

FIFTH STREET

Written by

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INT. COIN LAUNDRY - NIGHT

Circulating dyers, chrome circles frame glass, reflecting overhead fluorescent lights.

A Mickey mouse clock TICKS.

The sole customer, AIDA TAKAHASHI (30s) Thai, timeless look about her, even in jeans and a Van Halen t-shirt. Melancholy in her unwavering gaze.

Aida sits hunched, sways, perspiration on her face. She clasps a small towel.

SOUNDS fade.

A hallucination. Aida's mother, SROY (60s) Thai, short, unkempt, greying, colourless jumpsuit, nicotine stains on her right hand, late-night gambler.

**(All conversations between Thai nationals take place in the Thai language).**

SROY (O.S.)

I don't think anybody likes you.  
Your father didn't. It's what made  
him sick. That's why he's gone.

Dryer door opens, hands reach in. Clothing stuffed into bags, eyes drained of colour.

SCHOOLGIRL 1 (O.S)

I told you not to come around here.

Aida turns toward the exit. Another hallucination.

Two Thai SCHOOLGIRLS in their teens appear. White shirts, navy blue skirts, pleats front and back, black leather shoes, white socks.

SCHOOLGIRL 2

You retarded or something?

They stalk Aida, her face drained of colour.

SCHOOLGIRL 1

Told you what'd happen to you.

SCHOOLGIRL 2

Stop and lie down, bitch.

AIDA

Fuck you.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Aida bursts through the Coin Laundry doors, walk runs along the deserted street. Checks behind her for the school girls. Turns back.

She stops, smiles.

Another hallucination. A well-groomed HIROTO TAKAHASHI (30s) Japanese, her husband, handsome, tailored suit, faces her.

**All conversations between Aida and Japanese nationals take place in the Japanese language).**

HIROTO  
You can rest now.

AIDA  
Never stop.

HIROTO  
Oh, Aida. You stopped moving back there.

Aida turns. Behind her, laundry scattered near her limp body. She turns back.

PRE LAP: Alarm BEEPS.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Aida jolts herself awake. Face down, breathing hard. A television on in the background.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
A powerful typhoon threatens to make landfall this weekend.

Light floods through half open curtains of her modern apartment.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Railways and supermarkets plan to suspend or minimize operations for much of Saturday.

Alarm continues. Drenched in sweat. Fully dressed. She reaches for the alarm, knocks over a bottle of Zolofit.

She rolls out of bed.

Next to the bed, a photograph of Aida, Hiroto and HARUKA (12) female, half Japanese, half Thai, her daughter.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Aida immobile, dressed, on the toilet. She studies a calendar, its crosses. A circle around today.

Aida stares at the pills she clutches.

Bedside table drawer opens, hands grab all the containers. Pills fall into the toilet. Containers in the rubbish bin.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Wind and rain pick up. Red handbag in hand, Aida pushes the buzzer of an upscale two story house, in a distinguished Tokyo neighbourhood. Door opens.

JUNKO TAKAHASHI (60s) leans in the doorway, in a nice dressing gown. Well spoken, widower, grey streaks in her hair, mutton dressed as lamb.

JUNKO

I wasn't expecting you.

Junko saunters inside, Aida inches to the living room to find Haruka.

AIDA

Hi.

Haruka runs into Aida's arms.

HARUKA

Grandma didn't say you were coming.

A TELEVISION in the background.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The typhoon has begun to bring fierce winds and downpours to a large swath of the mainland.

INT. DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Junko a deck of cards in her palm, tugs a section of the deck off the bottom out, the remaining deck in her left hand.

Haruka and Aida eat their meals.

Junko clocks Aida's red bag. She deals two hands of three cards.

Aida checks her hand, folds. Junko reveals the dealer's hand. All hearts.

Haruka moves to the floor. Aida looks to Haruka's plate. Junko turns over one of Aida's cards. Jack of Spades.

AIDA

Haruka, you're not going to eat your vegetables?

Junko turns over one of Aida's cards. Ten of Spades.

JUNKO

You can eat them tomorrow, can't you?

Junko turns over Aida's final card. Nine of Spades.

JUNKO (CONT'D)

I'll go make sure your room's in order.

Aida watches Junko saunter upstairs. She rushes outside.

She paces, heart racing, struggling for air. She clears her neck of clothing. A deep breath. Another. Rain falls.

She returns inside. Haruka in the corner moving three cards around face down.

AIDA

Hey.

Aida reaches into her bag, hands Haruka a gift. Haruka opens it, a silver jizo pendant.

HARUKA

Thank you.

Aida lays the pendant around Haruka's neck, closes it's clasp. Aida tries a smile.

Storm doors RATTLE closed.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

An icebox opens; ice falls into a glass. Rain batters windows. Aida leans against bench. Haruka on the kitchen bench shuffles cards.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)  
But as of 8PM it is still packing  
sustained winds of up to 198  
kilometres per hour.

Junko sits, cigarette hangs from her mouth. She shuffles  
cards at the table.

ANNOUNCER (O.S) (CONT'D)  
The storm is forecast to travel  
over the Kanto region and then  
north.

Uncomfortable silence. Junko plays with her necklace.

JUNKO  
How long are you going to stay  
sober?

