

Inertia

Inertia isn't the absence of action or the resistance of movement. She's a girl standing outside a Häagen-Dazs in downtown Tokyo, one, maybe two subway stops from Ikebukuro, just a short hop along the Marunouchi line. There is a row of trees behind her, their trunks painted white, and their branches stripped of leaves. It is probably winter. At least, that's what it seems like to me.

There are three surprising things to note about Inertia. The first is that she is completely naked except for six thin black silk ribbons. Two wrap tightly around her wrists, another two loop around her ankles turning her feet an alabaster white. One ribbon runs just under her small breasts and is tied in a bow at the base of her rib cage. The longest piece is tied elaborately like a deconstructed black thong, forking out at the crescent of her ass at the rear and dividing her smooth lips evenly at the front.

The second surprising thing is her Häagen-Dazs name badge. It is pierced through the flesh of her upper left breast. The entry and exit holes leave a small, dried trail of blood running down towards her nipple.

The third surprising thing is that Inertia has spent the last twelve hours in a gallery watching three short films about your life.

I Can See My Burns Dream Before My Eyes

The first film is the most painful. It is the one where I can see my burns dream before my eyes. Black ribbons have been set alight, like wicks on a candle. They ignite upwards and scorch the outer layers of my skin before I shake them off. The flash of red hotness is replaced by a slow smouldering heat. The subtle movements of skin as I twist and bend my wrist send ripples of my brain into sub-space.

Since he left me alone, holding one end of a phone linked to the sounds of something that I cannot stop hearing; this is the way I choose to forget. Each evening is a different set-up, but the same outcome. Arousal, guilt, dull pain and fitful empty sleep. Ribbons as rope, the scars left from the previous sessions slowly healing under the black silk. Sitting naked in my dark flat, stripped of all of his things, I hurt myself. It started by pinching myself until I felt the pain run through my breastbone into my back. And then it slowly morphs into darker places, where the taste of my blood mixed with the salty, bitter-sweetness of umeboshi becomes the sensory soundtrack to the space between work and waking.

Metres and metres of black ribbon bind my chest and stomach, wrapping in loops showing only the slightest glimpse of my skin between. I tie my legs together, wrapping my hips, knotting at my pubic bone and then back down through my thighs. The ribbons are tied so tight that I can feel the blood pulse over and through the material. My hands and feet seep warmth and colour.

I strike a match. Small flares of sparking phosphorous arc away from the match head. Every pore of my scarred body tingles, as if my skin was made of soda, shaken and bursting to get out of the bottle. I ignite the tail of the ribbon and watch the nearly translucent heart of the flame run up the fabric and towards my skin. It is at that moment, when the heat bites into the epidermis that my dreams of a life lived as it has been start to burn. I shudder so deeply that I collapse into myself, the small red welts already forming on my body and the small barriers holding me back from oblivion shatter and splinter into tiny shards.

The amber light of the city seeps into my room, covering the sheets and hard slats of the timber floor with a yellowish egg wash. The other side of the bed is heaped with clean clothes and unwashed panties. It is a curious thing. And by curious, I mean strange. The skin on my wrists and ankles burn with a deep ache that overwhelms me slightly. There is no obvious sign of trauma, at least not to the naked eye. I swear I can smell the short tail of the smoke from a struck match. I walk from bedroom to the kitchen, the camera staying at the doorframe and following my ass, down my legs and to my bare feet. The second camera picks me up as I open the fridge and take out a small blue china bowl, with the Japanese characters for Umami, painted onto the side - a precious balance of flavours linking salt to sweet through to savoury. In the bowl is umeboshi, each plum crinkled and dark maroon in colour. The brine at the bottom of the bowl is a black blood red. Both are equally umami. And then the feeling

of curiosity return. What to do next? The first camera positions itself over my shoulder, watching me carefully pick up an umeboshi and pop it into my mouth. The credits roll. What a strange way to end a film, I think to no-one but myself. I wonder what Inertia must think?

