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Exit A

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This boy is an American, born on the third of July, 1972. While his mother spat and screamed through the life-endangering birth, his father and the orderlies and janitors lit illegal fireworks in the hospital parking lot. The men drank from bottles of bourbon and beer while leaning down to light Bottle Rockets and Flaming Marys and Wailing Jennys. His father supplied the armament and the devil's milk, and the matches, and most of the boisterous ranting and raving about God and Country and the Founding Fathers and the *Mayflower* and Plymouth Rock and the Salem witch trials and the Red Threat, that ungainly, bloody bear from the East.

The doctor held the boy upside down, and the safety of the womb became history. The room above the mother spun one hundred times, and she went under.

No one found the father, not even the orderly sent to look. So they slapped the boy's bottom and placed him in a crib, where he waited for someone with his same blood to come to consciousness. His aunt Mirtha was the first to appear at the hospital, and after cursing the father's name, she picked up the boy and performed an auntly show for him, baby talk and ego stroking and burp and bowel sounds. Because his aunt was present and cogent, and the nurses wanted to get down to the parade grounds for the base general's midnight fireworks display, they asked her to name the boy, and she did. This boy's name is Severin Boxx.

• • •

This girl's name is Virginia Sachiko Kindwall. She is the daughter of General Oliver Kindwall and Mrs. Oliver Kindwall, once known as Olive, though that was not her given name but simply a shortening of her husband's. Her given name was Nakashima Sachiko. Olive died on the birthing table at Travis Air Force Base in California, in July 1972. While she died giving birth to Virginia Sachiko, her husband, a major at the time, paced the base morgue while overseeing the identification and shipment home of the newest dead boys from Vietnam, some of the last. Later, General Kindwall would tell his daughter that on the day of her mother's death and her own birth, the dead boys from Vietnam seemed much more dead than usual. He spent that night wide awake with his back ramrod straight, flat against the gray concrete floor of the hospital morgue, while his daughter, a few buildings away, slept with other military babies, some born to mothers whose husbands had died in Vietnam.

The maternity nurses that night paid extra attention to Baby Kindwall, Baby and not yet Virginia Sachiko Kindwall, because her father had been too distraught to remember what name he and his deceased wife had decided to call the child if the ball of love entered the world as a girl. The nurses rocked Baby Kindwall in their laps and called her "sweetheart" and "precious" and "lamb," and the nurses wept and cursed God and Vietnam, as they did every night.

On the floor of the hospital morgue, Major Kindwall dreamed of his wife in twenty years, in a church dressing room, preparing their daughter for marriage. The women's faces were made of shattered glass, and they could not find the wedding dress, so the daughter decided to be married in the nude. The dream ended with Kindwall walking his naked daughter up the church aisle, but the altar was absent priest and groom. Flames shot from the tabernacle. Kindwall awoke in the morning without recalling the dream.

The next day he volunteered for his third tour in Vietnam.

The day he left, he noticed a yellow piece of paper affixed to the refrigerator door with a watermelon-shaped magnet, these words written on it in his wife's penmanship: *Girl=Virginia Sachiko.* So his daughter had a name now, but no mother, and a father back at war.

PART I

Tokyo, November 1989

ONE

Severin Boxx rode home from football practice in the back of Coach Kindwall's van. In the front passenger seat, the coach's daughter applied a French manicure to her nails. The coach was also the base general of Yokota Air Base, Japan, and Severin's father's boss. These facts made Virginia Sachiko Kindwall untouchable and even more desirable than had she been a sergeant's daughter. Severin didn't wish to cause trouble for his father, and he intended to start the remainder of the season as outside linebacker, but he also wanted five minutes alone with Virginia, five minutes to speak in a calm and controlled voice, to practice his Japanese with her, five minutes at a ramen shop, slurping their noodles, laughter, together. The back of the van smelled of pigskin and wet gridiron and the still sweet sweat of boys. In a year or maybe in months, the boys Severin's age would begin to sweat like men, and stink like men, and maybe even suffer and want and love like men. But for now they were boys.

