily muttered "excuse me!" to reach the theater exit.

She barely made it into the hallway before her stomach emptied her partially-digested dinner onto the floor.

She sat on a bench in the lobby of the multiplex, bent over, panting, trying to get her strength back. *I don't understand it, she thought. How could a decent person even like movies like that? That wallow in the kind of depravity it takes to enjoy the sight of someone being killed in such bloody and horrible ways? Even if it is all fake?*

"Um, excuse me," said a voice to her right. "Are you all right?"

She looked up to see a tall, gangly teenage boy, in white shirt, black slacks and vest, and a name tag that read "Brent". "Uh, I'm... I'm okay. I guess," she replied.

"Were you watching *Rip Your Head Off*, by any chance?"

Despite her discomfort, Tetsuko had to grin. "That obvious?"

Brent grinned in return. "Yeah, it's having that effect on quite a few people. Especially the buzzsaw scene."

"Augh, I don't even want to hear about -"

They both turned at the sound of vomiting; another girl about Tetsuko's age had run out of the theater, and hadn't made it to the restroom in time. Brent checked his watch. "Yep. The buzzsaw scene. I better go get someone to clean that up." But as he turned to go, he added, "Uh, can I call you a cab, or something?"

"No," Tetsuko answered. "My boyfriend's still inside watching it. I'll just wait for him."

Brent looked at his watch again. "Well, you still got about twenty-five minutes to go." With a wave of his hand, he said, "Good luck!" and left to attend his duties.

Sure enough, twenty-five minutes later, the crowd started filing out of the theater. Tetsuko searched the faces for Derek; there he was. Looking as though he was heading straight for the exits, not even looking for her.

"Derek!" she called out.

He turned at the sound of her voice. "Oh, *there* you are, babe!" He turned and strolled toward her. "I thought you'd gone home."

"My car's still at your place, remember?"

"Oh yeah, that's right."

As they pulled out of the mall parking lot for the trip back to Derek's apartment, Derek could sense that, once again, he had to mend fences with his girl.

"I promise, babe, next time you get to choose the movie," Derek began in a conciliatory tone.

"That's what you said last time," Tetsuko replied in a voice that was somewhat testier than perhaps she intended. "And we wound up seeing *Horror in the Asylum 2!*"

"Three," he corrected.

"Whatever! Not the point!"

"Well like I said, I been looking forward to this -"

"And I've been looking forward to *Meet Cute!* Don't *my* feelings count for anything?"

Derek took his right hand off the steering wheel and raised it as though swearing an oath. "I promise, babe. Next time, we go see *Meet Cute.*"

"Okay."

As they approached the apartment complex, Derek asked suggestively, "Say, you wanna come upstairs for a little... fun?"

Tetsuko squirmed in her seat. "I... dunno, Derek. I still have studying I'd like to get to..." But she stole a glance at Derek's crotch. *Well... he does feel good inside me. Maybe a little sex will make me feel better...* "Okay!"

Derek smiled. "Great!"

Part 5

"Oh Derek! Oh Derek!!" Tetsuko moaned, her voice husky. She lay on her back in Derek's bed as he straddled her hips, his sturdy penis pistoning back and forth inside her vagina. "You feel so good inside me... your cock is so big..."

She grabbed her own breasts and began caressing her nipples, hoping to hasten her building climax. Derek's orgasm would be happening soon, she felt, and she wanted to simultaneously - -

Suddenly, Derek lurched, and Tetsuko could feel his organ throbbing, his warm semen filling her canal and squirting past her labia.

Derek rolled to his left onto his back, practically collapsing on the mattress, sighing loudly. Tetsuko raised herself up on her forearms and looked over at him. "Already?" she asked.

"...ohh yeaahh..." was his breathy reply.

"But I was just getting excited!" she continued. "A couple more minutes and I'd've come, too."

"S'way it goes sometimes." Derek slipped his hands under his head and closed his eyes. "Someone always finishes first."

"Yeah, and lately it always seems to be *you* finishing first."

Derek opened his eyes just long enough to roll them back in their sockets.

"Goddammit, bitch, don't start that *whining* again! I *hate* that shit!!"