I Wish My Mood Would Mask More Than Tape

The second film was about me and you.

ME

I wish this man would get over his insecurities and fuck me. I wish this man would end my charade of loneliness. I wish that my mood would mask more than tape.

I want to be fucked. I want to be fucked.

Instead, I will try to fall into a dark sleep and dream of loud and ecstatic sex. I want to be fucked. A dirty, grinding, oblivion inducing fuck. Oh, fuck. Oh, FUCK.

YOU

I don't love her. I kind of like her in a 'she's not bad to hang around with' kind of way. I don't want to lead her into something I cannot finish. I am a doll that she wants to play with day in and day out. Why does she hide everything except her sex? It's not that I want to settle down, have children and gaze longingly at a mortgage. I just want to have fun. What is her deal?

ME

My legs are burning, sending spider web streaks up my thighs. My skin is crackling hot, each hair alight, fanning out dark red flames. My brain fizzles with the need for dirty, hot pain; shards of metal through my nipples and sparkling electricity across my clitoris, running not blood red, but shiny, dark black. Is this what I am looking for tonight? I doubt it. Oh dear.

YOU

I am as adventurous as the next person. I like it, I really do. But she scares me in a way that makes me want to run, far away. Her need for pain is a fetish, unique and terrifying, and it's one that I cannot share. She wants to be scarred for life and screaming for it as well. I met a girl in the bar. She seemed nice, if a little unhinged. We clicked. We shared sushi and perhaps a few too many beers. And then it was lights off, socks on, sleep for life after. That's the way I roll.

ME

I am clearly hunting the wrong guys. I am getting lost in my own words and buried in a fantasy dark enough to make the pain go away. I need to hurt myself in order to feel better. The short sharp shocks of needles running through the red flesh of my nipple, over and over, are like the pinpricks of light that seep into a camera obscura, revealing a brighter, happier panorama caught in still life.

Oh God. I want to be fucked.

YOU

It was the crazy talk of redemption and revenge. It was dark and fractured. She wanted a relationship after like three pieces of tuna and a night of fucking. In the end it was just a dream. A fleeting snapshot of someone, or something cracking up. I was not the doll anymore. She was a bodiless remnant that ended up under the bed. Broken, forgotten and lonely. Too much, too little, too late.

ME

Hello? Hello!

Umeboshi

The third and final film is a repeat. I am sure Inertia has seen it before. But she sits on the floor of the gallery, feet hunched up under thighs and settles in. She takes out a small plastic container of dried Japanese sour plums. The sourness acts like an aphrodisiac on her frayed nervous system. She closes her eyes and lets her head roll back. The skin on her lower thigh shows a slight glistening of

sweat and an even more imperceptible tremble. The artery in her neck begins to subtly throb, stopped only when she brings her hands up to the stretched skin. She slides her hands up to her cheeks. They stop there, briefly, as if to contain the flood. After a minute or so, they fall back to her thighs and slowly glide up her under her tartan skirt.

It would be rude of us to observe any more her of ecstasy. She is not the reason we are here.

Watashi wa kanojo o miru tame no hentaida? Wareware wa hentai de wa nai. Am I a sexual pervert for watching her? No, I am not a sexual pervert.

Umeboshi wa, oishi? Is Umeboshi that good? *Hai!*

Anata wa eiga no bangō o mite junbi ga dekite iru Inertia? Are you ready to watch film number three, Inertia?

...lies

The third film was about me and *le menteur*. I know that this is the conversation of the drunk. The lust of the cock and the tingle of the cunt are never far away from the bar. Bloodshot eyes meet. Grubby hands wipe through my hair as a smallish but acceptable bulge pushes open the buttons of a pair of safe and conservative 501s. My lust takes over. Could I find any other ways of hurting myself? The ribbons weren't doing any damage, nor were they holding things together. They didn't deaden the pain, they exposed it.

