

Tooth for Tooth

Kenji Tocighi woke up from a heavy sleep like a faint, wanting to raise his hand to push the window curtain aside, but the semi-shadow overwhelmed him, melting his movements like a hungry woman bending over him, covering him with voluptuousness. The new secretary he had just hired, with her high school skirt and knee-high stockings, with her black eyes sharp enough to cut paper with their gaze, knew her job so well... she worked wonders at the spa, with a single touch she overturned all his senses that he could not invest. his financial empire. All of Osaka will be dotted with spas and massage parlors, luxury hotels and casinos. A scorpion silently descended, flashing from its fluid image on his right nostril and Kenji, observing it from the corner of his eye, moved his nose instinctively, letting the scorpion descend on his cheek, then closing his eyes as if to think of falling from his eyes again, to think of the sleep of taking care to think of my fall. from these turbulent and wet dreams still haunting his mind. But the scorpion, reaching the level of his chin, raised its tail, buzzing menacingly, lingering for a moment, climbing onto a pebble, reaching with its spine right next to his eyelid, ready to attack. Kenji started to raise his hand and chase away this illusion, wanting to turn to his side, he still felt frozen in pleasure. Suddenly a memory clenched his teeth - yesterday's meeting between the clans gathered immediately after the death of Takumi Edo. In the marble hall with a rack of swords on a river stone-colored wall and a single watsabi table made of a massive wooden slab stuck in a rock tooth, all the yakuza had gathered, clucking like scared poultry because why had he killed Takumi and raised him to the level of the rock. So that the whole neighborhood could see him with a sword in his belly. That's why... Why, why, he was tired of this rascal who beat up his guards at the Odaba Hotel where he ate without paying, slept with them, used their girls and behaved as if he were the master. -The Edo clan has deep roots in Osaka, said Tirasa Konda, the oldest of the yakuza, after carefully making sure that everyone was in the room and there was no one older than him, with a heavy and harsh voice wiping the faces of those at the table with grave approval. Even today, the Edo clan supplies the government with the most trained and cruel assassins. And the Edo family has always owned the Odaba Hotel. "One of them helped me a lot," Tirasa wanted to say, stopping his words on his lips, wiping them with a handkerchief or a streak of saliva.

-That was a long time ago, until old Shintai lost him at cards, Kenji said confidently with a bright smile thrown from the corner of his mouth as if he had left a gold coin as a tip.

Tirasa turned his sharp eagle profile suddenly towards Kenji as if he had drawn a sword, but he calmed down, thinking, lowering his head - "at rigged cards."

-Tirasa is right, though, someone dared, the elite IJA troops are trained by members of the Edo family. Shadow counterintelligence officers are chosen according to an Edo protocol.

-Legends to lull children to sleep, Kenji grimaced, lighting a cigar, admiring his elegant suit in the ceiling mirror.

The Edo clan is gone.

-Not really, there's still Emshi Dewa.

-Well, that's good, Emshi is a teenager...anyway, I have the impression that he's in prison, "I'll take care of him too", thought Kenji, suddenly banging his fist on the table. Now let's have some fun... Edo is history. The Edo family has no money left, they have no soldiers, I have a thousand and I can raise a brigade. A new era is opening, Kenji said, taking a drag from a cigar that shone like a jewel, leaving a curtain of smoke relaxed on his back as if surrounding him both above and below, as if Kenji's mind had let itself be lost in the pleasure of the cigar aroma with a label.

- The Edo clan never needed soldiers, they solve their own problems, Tirasu growled, taking off his sunglasses, revealing his white eyes that blinked like fish scales. The Edo family has treasured their martial arts for centuries.