The van passed the flight line and the jet-fueled, mind-blowing birds of human prey. In the dark the planes looked harmless, like linked parts of a playground that young children might scamper on and under. But Severin knew, because his father had told him, that within twenty minutes General Kindwall could strike North Korea with a rain of bombs and fire more effective and impressive than ever unleashed before. All of this firepower idled within a half mile of the football field and two miles of Severin's front door.

Severin stared at Virginia's profile and felt his desire for her flush his face and his chest. Coach was talking about the power of the linebacker blitz, but Severin ignored him and stared at Virginia's beautiful nose and lips and the wisps of hair that floated above her head like strands of God. The car arrived at Severin's house in the officers' suburb of the base, and Severin jumped out with his gear in both hands and said good-bye to Coach and his daughter. He could barely pronounce her name.

"Hold up, Severin," Kindwall said. He put the van in park and walked around the front of the vehicle and faced Severin. Kindwall was a massive man, six foot four, more than 250 pounds. The general's face looked as though two pit bulls had played catch with it. His scars were from his third tour in Vietnam. A bouncing Betty made from ball bearings and gunpowder had rendered his face a combat zone. The general's carriage invoked the competing sensations of victory and humiliation. Severin knew the general could use rhetoric to turn breakfast into Pershing's European campaign.

Kindwall stooped and aligned his eyes with Severin's. "Tomorrow we will win a football game. It is all a part of the march of history. Only a few names are remembered in the end, only a few names make it into the great score sheet of history. Eat right, sleep well, and hit hard."

"Yes, sir," Severin said.

Kindwall grabbed the back of Severin's head and pulled him into the crook of his arm and, with his other hand, vigorously slapped the boy on the back. Virginia looked at Severin as though to apologize for her father's historicized, militarized vision of everything, even a hug. She blew Severin a kiss.

He nervously extracted himself from Kindwall's embrace.

Inside, Severin's dinner waited on the Formica kitchen counter. From the mudroom, he eyed the plate and guessed that it was chicken-fried steak and potatoes. His dad liked chicken-fried steak, and Dad was home from somewhere in the world—Taiwan, Diego Garcia, Turkey?—so they would eat chicken-fried steak.

And his mother would drink less coffee, and her girlfriends, the mothers of his friends, would not hang around as late at night complaining about their absent husbands.

Severin stood at the counter and ate, wearing his grass- and mud-colored football pants and a half-shirt stained with sweat and winning. He was not tall, five foot eight, but he carried a solidly muscled 175 pounds. An admiring coach from an opposing team once said, after Severin had clobbered his quarterback ten yards behind the line of scrimmage, "That kid is made of bricks." His sweaty bangs fell across his brow and into his blue eyes. His eyebrows, dark black like his hair, grew in an arched pattern that gave his face a constant look of youthful surprise. His nose was thin and straight, and his thin lips pulsed cranberry red. He looked his age, seventeen. He felt younger. He needed to prove something.

His mouth bulged with chicken and potatoes and gravy, and he breathed riotously through his nose. Mrs. Boxx entered the kitchen. "How many times must I tell you to shower before you eat? It smells like the fifty-yard line in here. And please sit at the table."

He swallowed hard. "Sorry, Mom. I'm hungry after practice. I can't wait." He fell into a chair at the kitchen table.

"I make your father shower when he comes in from the flight line. Are you suddenly the power around here?" She tousled his sweaty hair and then smelled her hand, her son.

"What's for dessert? Cookies? Ice cream? Both?" He turned his face toward her with an expectant smile.

"Pistachio ice cream," she said after a quick survey of the freezer.

"That stuff is nasty. How about some green-tea ice cream?"

"Your father doesn't like it. Too Japanese for him."