I found the smell of him overpowering. It was the stink of cheap leather and wet wool. He was drinking a pint of dark coloured beer, the foamy white head spilling over the edge of the glass and onto the wooden table. He talked about nothing in particular. His job maybe. Perhaps about how attractive I was. I find it difficult to remember any details. I didn't care. I was just focused on getting fucked. I suspect he asked the standard questions. I assume I gave the standard answers, each time offering him another flashed exposure of my baby browns.

We shared nothing and exchanged even less. I downed three glasses quickly. He bought another one for me readily. He might have sold carpet tiles or was it engine parts? Maybe he couldn't believe his luck, or maybe mine was just running out. I should have listened to the warning signs and ran out into the night.

Of course, *le menteur* was already there. We had agreed to meet at 9pm, one last time. I was not sure if it was to work things out or to work them over. It didn't matter. *Le menteur* called me. I said yes far too quickly, suggesting this bar because it was near my hotel. The place itself was quiet, even for a Monday night. Small groups of conservatively dressed bankers drank lite beer sullenly, as if to tick the last box on the day's activities. A younger couple sat near the door, each flipping through a Lonely Planet guide crammed full of yellow post-it notes. Neither of them spoke a word to each other, like strangers forced to share a table. *Le menteur* was sitting at the back, under the jukebox, which was silent and dark. True to form, the bastard had been watching me the whole time

The man into engine tiles saw the game was up when *le menteur* walked over, kissed me on the cheek and sat down. 'Mr engine tiles' walked over to the jukebox and dropped some coins into it, hoping to hear a soundtrack for his missed opportunity. Each quarter rattled straight through to the return slot. Dark and silent it remained. Like I should have been.

I won't bore you with the conversation between *le menteur* and I. I will tell you that there was no 'sorry'. There was little regret. He asked about the ribbons, to which I responded that they went well with my dress. Lie number 1.

He politely enquired as to how I had been. Inside I was screaming, outside I was calm and boring. Lie number 2.

It moved quickly after that. We stumbled into the ladies toilet. My back was pressed into the towel dispenser as his hairy, cold cock sliced me open and slid into every crevice. I shoved him into a vacant toilet stall and kept it closed with my shoulder blades. My dress was riding up over my chest and my panties were holding my thighs together lest they slide apart and split me in two. It didn't last long. He grunted wildly and snorted air through his nose like a pig. Yes, I fucked him in the dirty

bathroom, to the sound of the toilet flushing automatically every twenty seconds, as the girls who came into piss ignored us into the interesting mid-distance. There was no sorry and little regret. Lie number 3.

The lock of the stall was forming a small temporary scar on my lower back. He had walked out calmly, for the last time. I slashed at the ribbons deep and hard with my nails, trying to tear not just material but the skin beneath. I smashed my temple against the cold marble of the wall. The smell of iron and piss made me retch. A pattern of thick warmth ran down my arms, onto my dress and cascaded down my legs. It seeped between my toes, the blood red polish camouflaging the rest of my feet.

My mouth was wet, my throat open to any words I wanted to say. The ribbons fluttered off my wrists and fell onto the floor. A few more tired drinkers came into the restroom, washing their hands whilst they stared through the mirror. I looked past them. Checked my face, straightened my hair, adjusted the belt of my dress, to let it flow back to my knees, put on a new coat of lipstick and walked out.

The final reel of film focuses on me. Did I mean for it to happen? My legs and feet are totally dry and the scars on my wrist have vanished. There is a litany of things I cannot damage about myself. Trust me, I have tried. A need to slide into pain and bleed from fresh, dark scars overwhelms me on even the most normal of day. The end of it? Three pieces of celluloid flapping through the projector and round onto the reel. The film is over. The noise makes a rhythmic pattern. Beating ends of film stock. A crop against my thighs slashing at them over and over until I cum. Did the film make sense? I doubt it. The lack of narrative or structure would have seen to that. Perhaps the best thing we can do is to let the credits roll and repeat to fade. Repeat to fade and then end. Bring the house lights up.