AIDA  
I never drank heavily until Hiroto  
and I...

JUNKO  
Leave Hiroto out of this. I can't  
bear to hear you talk about him  
like that.

Aida fidgets.

JUNKO (CONT'D)  
When he was dying he asked me to  
look after Haruka. If you hadn't  
been in rehab then, it might have  
helped.

AIDA  
If we wait much longer I'll lose  
Haruka's childhood. I'll lose her.

JUNKO  
Why didn't you think of all this  
before?

AIDA  
I agreed to the guardianship when I  
was in rehab. Now it's different.  
I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn  
well, so far as...

JUNKO

Please don't swear at me. How much you were responsible for Hiroto's death is something you'll have to square with your own conscience.

Junko leaves.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Haruka lays down three cards, face down, moves them around. Aida watches.

Haruka shows one card, queen of hearts, rearranges the cards.

HARUKA

Ok, watch the queen.

Aida chooses a card, turns it over. A Jack.

HARUKA (CONT'D)

Want me to go slower?

AIDA

Deal the cards.

She shows Aida the cards, places them down, shuffles. Aida chooses. Wrong one.

AIDA (CONT'D)

Who taught you this?

HARUKA

Grandma did. Grandma says everybody knows it's a scam. But they come back, because they think they can outsmart the game.

AIDA

What's the alternative?

HARUKA

Don't play.

Haruka shuffles again. Aida watches. She chooses, a Jack, again.

AIDA

Are you hiding the queen.

HARUKA

Look.

Aida flips all the cards over. Finds the queen.

HARUKA (CONT'D)  
The only way to win is to not play.

AIDA  
Come on, bedtime.

Aida tucks Haruka in to her bed.

HARUKA  
Will I see you tomorrow?

Aida forces a smile.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)  
Officials in Tokyo warn of flood  
risks and advise evacuation.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Storm rain and wind batter the house's exterior. Junko in a game of solitaire, Aida stands in the doorway.

Junko eyes the red bag Aida clutches.

JUNKO  
I've seen that look before.

Junko prepares the table, Aida sits. Junko shuffles, deals.

ANNOUNCER (O.S)  
Take actions to protect your own  
life.

AIDA  
I raise. One hundred thousand  
straight.

JUNKO  
Very aggressive. I re-raise. Five  
hundred thousand.

AIDA  
I re-raise. I'm all in.

Junko scans her cards, looks at Aida, throws her cards down.

JUNKO  
Take it down.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Rain and wind intense. Aida picks up her stacks of cash from the table, gets up.

Junko stares at the few bills she has left, glares at Aida.

JUNKO (CONT'D)  
 Catching that Jack on fourth street. You got lucky there. Course you could let it ride, Aida. Take your chances.

AIDA  
 I've got what I need. I'm going home.

JUNKO  
 Fine. After all, I'm paying you with your money.

Junko splashes the pot with a photograph, Haruka. Aida glances at it.

JUNKO (CONT'D)  
 What've you got to lose?

Aida takes a seat.

JUNKO (CONT'D)  
 You sure?

Aida's eyes remain on Junko. Junko shuffles, deals.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Typhoon batters the house. They hunker down across from each other, cards on the table.

JUNKO  
 You were always stubborn. Like your mother.

AIDA  
 Raise

JUNKO  
 I met her once. Told me a story about you. You got a perm. Re-raise. Your choice; she said. You probably didn't know what you wanted.

AIDA  
 Re-raise

JUNKO

The next day, they found you  
upstairs. Re-raise. You'd cut it  
off with the kitchen scissors.

AIDA

Re-raise.

JUNKO

Just like your mother, which is why  
I never loved you. Don't worry, my  
dear. It'll all be over soon. Call.

The table reads Jack of Spades, Queen of Spades, seven of  
Diamonds.

Aida lays down a Jack and Queen of Diamonds.

AIDA

You've got two-four, and I'm not  
going draw against a made hand.

Aida and Junko exchange glances.

JUNKO

Let's play some cards.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Typhoon has passed. Light trickles into the room through  
cracks in the storm doors.

AIDA

I call.

JUNKO

Five hundred thousand.

Junko throws her money over the table.

AIDA

I'll call the five hundred  
thousand. I'll gamble. Don't splash  
the pot.

JUNKO

You're on a draw, Aida? This one's  
not good for you. And in my house,  
I'll splash the pot whenever the  
fuck I please.

JUNKO (CONT'D)

I bet the pot.

AIDA  
I call you.

JUNKO  
Fifth street coming.

Aida deflates as the card falls on the table.

JUNKO (CONT'D)  
It hurts, doesn't it? All your  
dreams dashed. Hopes down the  
drain. That ace couldn't have  
helped you.

Junko puts in all her chips in.

AIDA  
You're right. The ace didn't help  
me.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Haruka's photograph, hangs in a new frame. Coffeemaker  
WHISTLES. Aida's apartment different, older.

Light streams through the windows. Aida eyes her reflection  
in the window.

Coffee, eggs, juice, rice, miso soup, fish, a full breakfast  
arranged on the table. For two.

Haruka sleeps on Aida's bed. Aida's jizo pendant around  
Haruka's neck.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

House empty. Junko alone, sits at her kitchen table in  
silence.

FADE OUT