**do not refuse me**

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# do not refuse me

by platonics

Summary

*“Well, Kako, I’m Shizuhara Hiruko. Your new master, if you choose to go ahead with this foolish plan of yours. If you choose to back out, what I am to you depends on whether you have the intelligence to keep quiet about any information you might glean from me. We can either become strangers once more, or I can be the harbinger of your doom. Entirely up to you.”*

A girl in the TRC’s red light district approaches Hiruko for help making money.

Written for Enfleurage: a Hundred Line WLW zine

Notes

crossposted 10/30/26; publication date is when it was originally posted to ao3

See the end of the work for more notes

The girl had been watching Hiruko for some time, while Hiruko watched her quarry. She was aware of it, as one always had to be in the Tokyo Residential Complex's red light district, but there was no reason to step in. Her little stalker, with her pink pigtails and the gaunt, dead-eyed look of a teen who'd grown up on the streets, was hardly a threat. Hiruko took her time. Leaned against a concrete wall, the night-damp cold leaching right through her leather jacket, she chatted with the bouncer of one of the clubs she frequented, one eye always on the girl across the alleyway.

After the conversation dragged on long enough, every pause for breath filled with Hiruko silently cataloguing leads on potential victims, she would have expected the girl to either leave or make her move. She looked too timid to belong to one of the neighborhood brothels, and Hiruko hadn't seen her trying to pickpocket or scam anyone. Possible that she was the bait for someone else's scam, but equally possible she was something else entirely.

Hiruko bid the bouncer goodnight and pushed away from the wall. Bodies parted from her path across the alleyway. She was going to find out.

Upon getting close enough, it was all too visible that the girl was trembling. She squared her shoulders, standing up straight, but she was still much shorter than Hiruko, and her quavering muscles were a dead giveaway of how unprepared she was for a confrontation. Hiruko had to fight a smile as she came up beside her, cornering her by a row of dumpsters.

"What do you want?" she asked, lifting her chin defiantly to glare straight into Hiruko's eyes.

"Oh, very impressive. I think I ought to be the one asking you that, however. You've been watching me all this time—surely you must be after something. So enlighten me." The slightest tip of her head in challenge, and she would have sworn that the girl would already break. Instead, she took half a step forward, making even more of an effort to glower at her.

"Okay, maybe I am after something. People talk around here. They say you make good money around here, and without ever doing anything you don't want to do. I want in."

"Do you?" Hiruko crossed her arms, settling into a more relaxed posture, and surveyed the girl again. She'd never taken on a partner or an apprentice before. The authorities didn't give a damn about what went on in the red light district, broadly speaking, but she still found that it was better not to tempt fate by letting anyone in on her secret pleasures. She didn't kill for notoriety or justice or even for cash, though that last one was certainly a perk. It was purely for the enjoyment of it all, a way of sating the bloodlust constantly reverberating through her body. "What's your name? Why do you think you have what it takes to get involved in what I do?"

"My name is Kako. Tsukumo Kako. And I can do whatever's necessary to survive. My brother and I have been living like that for plenty of time already. If the rumors are true, whatever you'd have me do can't be as bad."

"Well, Kako, I'm Shizuhara Hiruko. Your new master, if you choose to go ahead with this foolish plan of yours." She grinned, no effort made to conceal the tinge of sadistic glee that

crept up on her. Behind it, there was something else that tightened her chest, a sense that she ought to do all she could to discourage Kako from following in her footsteps. “If you choose to back out, what I am to you depends on whether you have the intelligence to keep quiet about any information you might glean from me. We can either become strangers once more, or I can be the harbinger of your doom. Entirely up to you.”

“I won’t betray you, Shizuhara-senpai!” Kako reached out. A delicate hand, nails painted in chipping pink polish, grasped one of Hiruko’s own. Those short, ragged nails bit into her flesh, a barely there sting. Hiruko squeezed more tightly in response, until she heard some joints crack. “I’m indebted to you. I’ll be the best assistant you could ever ask for, I promise you that. You won’t have any reason to take vengeance on me.”