Tetsuko climbed over Derek, straddling his abdomen just above his now-softening penis. "C'mon, Derek, at least eat my pussy! I wanna get off too!"

"Eeyucchh!!" Derek sat up, undisguised disgust on his face. "You expect me to put my mouth on your cunt while it's still got cum on it??"

"Well, it is *your* cum --"

"Forget that shit!!" Derek lay back down.

"Maybe if I went and washed myself..."

"Yeah, whatever."

Tetsuko clambered off of Derek's torso, and slid off the bed. "All right," she sighed in irritation. "If it'll get you to give *me* some pleasure, too..."

As she squatted in the bathtub, scooping handfuls of warm water from the spigot to douse her vagina, she thought about how little she was getting from Derek lately. He'd never been the most attentive of lovers, but lately his attitude seemed even colder; as if he thought Tetsuko only existed to be with him when he wanted, and to give him sex on demand without expecting any satisfaction in return.

Why does he treat me like this? Haven't I been attentive enough to him? God, I practically plan my entire life around when he wants to be with me, and he treats me like some damn sex slave! The more she reflected on how Derek treated her, the angrier she became at everything he did that irritated her, the inconsideration with which he treated her in what was now almost every aspect of their relationship. How he never apologized for being late (which was nearly all the time now). How he never called her by her name; she was always "babe" when he was happy with her, and "bitch" (or worse) when he wasn't. How (she realized now) unconcerned he was with her feelings.

She shut off the water, stood up, and reached for a towel to dry off the water streaming down her legs. *"Bitch," he keeps calling me. Well, maybe I have been acting like one lately. Maybe if I try extra hard to be nice to him, maybe he'll start acting kinder toward me again.*

She stepped to the open doorway from the bathroom, trying to angle herself so that the light from behind her showed off her slim, toned physique to its best advantage, and struck her most seductive pose. "Well, Derek, I'm all clean now," she purred, "and ready for more lovin'."

Derek didn't stir. His face was pointed directly at her, so he had to have been able to hear her. Tetsuko approached the bed warily, fearing that something awful had happened while she was washing herself: a heart attack? suffocation? had someone

broken in and murdered him, and slipped quickly back out while she was occupied? "Derek?"

But as she stepped closer, Derek suddenly turned onto his side, with his back to her, and she could hear that he was snoring. The bastard had fallen asleep!

The drive home was more difficult that night than usual; it was hard to see the road through her tears.

Part 6

Derek pushed the hardhat back on his head, and wiped his streaming forehead with an already-moist rag. Even though the air-conditioning units were pumping full-blast, creating a background noise that almost drowned out the light-pop music emanating from the speakers in the ceilings, the warehouse was still uncomfortably hot. He pulled the hardhat forward again, and pulled the lever that raised the pallet on his forklift onto the proper shelf.

He looked at his watch. "Lunch time," he muttered to himself. "About goddam time!"

In the breakroom, Derek saw a short but stockily-built black man dressed in sweat-soaked T-shirt and jeans, whose formerly shaved head was beginning to grow stubble. "Hey, Carl!"

"Derek!" Carl replied. "So you the one they got to fill Stan's shift."

"Yeah, got the call about 8 AM," Derek said as he opened the refrigerator door and grabbed the plastic container that held his lunch. "Hey, I can use the hours."

"Yeah, but ain't you got a test or somethin' today?"

Derek punched a button on the microwave. "Aah, I'm not so sure anymore that I need college."

"Say *what*?" Carl exclaimed. "Your folks are payin' your freight, you got a golden opportunity to make somethin' of yourself! Why you wanna throw that away?"

"Hey, I'm in good with the higher-ups here, I can - -" Derek suddenly paused, and stared out the breakroom door. He saw his immediate superior, Mr. Conway, walking past, accompanied by a tall figure dressed in trenchcoat and slouch fedora pushing a wheelchair in which sat a wizened, elderly man to whom Conway seemed to be paying great attention and deference.

"Hey, Carl, who's the old geezer in the wheelchair?"

"Hmm? Oh, that's Hamilton Slade. He owns the company."