"But we're in Japan! Dad! We are in Japan!" he yelled toward the living room. "Eat the ice cream!" Severin was truly angry. His father preferred a teriyaki burger from McDonald's to a bowl of ramen.

"Your father is asleep. Jet lag. How does a pilot get jet lag?" She sat down next to her son.

Severin briskly stirred his potatoes and gravy. "When is he leaving again? Midnight? He's always gone. He never sees my games."

"How's the team looking?"

Severin dropped his fork and it rang against his plate like a bell. "Practice sucked. He ran us through two extra cycles of calisthenics. But he gave me a ride home."

"He must be stressed out over the accident this morning."

"What accident?" Severin hadn't heard of an accident.

"A troop transport truck ran over and killed Yoshida's son, riding his bicycle home from school. It's horrible. The driver didn't even know it happened until he got to the front gate and an MP stopped the truck because a bent bicycle wheel was hanging from the bumper." Mrs. Boxx shook her head.

"Yoshida, like Yoshida Electronics?" Severin's eyes pleaded with his mother to say no.

"Yes, honey."

"Mom, he's so nice to everyone. He lets us hang out in his store as long as we want, watching TV or listening to music. I can't believe this. What's going to happen?"

"The liberal papers will call for a withdrawal of American forces. I can't say I think otherwise." Mrs. Boxx leaned back in her chair and sighed.

"How old was Yoshida's son?"

"Seventeen."

My age, Severin thought. My age and dead. "The general didn't say anything at practice."

"I wouldn't think so."

"Can I go to the Base Square? The guys are hanging out there until football curfew. I think Johnson knew Yoshida-san. He's probably messed up."

"On Sunday there will be a memorial mass. I hope you'll attend

with me." Mrs. Boxx looked out her kitchen window at the darkness.

At seventeen, Virginia Sachiko Kindwall wore pearls around her neck and diamonds in her ears, combat boots, and mostly black clothing. She was a *hafu,* a dark-haired Faye Dunaway from a punk-rock remake of *Bonnie and Clyde. Bonnie and Clyde* was her favorite movie, and it often played at the Yokota base theater. She'd covered her bedroom walls with still photos from the film: Bonnie and Clyde in bed; Bonnie, framed in bars, pointing a revolver at a bank teller; Bonnie, Clyde, and C.W. living in their car.

Virginia tried on clothes and scrutinized herself in the mirror, full-length, attached to the closet door. A crowd of rejected skirts and T-shirts gathered at her bare feet. She clenched a pink silk skirt between her toes. She chose black knee-highs, a Catholic-schoolgirl skirt, and a black concert T-shirt. She approached one of the posters of Warren Beatty and kissed him on the lips. Standing in front of her dresser, she applied makeup, looking at herself in the round vanity mirror. She'd bought it at a thrift store off base. Two of the lights were burned out, so her face was half in shadow.

She opened the top drawer of her dresser and pulled out a blond wig and tried it on. She smiled at her blond self and removed a .38-caliber pistol from the drawer. She put the wig and pistol in her purse and went downstairs to tell her father she was hanging out with friends in Shinjuku after attending the eight P.M. movie at the base theater.

The base kids crowded the Base Square, an area near the center of Yokota Air Base meant to replicate the downtown in Anywhere, America. The kids called the area the mall, even though their parents called it the square. The kids were correct. American food and retail chains had bought the rights to sell their wares on the base, so indeed at Yokota Air Base, Tokyo, Japan, the children and mothers of American military men spent American dollars in a

strip that looked as though it had been transplanted from Montclair, New Jersey, or Dickinson, North Dakota, or Sacramento, California. You could buy hot dogs on a stick after purchasing sneakers at the Athletic Shoe Factory, which was located next to a Baskin-Robbins counter, across the way from a Pizza Hut. Some of the kids had lived overseas for so long they didn't know that what lay in front of them was a replica trading center that could be found in thousands of American towns. They lived the suburban American dream without knowing it. The difference was that this mall was always safe. There were no abductions, no girls lured into rape vans with promises of modeling careers or screen time, no burglaries in the parking lot.