-Enough, Kenji shouted, pounding the table with his fist. I'm responsible now. He wanted to say "I'm oyabun now... but without knowing why, his mind slipped to one side and he chose the word "responsible." A bodyguard had gotten up and closed the window because from outside came the annoying cadence of a jackhammer digging with a chisel into the asphalt of the road, making a noise like it was drilling your brains, pushing aside the layers of bitumen, scratching the road into the rock, effectively covering the tooth of a mountain. When he had gone to the spa, the limousine passed right by the work site surrounded by plastic barriers and banners with work zone signs, noticing that a worker with an earring in his ear was just lifting a bottle of sake to his mouth and he even wondered how that worker could drink alcohol in the scorching heat. When the limousine turned the corner, he thought he saw that worker smiling cheekily at him, almost greeting him as if he knew him. He even thought he should call the prefecture... what kind of work is being done in the middle of the road when the houses in the area have neither gas pipes in the middle of the road nor water pipes? Another flash of the subconscious numbed by pleasures showed him the covered face of a ninja who appeared in the ceiling, carefully lowering a thread, releasing a single precious drop from a bamboo container, rhythmically and silently sliding directly towards Kenji's lips. Stressed, he tried to raise his hand to chase away this image that could have been real or rather it was a natural effect of the unconscious. More than likely he had seen a documentary about ninjas with exactly this scene when he was a child, but now remembering that sequence, fear replaced the eyes and gaze of Emshi Dewa Edo, whom he had learned had escaped from prison, in the image of that warrior's face. That's why his house and garden were full of people. Komo Aray Aisoon, his trusted man, the Thai, was right now in the kitchen, he could clearly hear him asking about the coffee of the boss who had to wake up. He smiled knowing that his trusted man was attentive to all the details. Suddenly he felt a sharp sting from an insect, turning his head to the side and trying to hit his cheek, which began to tremble as if by itself. Opening his eyes, the vibrations deepened, making his chin tremble even more, rhythmically hitting the asphalt with his bone. The vibrations went down his spine to his rectum, and his gaze had just begun to feel around him in confusion when the light of two headlights hit him from very close, violently like a sword, throwing a wave of dust directly into his left eye, from which a strand of blood, blue as a salamander, began to flow, gurgling.

-What the hell, what the hell... Kenji stammered, trying to reach his hand to his face, still in shock... In the whitish light of the salty dawn sliding from the ocean like layers of fog laminated under the pressure of the forces, the street in front of the sumptuous villa almost lost its balance. Shaking his head, Kenji made the scorpion slide out of its nest in his hair, and now from its raised tail it buzzed twice in warning. Noticing the green knots on its tail and the bristles around the thorn, Kenji, his chin trembling, began to scream, adjusting his gaze fixedly fixed at a single angle, and only then did he realize – he was cemented up to his chin in the middle of the street right in front of the house. From the level of the advertisements above the street, his head looked like a ball forgotten by kids on the street, slightly deflated, as if touched by a car wheel, but good for another minute. The shock made him tremble and his eyes filled with secretion, from the right eye hit by the force of the wheel that had almost touched his right cheek, blood and part of the cornea were making their way through the damp layer of dust.

Without taking into account the scorpion's threatening movements, he began to call out to his trusted men from beyond the fence, fidgeting anxiously because they did not know where the cries of the boss who was not in the room were coming from. Komo, pushing aside his hair from his ear, signaled the people to be quiet, realizing that the sharp screams of the boss were coming from right in front of the house. Quickly leaving with the gun in his hand surrounded by armed guards, he looked left and right without understanding anything and only when he looked away did he see the boss's head in the middle of the street, right where the work point had been before, but the boss's skull was sticking out in the middle of the street in a perfect job, so that no trace of excavation could be seen, the asphalt layer sliding silently under Kenji's chin with his face torn by shock.

- Komo, the boss shouted! Komo...But the shouts confused Komo more because he didn't know what to do, how to get his boss out of there. "I need a scythe, he thought quickly, but this is serious work...at least a few workers are needed. I have to close the street."

-Do something, the boss shouted so shrilly with his voice struck by delirium...

- I'll call... some workers, Komo said hesitantly, looking at the end of the street where a car was waiting with the engine running.

-Call workers now, but quickly call 110, call the police. Call...

- The police? Komo asked in surprise, looking at his confused men in expensive suits of fine fabrics with automatic pistols in their hands.

-Yes, yes, call the police, Kenji screamed and the scream shot through his spine to his rectum, the echo of this pain returning like a wave hitting the walls of his forehead. Call now.

-Bring me the phone, said Komo, confused and strangled by stress.

-Ring once... Kenji screamed.

But Komo, grabbing a phone, looked warily at the car with the engine running, hearing a distinct laugh.

-What a shitty oyabun, was heard from the end of the street and from the semi-darkness of the end of the night two teenagers emerged, one of them with a six-barreled aircraft machine gun on his shoulder. I told you not to step on him yet.