"Slade? Same guy that's always in the news? Police seem to think he's some sort of crime boss!"

"Yeah, but they ain't never been able to prove nothin' - hey, where you goin'?"

Derek had suddenly bolted out of his seat, and was rushing for the door. "Gonna get in good with the big boss!"

"Mr. Slade! Mr. Slade!!"

Dennis Conway, manager of Warehouse Operations, turned at the sound of Derek's voice. The trench coated man and the elderly man in the wheelchair did not react.

"Excuse me," Derek continued as he tried to pass Conway, "but I got somethin' to tell you!"

Conway put out a hand to hold Derek back. "Mr. Horner! Whatever you have to say to Mr. Slade, you can tell me."

"But this ain't about work, Mr. Conway!" Derek leaned to his right to shout past Conway's shoulder. *"Mr. Slade! I know someone who's working on an anti-aging formula!!"*

That had the desired effect; Derek saw the elderly man hold up a hand, prompting the trench coat man to stop.

"Winston... let us hear out what this young man has to say."

"But what if he's just spoofin' us, boss?"

"If this is a hoax... then you'll get to 'teach' him the 'error of his ways'."

"Yeeaah... heh heh heh."

Conway was just as surprised as Derek himself was, when Winston actually turned the wheelchair around, and wheeled Slade back to where Conway and Derek were standing.

"First things first, young man," Slade addressed Derek in a voice gravelly with age, yet still intent with purpose. "Your name?"

"Uhh, Derek. Derek Horner. Uh, sir!"

Slade then turned to his warehouse manager. "Your estimation of our Mr. Horner, Conway?"

With the manner of someone who can't believe he has to say something nice about someone he doesn't really respect, Conway replied, "Well... he does tend to be a bit full of himself. But he's a good worker, always willing to take overtime - -"

Slade interrupted. "Trustworthy?"

A pause before Conway answered. "I've... never known him to lie."

The elderly man turned back to face Derek. "Very well. Not exactly a 'ringing endorsement', Mr. Horner... but I'm inclined to trust you as well. You seem like you're intelligent enough to know that if you're lying... well, it won't go well for you."

Winston chuckled, the only vocalization Derek had heard from the man in the hat; but it was enough to send a shiver down his spine, and wonder if there wasn't something to all the "crime boss" talk after all.

"On the other hand," Slade continued, "if what you're about to tell me pans out, you'll find me very... 'appreciative'. So let's have it."

Derek swallowed nervously. "Um, so... my girlfriend, she's like a 'girl Friday' to this Dr. Gannon - -"

"Gannon? Dr. Sonya Gannon? At the university? She's reputed to be one of the finest minds in the world."

"Yeah. So anyway, my girl was telling' me last night..."

The afternoon sun shone warm on the students walking along the sidewalks crossing the quadrangle in front of the UF-O Student Center, or picnicking on blankets on the grass, studying under the shade of tall, wide trees, or playing Frisbee. But to Tetsuko, sitting by herself on a bench shaded by an ancient oak tree, the sky might as well be overcast to match her gloomy mood.

She wasn't precisely crying, but a tear or two trickled down her cheek as she ruminated over last night's date; "Worst Date Ever", she'd already dubbed it in her mind.

Suddenly she saw a flicker of movement on the sidewalk at her feet. Before she realized it was even there, the squirrel leaped up onto her leg, sat up on its haunches, and leaned its head expectantly toward her, its front legs tucked up against its chest.

Despite her mood, Tetsuko smiled. "Well, hello, Scooter," she cooed. "What can I do for you, girl?"

Scooter untucked her paws, as though ready to reach for something.

"As if I didn't know," Tetsuko chuckled as she reached into her purse. "I think I still have one in here... ah, here we are!" She took out a peanut, still in its shell, and offered it to the squirrel.

Scooter placed her tiny paws on Tetsuko's finger for support as she took the proffered peanut in her mouth. She then turned around, ran the peanut along her mouth as though taste-testing it, then took it in her teeth and jumped down, scampering off to... well, either eat it or bury it, who knows where.