“I do hope you’re right. Have you ever killed someone before?”

Kako’s breath caught in her throat, a fluttering little hiccup. Hiruko watched the lurching movement of her chest. “No. I haven’t.”

“Do you think you can? You said you were willing to do anything for survival.”

“Yes,” Kako said. “I’ll do it.” Hiruko realized only then that she’d never let go of her hand. She prolonged their touch a little longer, giving it a couple of firm shakes to cement their agreement. Then she let go, tucking her own hand back into her jacket pocket, and watched what Kako did. Not flex or shake out her hand, nor any other motion that would give away the soreness she surely felt from the force of Hiruko’s grip. She merely crossed her arms and gave her a questioning look.

“Very well. We’ll see if you have what it takes.”

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With a gun in her hands, Kako was not so impressively steady. Hiruko supported her, hands on Kako’s skinny arms, and showed her how to aim and fire. Her first shot went wide of the target and whizzed off into the distance, fated to plunge into some crumbling wall at the edge of the complex. Kako hissed out a curse, shoulders tensing, and caught her lip between her teeth.

“Don’t get flustered. Go again. Unless you don’t have what it takes. Shall I set you free right now, drop you off at whatever hovel you and your brother call home? Without blood on your hands, it’s not quite too late to turn back, so long as you know how to stay quiet.”

“*No*! I can do it. I’ll try again.” A tremor went through her whole body, a tiny earthquake against Hiruko’s front.

“Without my help this time.” She retracted her hands, not wanting to, and took two large steps back, so Kako couldn’t lean on her to help brace against the recoil.

The next shot hit the target, if barely, clipping the edge of it. That time, Kako did not need to be told to try again. She got more and more precise, until Hiruko sucked in a breath through her teeth and gave her a slow, precise round of applause. Bullseye.

“Not bad for your first day on the job. You might join me on a hit someday soon.”

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Someday arrived sooner than she’d planned. Logic dictated that she wait at least a few weeks, get a more solid read of Kako to be certain she wouldn’t break under the pressure. But it had been long enough without a fix that *Hiruko* was the one in danger of breaking. She was growing restless, irritable. Plying herself with greater amounts of caffeine and of alcohol, aiming only to deaden the craving for blood pumping under her hands, under her blade. With Kako trailing her on a daily basis, whenever that brother of hers was off working the streets, the decision was made for her.

Hiruko smothered her misgivings with a hand vise tight around Kako’s wrist and weapons strapped tighter to her body under her clothes.

“Remember all I told you. You cannot waver,” she instructed. They strode through rain-soaked streets, joined only by the wet swishing of passing cars and the oily reflection of neon lights on the pavement. “When you have someone’s life in your hands, a weapon pointed at them, the slightest hesitation could get you killed instead. I’d—” Hiruko faltered, looking away from Kako. The idea of looking at her soft eyes, the curve of her cheek or her lips, was suddenly unbearable. “I’d hate to have a promising underling go to waste, is all.”

She had not been looking anywhere in particular other than *away*, but with the words out, she was able to assess where her gaze had landed up ahead. A flower stall, incompletely secured for the night and with no owner in sight. A few wilting bouquets still laid across the counter, their dry stems tied with ribbons. Had the stall owner left them behind deliberately, deemed them beyond preserving for another day? Or had some emergency befallen them and kept them from their evening routine?

“I promise, Shizuhara-senpai. I’ll make you proud. But, ah, wait just a second!” Kako wiggled her wrist out of the cold circle of Hiruko’s hand. Surprise had loosened it—what was so important that she would ask her to wait in the middle of the street all of a sudden? And what was going on with her that she was allowing it?

Kako trotted across the narrow street, all long-legged and coltish. Straight for the flower stall. Hiruko watched, sheathed blade bumping against her thigh, as the younger girl plucked up one of those abandoned bouquets. Little more than a weak tangle of flowers, mismatched and drooping. Then she turned to come back to her, innocent, trusting. In the puddle of a street light, the flowers were revealed as gardenias and an orangey flower Hiruko believed was called California poppy. Meanings came to her unbidden. *I’m too happy. Do not refuse me*.