Severin Boxx and the other members of the defensive squad for Yokota High School sat at a picnic table in the middle of the food court.

John Duncan said, "Coach thrashed us because he's pissed about that truck killing Yoshida's son."

Connor Johnson said, "I called Yoshida's house, but there was no answer. My mom is going to take me over there tomorrow. He was cool. He was teaching me Japanese."

Severin Boxx said, "Why didn't Coach say anything? I'm really sorry, Connor."

Connor said, "Me, too. But all we have to worry about is playing football. That's what we do, right? The general asks us to win, nothing else."

"Winning is garbage," Severin said. "We should dedicate tomorrow's game to Yoshida-san. Let's have our moms sew red patches on our uniforms. Everyone cool with that?"

All the boys agreed, and Connor took responsibility for calling the rest of the team.

"You better keep your eyes off of winning Virginia," Leon Frank said to Severin. "That's the only thing I'd worry about. The general seeing you take off his daughter's clothes with your eyeballs."

The boys all started making grunting noises and slapping Severin on the head and punching him on the shoulders.

"Back off," Severin said. "You guys look at her the same."

"We look at her the same, but we've got *sanity.* You don't have sanity on your side," Leon said. "I bet Boxx knocks up Coach's daughter before Christmas. Or he breaks in the house to steal her panties and gets caught."

High fives for everyone, and the other boys danced circles around Severin and continued to berate and cajole him. He couldn't respond, he couldn't tell them they were wrong, that they had no idea what he was made of, because they knew, and they were right, and he would have to do whatever it took to keep his sanity, to not break into Virginia Kindwall's house and steal her panties. To do whatever it took not to ask her to his house to listen to music or allow his mother to do the same. Maybe no one would care, and maybe Coach already knew of Severin's ardor for his daughter, probably Virginia, with a name like that, wasn't even a virgin—he'd watched her camped at the theater with the old sergeant Focheaux, watching *Bonnie and Clyde* three times in a week, that old bastard had gotten her virginity a year ago, Severin guessed, and the coach knew and his own mother knew and the world knew and he knew nothing about anything, least of all Virginia Kindwall and love. He considered himself a simple, brutish boy who excelled at monkey-jumpers and other kinds of nonsense—the linebacker blitz, the safety rush, wrapping his arms around the opponent when tackling, holding on until he ground the bastard's body into the turf, punching the ball out for the fumble on the way down, kicking the quarterback in the head when the referee had his back turned—simple, brutish acts that placed him on the same ladder rung as the ape. There he sat on the ladder, smiling stupidly, swinging his legs in unison with the ape, awaiting a synaptic tug toward the civilized world. He was deep in the cave of unknowing, and he knew it. Perhaps knowledge of his low-down location was progress. He longed to take his first step out. No, he longed to leap out.

Severin caught sight of Virginia across the square. The tips of her hair teased her chin, and she smiled—at everyone or at him, he couldn't tell.

Virginia walked toward the football players. They stood between her and the eight P.M. showing of *Bonnie and Clyde*. She knew Severin Boxx was madly in love with her and that he didn't have the courage to tell her. She also knew that all of his friends and even her father knew. And she liked Severin, she'd liked him since seventh grade. But he was a boy, like all of them, for God's sake, even her father was a boy. The boys stopped talking as she approached, and one of them, she could never remember his name, pushed Severin toward her and whispered obscenities in his ear. The kid had extreme acne; someday he would have scars and be ashamed of them, she thought.

"Hey, Severin," she said. "You left a book in my dad's van when we dropped you off. Why don't you come by tomorrow morning and pick it up? Ten too early for you?"

She didn't stop walking, and Severin failed to answer her. She had no idea if he would show up or not.