-But I haven't even touched him, said Shintano Tori, taking a gulp from a bottle of sake.

-You should be more careful with your drink. For a helicopter pilot, you drink a lot.

Emshi got out of the car holding the machine gun on his shoulder like a shovel, and Kenji's guards, seeing him approaching, raised their automatic pistols, looking hesitantly at the Thai, but before firing, Emshi quickly lowered the barrel of the machine gun towards the pavement and unleashed a serious burst of machine gun barrels, silently spinning around the motorbike. The metal tubes of the cartridges continued to fall rhythmically onto the pavement, leaving sharp sounds for good seconds after impact.

The burst bit the asphalt so violently as if it had surrounded Kenji's men with a wave of small explosions, sweeping them into the yard of the house, each of them urgently hiding wherever they could, some behind the walls, others behind the door, behind the balcony or behind the trees in the garden. Their moist breath of fear could be heard behind the hedge in front of the villa.

-You all saw your boss, Emshi laughed, approaching without any fear, now being one step away from Kenji's head.

A stream of urine slid down Kenji's face, revealing the wound on his right eye.

-Emshi, Kenji said pleadingly with his mouth full of secretions that had leaked from his face, feeling his tongue covered in dust. It's a misunderstanding, I didn't kill your brother. I was

really against it. I...I have money, a lot of money, in the house...get me out of here and I'll give you everything I have...I'll give you all my wealth... but the last words were heard like moans underwater because Shintado, turning the sake bottle over his head, relieved himself by directing his full stream right at Kenji's mouth.

-Hey, you guys in the house, Emshi suddenly shouted towards the villa, drop your weapons and go home. I'll give you three seconds... one, two, three and when he said three, the guards dropped their weapons, one of the guards right in front of the Thai who was staring at him looking at his gun. When "three" was heard and the Thai threw the weapon aside and stood up.

-We'd better go home, said a bodyguard with a tattooed neck, but with the look of a retarded teenager.

The Thai lowered his eyes in approval, his forehead wet with sweat.

Kenji's soldiers left the villa one by one, lining up along the alley, and Emshi signaled them out of the corner of his mouth to disappear, spitting thinly.

-Look at your people leaving, Emshi laughed in a cheeky tone, watching the line of bodyguards that almost never ended, slipping bent over through the entrance of the villa. Looking along the street, it seemed to him that from the salty dawn with the first ray of sunlight, the face of his brother Takumi emerged, advising him carefully, as when he was a child, when he waited for him at school.

When keishi kan Sori Takaichi arrived at the scene, his instinct sounded in his blood like a battle drum, shaking the heated street, and suddenly the officer stepped very carefully towards the group of officials. You immediately sensed that something was wrong because the street was already divided by police banners and in front of the villa the press from all the Osaka newspapers had already gathered, who hadn't even had time to take a few photos, not understanding where the body was, only the officers demanded even more space in such a way that at one point the journalists had been pushed into an alley from where they couldn't see much anymore. A little further back, an excavator and a bulldozer had been brought in. The bored workers retreated beyond the park's hedge, lighting their cigarettes calmly because they were paid by the hour. Only one worker remained in the excavator, looking up as if he wanted to go unnoticed. But Keishi Kan noticed him and recognized him. It was the very head of Roads and Bridges. What would the head of Roads and Bridges be looking for in an excavator? The heat would have burned an omelet at ground level. A shoe slipped on Sori's side, the bitumen had almost caught him in its own substance. Just as he was wondering this, he recognized the prefect among those present who were around an overturned bucket. He held out his hand to him smiling and Sori bowed reverently. If the prefect was there before him, it meant something serious. Just when he was about to ask where the body was, a sergeant, understanding him, lifted the bucket, revealing the boiled head at ground level. Sori, who had seen a lot in his life, swallowed his surge of disgust and bent down, barely holding back his feelings but with more than perfect control of his emotions, he focused his attention on the head that was sticking out of the asphalt with its face bruised and swollen from the heat, with dried secretions on its face, the flesh starting to peel off from its jaws, the color of an ancient mummy stretching its skin over the bone of its jaw. A greenish fly sprang up, buzzing towards the eye of the policeman who deftly dodged to the side as if he had avoided a punch like in boxing. He glanced briefly at the forensic doctor he had known since childhood

because they had been classmates in elementary school and then high school, Tony Yamato, who, reading his thoughts, shrugged:

-The heat of the asphalt made his brain go to soup. Probably 5 o'clock in the morning. A cyclist called who almost tripped over him.