Tetsuko watched Scooter's furry tail as she disappeared into the bushes. *Heh. In a way, Scooter's just like Derek; they both love you only for what they can get off you. Only Scooter's more honest about it...*

"Tetsuko? Are you OK?"

She turned at the sound of the voice to her left, and saw David standing there. She gave him a wan smile. "Yes." Then, realizing that David could see the pink blotches on her face, "...No."

David sat down (but not too close) beside Tetsuko. "Worried about the test?"

"No... actually, I think I did pretty well on it. Thanks to the notes you gave me." David looked away, blushing.

Tetsuko dropped her head again. "It's..." *Do I really want to tell him about my romantic troubles?* She sighed. *Well, right now I need a sympathetic ear.* "...it's Derek."

She was surprised to find herself pouring out her heart. "It's no fun being with him any more! Everything's all about *him*! We always go to whichever restaurant *he* wants to go to... like last night, we were at Hannigan's, I wanted to get my favorite food, the Monte Cristo, but I was afraid he's rag on me about it making me fat! And we always go to whichever movie *he* wants to go to, and it's usually some gory horror movie that makes me sick to my stomach! He doesn't respect my wishes at all... or me either, for that matter! His favorite nicknames for me are 'babe' or 'bitch', depending on whether he's mad at me or not!"

David frowned. "That's horrible!"

Tetsuko continued, "I don't think he's called me by my name in - -" But her rant was interrupted by a sound coming from her purse: backed by a synth-pop rhythm, the voice of Thomas Dolby singing "She blinded me with science..."

"Oh, that's my cellphone!" Tetsuko said as she reached into her purse once again. "It's Sonya... uh, Dr. Gannon!"

She drew out her phone and thumb-swiped the screen. "*Hai, sensei!* I was just getting ready to come over to the lab - -"

Even as David was thinking, "*She Blinded Me with Science*" - *appropriate ringtone for Dr. Gannon*, he noticed Tetsuko suddenly frowning slightly. She said, "Oh, not this afternoon? You'll be - -?"

Another pause as Dr. Gannon said something David couldn't hear, then Tetsuko replied, "Tomorrow morning? Saturday?" A pause. "S-sure, I can make it, it's just..." a nervous chuckle "...unusual."

Another pause. "Okay, then, see you tomorrow morning. *Ja, mata!*"

As she tapped the button to end the call, Tetsuko turned to David. "Well, I guess I'm going in to work tomorrow morning instead of this afternoon."

"On a Saturday?"

"Yeah. Doctor'll be out of town this afternoon and evening. Some seminar or something." She smiled, a wry smile. "Bright side is, at least I've got an excuse to blow off having to go to the beach with Derek tomorrow."

"But I thought you loved going to the beach."

Tetsuko glanced away for a second. "Yeah, well... I'm not sure I want to be wearing a bikini around him again. Ever since he started raggin' on me about getting 'too muscular' - -"

"What, he doesn't like you working out?"

"Hates it! Just last night at dinner, I reached behind my back to scratch an itch..." she imitated the motion, causing her bicep to swell again "...and he freaks out over my bicep!"

David's eyes suddenly widened at the sight of Tetsuko's muscle. "Whoa!"

"Oh, David, you're not gonna freak out too?"

"No, no!! I - -" Tetsuko could see him starting to blush. "...can I see it again?"

It was now Tetsuko's turn for widening eyes... "Sure..." but she raised her arm again, and flexed her bicep.

The rocklike ball of muscle exploded once more, swelling up hard and proud. David stared at it. "Wow..." he breathed. Then, a little louder, but still shyly, "Can I... can I feel it?"

"Um... okay."

David nervously reached out and touched her bicep. Emboldened somewhat by the fact that she didn't draw away, he began to squeeze its peak, feeling its firmness. "That's nice," he muttered under his breath; then, afraid his appreciation would be misinterpreted, "It's... very impressive!"

Tetsuko relaxed and lowered her arm. "You... like my muscle?"

"Oh, yes." he blushed again. "I... I don't tell anyone this, because they think it's weird, but..." and his hand stole to the back of his head again "...I really like muscles on women."

"You... you do?"