The reason *Bonnie and Clyde* played so often at the base theater was that the theater manager, Master Sergeant Leroy Focheaux, suffered a dangerous crush on the base general's daughter, and she knew how to expertly use it to her cinematic advantage. Not only did he play the movies Virginia wanted to see, when she wanted to see them, but he also paid her for watching the movies with him. Focheaux was afraid of Virginia's father. She knew she didn't necessarily want to touch her; that he simply liked to look at her and think impure thoughts—fantasies he'd take home to his marital bed, high-water marks of onanism that old Mrs. Focheaux, head cashier at the base commissary, could never reach.

Master Sergeant Focheaux welcomed Virginia into the theater with a flourish. He'd ordered *Bonnie and Clyde* again because she'd asked him to. Really, she didn't ask him for anything, she

told him to do things, and they both knew it, but she still used the words "please" and "thank you." For more than a year, Focheaux had been receiving complaints in the theater comments box about the constant repetition of movies, but he told Virginia that his job was secure and he threw away all of the complaints. She was the BG's daughter, and he'd been placed on this earth to please her.

Virginia settled into her seat next to Focheaux. She loved the opening credits: the genesis of the cult, the making of the imagery of the outlaw life.

The opening scene, close-up on Bonnie's lips. Pure sexuality, an animal clinging to the screen. American. Was that directed or natural? And calling Clyde "boy." Putting the man in his place. Clyde, smiling. And the ride begins. Later, the foreclosed farm: Here she always thought of her father. Midlothian, Texas, the dust-busted town her father grew up in. By the time his parents raised him, they lived in town, the farm gone, four generations of labor lost. In his closet, her father had pictures of the lost farm and his Texas youth. Mud-faced boy on a squalid porch, smiling. Can you ever know a man from a photo of his boyhood? She'd tried.

On-screen, the old farmer shooting out the windows of his farmhouse, now owned by the bank. What kind of world makes a man shoot out the windows of his former home?

As Severin walked away from his teammates and toward the theater the boys made sucking and grunting noises. Savages, he thought. He bought popcorn and licorice and a soda.

"The movie started thirty minutes ago," the counter lady said. "I guess you've seen it before."

He knew that if Coach caught him gorging junk food the night before a game he'd be condemned to monkeyjumpers' hell for the rest of the season, for the rest of his football life. When the counter lady turned her back to him, Severin jumped the rope that cordoned off the balcony. He sat in the center seat of the first row and trained his eyes on Virginia and Sergeant Focheaux.

Severin hated Focheaux because the old sergeant was sitting next to Virginia, in a dark theater, and what a waste, Severin alone in the balcony, the spy, the loner, the private investigator doomed never to touch the girl because of his own great incapacities. Language left his body whenever she was near. He knew the words: Virginia, I love you. But was that how you said it? Virginia, I have strong feelings for you? Virginia, can I be alone with you? Virginia? Virginia, may I speak? No, that certainly wasn't it, don't ask if you can speak, just speak. If you ask she might say no, she might say, I know what you're thinking, but it isn't a good idea. And then you'll die with the thought and desire dead in your brain, in your shorts. Virginia, I want to kiss. Yes, that seems right. Let's kiss, Virginia. Virginia, let's kiss.

His favorite scene in the movie: the Texas Ranger caught by the gang, Bonnie getting sweet with him, the gang posing for pictures with the defeated lawman. He spits in her face, and they put him out on the river in a rowboat. Down with authority. He liked the movie. But he couldn't relate to the romanticism of the outlaw. Robin Hood was still a thief, even if he gave to the poor.

Here the outlaw's horse was replaced by the V-8 engine. Life on the road, life in a car, escape and violence. Ride.

Clyde couldn't get it up at first. Severin remembered this. But later, in a field, they made love. That's how it should be, in a field, honey, you and me, sticking together.