-It's just not him...but seeing the villa, he clapped his hands in surprise, it's him.

-Did you recognize him? asked the prefect.

-Kenji, the clan of card games good luck. A worm.

-A piece of shit, a detective said involuntarily, spitting to the side.

"I heard about him too,... I understand that..." said the prefect, stopping because a sergeant was just leaning into the police commander's ear, "whispering that one of Kenji's men had called the police on the emergency number... hearing the name Emshi Dewa Edo, the police chief froze. The Edo family had financed his dormitory when he entered the military high school in Osaka, his father being a simple bricklayer who could barely put anything on the table.

The commander wanted to ask the sergeant to bring barriers for the works, but suddenly the prefect grabbed his hand and took the initiative, whispering in his ear.

Sori slightly raised his face towards the sun, waiting two seconds to fully understand, then he turned his gaze to the excavator, now fully understanding why the head of Roads and Bridges was there and not some ordinary worker.

-But the Press... Sori whispered to the prefect, looking at the construction emblem of on the excavator, recognizing the prefect's mother's signature.

-I'm pissing on the Press, he said through gritted teeth. I didn't have insurance for a mountain road. Who would have thought of that? I can't spend taxpayers' money on shit.

"But the Law?" Sori tried to ask out loud, still holding back his words, the echo of the prefect's gnashing of teeth remaining in his ears, understanding it perfectly now. Without insurance, the work would have been paid for from the prefect's money, which would have immediately automatically triggered an inspection of the roads and bridges company.

-Do you or don't you need a body?

Sori said nothing, but nodded in agreement, then the prefect gestured towards the excavator and the head of Roads and Bridges started the engine, advancing with the blade. The policemen moved slightly to one side to make room for the blade that perfectly scraped the asphalt surface. After the blade was withdrawn, the place seemed smeared with an oil stain. A worker threw a shovel of bitumen, stamping it with his boot, when he lifted his foot the place was as clean as a tear as if nothing had happened.

The Odaba Hotel had finally finished preparing to welcome the master. The manager, his face red with grease, looked at his staff perfectly aligned in the parking lot slightly behind the Yakuza lineup, sitting right next to the elevator. Swallowing hard, he quickly understood that not a single one was missing. They were all there ready to give Meiyo to the master. Suddenly the limousine sprang from the violent street traffic like a leopard jumping from a height. Emshi Dewa Edo got out, slightly distracted, next to his friend Shintado, who knocked over a sip from the sake bottle, laughing, most likely discussing something funny. There was a sharp sound of pieces of wood hitting each other and the entire line suddenly bowed like a parade, each one remaining bent as Emshi passed. Looking at them impudently, Emshi suddenly stopped and

said to the one on his left with a clear voice that rose above the parking lot, returning with the power of the echo clear and perfect like a sword strike:

-Tirasa Kendo Sanada... my grandfather told me about you when you were shoe shiners after the war at the American base in Osaka. You were not even ten years old when you left home. Later, when you started working on a construction site and the welding station exploded in front of you, my grandfather Takuri Emshi Edo paid for your treatment at the hospital. Although your eyes are like fish scales, you can still see very well today. Is that true or do you no longer remember?

-I still remember, Tirasa said, but with a voice touched by emotion, surprised as if he had received a whip in the back of the head, without looking up, being bowed, frozen because no one knew the name of Sanada's father, not having heard him for a very long time, and this name once spoken exposed his entire existence. I have not forgotten a moment. I remember very well as if it were yesterday - Ore no...ore no Oyabun! Tirasa's harsh voice passed like a vibration through the line of the alignment deepening the silence falling on things massive like a marble slab, good seconds after Emshi and his friend entered the elevator. Only when Tirasa raised his back in greeting, the others suddenly stood up and they too, breathing freely. In the shadow of the Odoba Hotel parking lot, Tirasa's eye suddenly opened and threw the flash of a knife blade over the rows of limousines.