"Oh yes! I've seen you going to the fitness center over there, and I've always thought... I've always thought that if you got really big, like a bodybuilder... you'd look fantastic!"

"Really?"

"Yeah! As a matter of fact..." and he reached into the large portfolio case that Tetsuko just noticed he'd leaned against the bench "...the other day, I drew..." he took out a sheet of paper "...this!"

Tetsuko took the sheet. On it was a drawing ...a drawing of Tetsuko herself, but with a massively muscular bodybuilder's physique.

Her eyes goggled. That was her face, all right, but the body was... "spectacular" was the first word that sprang to her mind. It was as if David had looked into her mind and saw what she herself sometimes imagined herself looking like if she "went all out" and developed a truly muscular physique; a physique she ultimately decided against because of the reactions of people like Derek.

The other thing that struck her about the drawing was how lovingly it had been rendered. This was the result of an artist truly appreciative of his subject.

"This is... this is really beautiful," Tetsuko said. "Did you draw this entirely from your imagination?"

"Well, I used some photos for reference, but... this is what I imagine you'd look like as a bodybuilder."

Tetsuko gazed at the drawing again. "Her" face in the drawing was proud, confident in its strength, and smilingly defiant of the narrow-mindedness of her detractors.

"It's really nice," she said as she tried to hand the drawing back. But David held up his hands. "No, no, you keep it."

She smiled. "Thanks, David."

"Hey," David began, nervousness suddenly in his voice again, "as long as you don't have to go to work this afternoon... let me buy you a Monte Cristo. N-not a date; just two friends sharing dinner."

"Aren't you afraid I'll 'get fat'?"

"Pfft. Not off one sandwich. Besides, I'm sure you'll work off the calories next workout."

"Well... okay then. I just want to stop by my apartment first to drop off this drawing. Don't want it ruined while we're out!"

"A Buster's?" the red-haired girl complained. "You take me to a *Buster's*, Derek?"

The waitress had just taken their drink order, her ample bosom jiggling in her tight white tank top as she left. She was a prime example of the kind of voluptuous servers for which the restaurant was famous; and Lori could see that Derek was enjoying the sight... maybe a little too much. He turned back to his date. "Hey, we ate where you wanted last time; this time I got to choose, remember?"

"Yeah, but... a Buster's? How'm I s'posed to compete with these girls here?"

"Aw, c'mon, babe," Derek began, now turning his lascivious leer onto Lori's considerable cleavage, "you could show up any of these bitches here! Besides... you're the one I'll be leaving with - -"

Suddenly he could feel his cellphone vibrating at his hip. "Uh oh, my phone's ringing." He almost took the call, then added, just in case this was another girl, "Better take this one outside. A little noisy in here."

"Not another girl, I hope!"

Derek touched Lori's cheek. "Of course not! I got you, don't I?"

He stepped out the door, and looked at his phone's screen. Sure enough, another girl: Tetsuko.

He thumbed the screen. "Yo, babe! Lookin' forward to the beach tomorrow - -"

His brow knitted in anger. "Whattaya mean, you can't go? ...What?! On a Saturday? Fuck!!" He rolled his eyes. "...Aah, save it for later, bitch!!" He angrily stabbed the screen, and crossed his arms, pouting. Then a smile crossed his lips; he'd just remembered something. He pulled a small white business card from his shirt pocket, recalling the last words of his meeting with Mr. Slade earlier that day.

What you've just told me is very intriguing, Mr. Horner. Winston? Give our young friend here my card. Now, Mr. Horner, if you find out anything about when and where Dr. Gannon may be found, call that number. Winston will answer, and you will tell him your information.

Derek punched the number from the card into the phone, and waited. Hope I'm not calling too late, he thought, when suddenly there was an answer from the other end. "Yeah?"

"M-Mr. Winston? Derek Horner.Yeah, from this afternoon! ...Yeah, I just found out the doctor will be at her lab tomorrow morning. ...Oh, sure, I know how to get there! My girl showed me where it was a couple weeks ago. Well, you go out Highway Fifty East..."

...and the story continues in Tetsuko #1: "Incident at Gannon Labs!"