

Blowing Smoke

by Sumi Watters

“The girl is lying,” Amari said for the seventh time. He stubbed out his Dunhill and reached into his breast pocket for another. “I was nowhere near her.”

Officer Kato scribbled something into his notepad, then leaned into his swivel chair and shot me a glance that suggested something other than concern. “I understand how you might’ve been tempted, Amari-san,” he said, directing his attention to my attacker. “Miss Duncan is an *alluring* young lady.”

Excellent choice of words there, buddy.

In a single breath, Kato had offered this repulsive, poor excuse for a man—a *pervert*—his empathy *and* justification for his deviant behaviour. As if I’d wittingly *lured* him into violating my personal space. As if I’d *asked for it*.

I shouldn’t be surprised, really. I’m probably not the first woman to have her integrity undermined by the Japanese police. Even the rookie officer who took my initial statement made inappropriate comments he wouldn’t have dared make to a male assault victim. ‘Your dress is very becoming, Miss Duncan. Were you on a hot date?’

The desk sergeant took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. “Miss Duncan... It’s nearly two a.m. We’ve been here for three hours getting nowhere. Are you *absolutely certain* Mr. Amari assaulted you and that his actions were... *unsolicited*?”

Again, as if I get my kicks from being fondled by middle-aged men stinking of stale smoke and sake.

“Yes, sir,” I answered.

“You realise that Mr. Amari is a prominent business owner and a family man. An implication of this nature could destroy both his business and marriage.”

Amari took a long inhale and blew smoke rings my way, smugness oozing from him like pus from an infected wound.

“With all due respect, sir, that’s hardly my problem.”

A female officer poked her head through the open door. “Kato-san, may I have a word?” she said, waving her boss over. Her eyes met mine, and in that fleeting moment, I knew they had him.

Kato returned several minutes later and patted his comrade on the shoulder. “I’m afraid, Amari-san, that CCTV footage from the train station shows you harassing Miss Duncan, just as she’d reported.” He then sat down and turned to me. “You’ll be wanting to press charges, I presume?” he snarked.

I’d love nothing more than to see Amari ferment in a two-by-two cell. But I’m no fool. It could take years to secure a court date, and even then, there was no guarantee of incarceration. Not with the likes of Kato and a patriarchal justice system on Amari’s side.

I glanced up at the wall clock. 1:54 a.m. “Does your desk phone have a speaker?” I asked.

Kato appeared perplexed, but nodded.

“I won’t be pressing charges, sir. Instead, my demands are that Amari phone his wife and confess to groping a 27-year-old American woman in public. And make sure you put her on speakerphone. I want to hear her every word.”