After leaving the theater and exiting the base, Virginia boarded a train at Haijima station. At Shinjuku, she switched to the Ikebukuro Metro line. A middle-aged man seated across from her stared at her legs. She mouthed the word *baka,* idiot. Her knees were scarred from spending most of her youth playing rough boys' sports with the sons of her father's subordinates. She pulled the rosary out of her shirt and thumbed Jesus' face. She wished she knew some Catholic prayers. The rosary had belonged to her mother, an unlikely convert from Buddhism. She blamed her

father for this conversion, but she liked the way, in rhythm with the subway car, the rosary bounced against the taut T-shirt between her breasts, where Joey Ramone's silkscreened face was eating Jesus. She'd seen the Ramones the prior spring. A gray-haired Japanese punk rocker had bought her the shirt and then sung Ramones songs to her all night in the back of a shot bar called the Crane. She drank too much Kentucky bourbon and eventually vomited in the man's lap.

Tonight she was nervous because this was only the second evening of her life as a criminal. She tried to convince herself that no man could match her in speed, and no man could match her in wit, and no man could match her in cunning.

She thought the blond wig was a dumb idea, but the Boss had insisted that it would throw the police off the trail. Generally, a victim forgets all aspects of a crime other than the barrel of the gun you point in his face, or so the Boss had said. And why on earth would she point the barrel of a gun at someone? Because she wanted to feel alive. Her life on base was boring and dull, and her father expected only the best behavior from her. But how did he behave? Wasn't he a hypocrite? Didn't hypocrites deserve what they got? How many handguns existed in the entire country? And she carried one of them in her purse.

She stopped around the corner from the *konbini* store, affixed the wig, checked her makeup, and walked quickly into the store, not looking at passersby. She grabbed a basket and proceeded to the rear of the store. She picked one carton of tofu. At the freezer she selected a bag of frozen *gyoza*. In the dry-goods aisle, she grabbed two bags of rice crackers and a tin of green tea. She walked to the counter, set down her basket, and waited while the clerk figured her total.

She read his name badge: Haruki. It was like being named Mike in America.

Haruki said, looking up from his calculator, "Are you hungry tonight, miss?"

"I'm shopping for my *obaasan,*" Virginia said.

"Sweet of you," he said. "Where does she live?"

"Nearby." She waved her hand toward the door and the dense nothingness of the city beyond. Nearby meant anywhere. And why did he care? She could have told him: I don't know where my *obaasan* lives because I have never met her, because I am a *hafu* and the Japanese half of my family rejected me. But she did not.

He smiled as he moved the items into plastic bags. She moved her weight from foot to foot and frantically opened and closed the snap of her purse. The noise attracted the attention of the young boy on the stool next to Haruki; probably his son. As Haruki began to speak the total, she opened her purse and, instead of her wallet, removed her .38-caliber handgun and pointed it at Haruki's stomach. He gasped, and the little boy put his hands over his eyes, the see-no-evil monkey.

In slow, deliberate speech she said, "Haruki, I need you to give me all of the money in the cash register and to empty the safe underneath the counter. And I need you to do this now."

"I am unauthorized," Haruki said, but she cut him off by cocking the gun.

He complied.

The thought went through her mind that this was happening too easily. She wanted another customer to walk through the door. She wanted to tell someone to shut up and lie down face-first. Or, like an incredulous Clyde Barrow in a 1930s dust-bowl grocery, she wanted to fight a fat white guy who attacked her from behind with an ax. "That guy attacked me," she'd scream. In a very small corner of her brain, she wanted to pull the trigger while pointing the weapon at someone's head. She had no idea where this desire came from. Probably from her father. Men who volunteer for combat three times must pass on the killing gene to their children. Haruki placed all of the cash in a bag, along with the tofu and the other goods she'd gathered in her basket.

He said, "I hope your *obasaan* is ashamed of the trash she has brought into the world."

She reached across the counter and slapped the clerk. His son finally began to cry.

She felt bad about taking the groceries. She hadn't even asked for them, and now they'd be wasted. "Sit on the floor and count to one thousand," she said, and left the store.