Repeat to fade and then end.
Repeat to fade and then end.
Repeat to fade and then end.
Repeat to fade and then end.
Repeat to fade and then end.

End

Inertia packs up her things. The now empty container of umeboshi, her black notebook and a half-full bottle of Pocari Sweat, are slowly placed in her black Converse backpack. She takes off her clothes in a methodical way and folds them, before placing them into her bag. Her nude form reveals the intricate pattern of ribbons crisscrossing her body that we saw much earlier. She unclips the pin from the small Häagen-Dazs name tag (her real name is Kuro if you must know) and pierces the outer layer of her breast with the sharp point. She pushes it all the way through the other side and clips the pin into the metal holder. A small trail of dark black blood runs down her white breast and stops short of her brown roundish areola. Inertia slings the backpack over her shoulder and leaves the gallery. Suddenly, all that talk of ribbons, dirty scars and burnt flesh appear like the fiction it should have been. Inertia has a date with a photographer soon; outside, in front of some trees he has painted white, just for the shoot. She hurries outside and takes her place at the far end of the tunnel. You are a distant memory and besides, the photographer is waiting patiently with her camera for Inertia to face the light and pose. A subway train rumbles beneath her feet. It is more than likely the Yūrakuchō line train, or perhaps the Marunouchi Line again. It does not matter. Inertia is going nowhere.

How Do I Know Any Of This Is Real?

There is a certain randomness to what I am about to tell you. I cannot promise narrative. There is, without doubt, a keening sense of disconnection. And clearly something is lost. However, there is a truth to what you will hear. A quality that is sadly lacking from much of what I have said and done. The truth and the fake of this story are my only real possessions or are at least what I will be able to carry with me to my next target.

This story goes in threes. Three of me, one of you spun around three times. Six words I gave you; Sensual, satisfying, breath-taking, enlightening, special and unique, all in a single beat. Not one of them was true. The deep burn waiting for new sensations to slake over the old is a hard one to endure. Yet, somehow in all of this, you managed it. I am jealous. But here, in the dark projector room

of my room, the only noises that break the silence are the small, tiny clicks of my mouse and the loud, screaming words in my head. Why did you think ANY of this was real?

I can see into both of our futures. Well, perhaps that is not exactly true. I can see because I control the future. I know how it will all end and I know when. I will make sure that you will never see me again. Little deaths, arriving by text, line after asynchronous line. I have seen the film, the sequel and the remake more times than you can imagine, even if this one did seem to get a little out of control, like a director mad with power.

The shattered edges of the future are slowly coalescing. I have set the scene, planned it out, storyboard by storyboard. The future is a sensual one, filled with hate and loss. The past is held back from falling by only small strands of molten film, and the tiny frames of image still visible - a graveyard crumbling under the rank stench of decay and the stale reality of something that should not have happened. Of course it wasn't real.

Do you know anyone who actually talks like this? Couldn't you see through the bullshit? Could you see that all of this was the language of my dreams? It was only one step away from a life in song, a sad waltz in d-minor made accessible by a second-rate orchestra. I may have offered you a fictionalised account or I may have told the absolute truth. It could have been an entirely fake persona, a digital stranger hiding in dark crevices. I was active one day and then I disappeared into silence, initiating a virtual death the next, forever vanishing from the community. My constructed identity was difficult to google search, left very few breadcrumbs or trails and most importantly, I was in complete control of the way it was constructed. Of course, it was real.

It was like travelling through a series of deserted, destroyed villages left empty after the victors have sealed the fate of those who lived there. I left the faint echoes of life for you to see; histories in text and photos, written by the winner. I picture you as an old lady, slowly sweeping out your pastry shop in the old backstreets of the village, the last resident holding onto to things that should slip into the past. You are wearing black from head to toe, bill-boarding to the world your loss, even though a simple look into your eyes says as much. You are fractured and broken, mourning around your shop in three-four time, whistling a raspy, empty lament that spoke 'how do I know any of this was real?'