“They’re for you, Shizuhara-senpai.” Kako held the flowers out to her. The same movement offered her wrist to be captured again. “I saw you looking at the flowers, and I thought… Well, anyway, take them. A present.”

“Very well.” Kako’s eyes sparkled. Hiruko turned her own away again. “Let’s keep going. It’s getting late.”

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Not an hour later, blood rained down on the tatami floor of their victim's home, spreading its metallic tang through the home. Hiruko wiped down her blade on the window curtains for lack of another convenient cloth to use, and as she did, she glanced over at Kako. She was prepared for tears (present, but only barely, when she squinted to see better) or hysterics (absent). Instead, Kako stood off to the side, staring not at the dead man and the new orifices they'd given him, but at the gun in her hand.

"Ensure you turn the safety back on," Hiruko reminded her, just in case. Kako's expression was a bit glassier than she'd like, and it would be a significant bother to explain to her brother why she'd gotten herself killed. Or rather, she didn't want to see the boy's face when she explained it. Rather, it would impact her reputation in the district. Rather… Her wilting flowers were still safe, tucked into her belt and spared of any blood splatter. A girl who'd bother with a heartfelt little gift like that on the way to committing a murder didn't deserve to die herself, barely on the cusp of adulthood.

"Yes, Shizuhara-senpai. I took care of it."

"Let me see." Hiruko dropped the bloody curtain and sheathed her ax. She crossed the room to where Kako stood in a few long strides, wrapping her hands over Kako's smaller ones as she inspected the gun. Yes, the safety was on. Good. Her composure hadn't been shaken too badly by seeing her first corpse. "Alright. Put it away. We should get out of here."

It was then that she heard a rattle from the direction of the front door. Maybe nothing. Maybe something. Could that clatter have been the locked doorknob trying to open.

"We should get out of here *now*," she amended. "Out the back. Now. Go." She gave Kako a firm shove in the small of her back, and for all her effort in rushing her out, lingered a few more foolish moments herself, watching the front door and wondering if the entirety of her underground life was about to blow up in her face.

"Shizuhara-senpai," hissed Kako from the back door, only halfway over the threshold, and Hiruko cursed under her breath before following her. Foolish, foolish girl. (It didn't matter which one.)

"Get down," her hurried instruction, was taken to its logical extreme by Kako. She dropped to the ground instantly, wriggling her way underneath a row of flower bushes. Dew-damp hydrangea blossoms gleamed forebodingly in the dim light, reminding Hiruko that she was then standing exposed and alone in a freshly dead man's backyard. She descended from the deck and followed. Better to stay close, to stop her protege from doing something stupid. Hiruko, being taller and with not quite such a stick-like frame, found hiding among the hydrangeas substantially more difficult, but in an uncomfortable army crawl that sent moist dirt soaking into her elbows and knees, she found herself alongside Kako, wreathed in fragrant greenery.

"Does this happen to you often?" Kako whispered. She was close enough that her face brushed Hiruko's neck. Petals in blue and pink clung to her clothes, conjuring morbid, funerary thoughts. Corruption wrought upon her, Hiruko its architect.

“Not exactly like this. But I’ve been in my share of sticky situations. We’ll get out of this one too, and then I’ll teach you how to avoid it.” By getting out of her line of work would be the most obvious piece of advice. One and done solution. Go work at a maid cafe or something, because at least that usually wasn’t deadly? Who was she to give out that sort of hypocritical advice?

“I can help too. With the figuring out solutions. I’ve always been interested in solving mysteries, so… this is kind of like that, right?”

Although she had no trouble hearing, Hiruko pressed closer, one curled arm encouraging Kako to burrow into the cold ground, or into her, knowing full well which option she would choose. A soft, warm, breathing creature at her side, one that looked up at her with wet, trusting eyes and fired when she said to.

“Yes, it’s a little like that. When the coast is clear, I’ll get you home.”

End Notes

kind comments and kudos always appreciated <3

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