At Exit A of Ikebukuro station, she handed the bag off to Yumiko, a fifteen-year-old girl pretending to be homeless. She'd met Yumiko at her recruitment lunch and had liked her. Yumiko was having sex with the Boss. Virginia wanted to tell Yumiko to wait a few years before having sex again. She wanted to say, Hey, I'm a virgin and I'm seventeen and I'm doing all right. Of course, she wasn't sure that she was doing all right; she'd been considering getting rid of her virginity and seeing what life looked like without it.

In exchange for the shopping bag with stolen groceries and yen, Virginia received an envelope with fifty American dollars in it. The Boss's agreement with his cadre of young female thieves was that for each robbery, they received fifty dollars, and at the end of the month, they also received 2 percent of the net take. Costs included rent of the apartment that the operations center ran out of, phone lines, recruiting expenses such as lunches and gifts, and the aspect of his operation that the Boss claimed set him apart from other hoodlums—the flowers and card he sent to his victims a week or so after the robbery:

> WE APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCONVENIENCE OF OUR CRIMINAL ACT

This night Virginia robbed two other *konbinis,* one near Ginza station and one near Tokyo station. In perfectly orderly fashion, the victims performed the tasks she'd asked of them, she exited the

establishments without incident, and she handed her shopping bags to Yumiko at Exit A of each station. Between her robberies and watching the film with Focheaux, Virginia had made $250 in five hours. She had no idea what to do with the money.

Her friends planned to party all night in Shibuya and Roppongi, hustling GIs and German tourists for drinks, maybe doing some drugs if they could find them for free or cheap enough. But she didn't want to be out all night. She boarded the last Chuyo-line train and returned to Yokota.

She'd told Severin to stop by the house at ten in the morning, and she intended to be there. Her intentions for him were not all good. She knew the Boss needed an American kid with muscle, and that was Severin. She had no idea what the Boss needed him for, but she felt certain she could convince Severin to participate—such was his simplicity and, well, his longing.

Virginia's father ate a late dinner with his girlfriend every Friday night at a small sushi restaurant in Yokota. He'd never introduced the two. As far as Kindwall was concerned, Virginia didn't have knowledge of his relationship with Miyoko. But Virginia knew: she knew Miyoko's name, where she lived, that she worked as an auto mechanic at the Suzuki shop next to her apartment complex, and that Miyoko was a *hibakusha*—a Hiroshima survivor—unable to get an office job because of the prejudice bomb victims suffered, especially in Tokyo.

Virginia regularly spied on the two lovers while they dined at Mikuni.

And there they were, at their usual seats, stage left of the sushi bar. Virginia watched from outside the restaurant, sitting on a barrel of sake, sign of good luck and plentitude. The owner prepared fish behind the refrigerated counter, his knife slicing through *saba* like a shooting star through a new-moon night. Her father wore civilian clothes, the casual attire of a banker on his weekend: a white oxford shirt tucked into khakis, brown deck shoes, brown

belt, a blue jacket with epaulets. Miyoko wore a dark blue pencil skirt, a red blouse, and a silk scarf with a blue-and-cream flower pattern. Virginia thought that her mother had been prettier than Miyoko, but Miyoko was still pretty and elegant—two qualities Virginia admired and found so rarely in the militarized world of her father. Virginia had more than once walked by the Suzuki shop to watch Miyoko work on cars: Bent over an engine, wearing blue overalls and rubber surgical gloves covered with grease, Miyoko retained her elegance and beauty.

Miyoko fed Kindwall a piece of tuna. Virginia had seen enough. Some nights she followed them through the city, to a pachinko parlor, to the Pretty Getter for drinks, home to Miyoko's apartment. But now she wandered the city alone, following no one. Again tonight she'd broken the law without being caught. She wondered if, in some perverse way, her father would be proud. Aren't fathers supposed to be proud of their daughters no matter what they do or fail to do? My daughter the criminal, my daughter my love.