

Five Million Yen: Chapter 4

by Daniel Harris

The story so far:

Chapter 1:

Ben Clarone, a musician, has just arrived home in New York City after an exhausting three month world tour. He is low on cash, but has a check for five million yen. Things are not as he expects.

Chapter 2:

After securing his horns, he finds himself in an uptown flop where all is not as it seems. After being robbed he sits in his room and ruminates on his life.

Chapter 3:

Ben deconstructs the sordid selfish path of his life and uncovers some clues.

Ben awoke Sunday afternoon. The rain was still slanting down the courtyard. A puddle of water was slowly making its way across the room. His ass hurt and he shifted his weight off the broken spring and stood up. There was a small circle of blood. He had to use the bathroom. He wrapped the top sheet around his body and opened the door.

The door of the bathroom across the hall was closed. He knocked on it. There was no answer. He pushed it open. On the floor under the sink with her head against the drain trap was a woman whose legs were spread-eagled across the floor. Her works were scattered around the floor and the rubber tube was still popping a vein in her arm.

Nature called. Ben sat on the toilet and let go the past. He flushed and straddling the junkie's body, he washed his hands. He dried off on the sheet.

He reached down and released the tube from her arm.

-I've heard of junkies losing their arm, even dying, because they passed out with the tourniquet on their arm. Must be some strong stuff to pass out that fast. Probably shot herself in an artery, not a vein.

He decided to try the shower. There was no one there, but the smell of cooked bacon permeated the hall, triggering borborygmus in his stomach. He loved that word, but not his empty stomach.

He closed the door and turned on the shower. Hot water gushed out of the showerhead. He stood under the cleansing flow and reveled in its power.

-Ah, this is what I need.

He stood under the shower for a good fifteen minutes. It felt good. He could sing, but only *Green Dolphin Street* came to mind.

-I'm not kissing the pavement and I have no love.

He got out of the shower and dried off on the sheet. There was a pair of boxer shorts drying on the radiator. He tried them on and kept them on.

-Screw that guy.

He left the shower for the bacon scented hallway and headed back to his room. He felt a lot better. His ass hurt, but that would probably go away.

-Got to turn that mattress over, he thought to himself.

When he got to his room he noticed the bathroom door was open. He looked in and the woman was still lying in her drool under the sink. He looked again.

-Is that Carmello's daughter Rita? Jesus, I can't leave her here.

He went into the bathroom. Her works were scattered around the floor. She seemed alive since there was new drool leaving her mouth.

I thought women weren't supposed to be on this floor. Or is it men who are not supposed to be on this floor. Men live on even floors, women live on odd floors. This is an odd floor. But I was told it was an even floor.

-How odd said the white queen or whatever.

This was like a big three-card monte game.

Find the black queen.

Well, if this is Rita, I can't leave her here like this

He gathered her up. She couldn't have weighed eighty pounds. He took her into his room. After putting her on the floor he flipped the mattress and put down the bottom sheet. A spring still stuck up through the mattress. He gathered up Rita and put her on the bed and put the thin blanket over her. He put the pillow under her head.

-Christ, I hope she doesn't die or lose her arm.

He went back across the hall to the bathroom and gathered up her works. He put them on the non-working sink in his room.

-She will need these when she comes around.

There was no place for him to sit. He took the wet sheet and wrapped it around his upper body. He looked like Lawrence of Arabia.

-I've got to go see Adonis. I'm sure he's behind the robbery.

He closed the door, locked it and called the elevator.

When the elevator arrived there was a man in it.

-Going down?

-Yes.

Ben got on the elevator.

-You know you are not allowed on the odd numbered floors. Men are strictly forbidden from being on those floors. A few months back a woman was raped and murdered on the seventh floor. Since then, men inhabit even floors and women odd floors. I had to leave a room I'd had for over twenty years because of that new rule.

-That's what they told me, but they gave me a 7D key. What's that all about?

-Was the guy at the desk a good-looking guy?

-Yes, I called him Adonis myself.

-Well, he was messing with you. You could be evicted and your rent money taken from you.

-Really?

-Yep.

-Well that blows. What do I do?

-Not much. Just hope they don't decide to enforce the rule. It happens now and again. Usually with Adonis, as you call him. He's a weasel, so watch out. I'll bet your room was broken into.

-How did you know?

-I'm not saying, but it seems to happen in situations like yours. The elevator arrived at the lobby.

-Name's Reynard. You can call me Rennie. If you need help with this place, I'm in 8D.

-Thanks, Rennie. I just might need to call in the favor.

Ben walked to the front desk. A couple from Germany was trying to rent a room. He was telling them there was no vacancy for a couple. Voices were rising in volume..

Ben walked up to the desk.

- Kann ich helfen? Can I help?

-You speak German.

- Genügend. Enough.

-Can you tell me what is wrong, bitte?

-This is an SRO, single room occupancy, Paare sind verboten. Couples not allowed. Eine Person in einem Raum. One person per room.

Ben and Adonis watched the German couple pick up their bags and troop out the door into the rain.

-Why thank you Mr Clarone.

-No problem.

Ben looked at the desk. There was a copy of *Breakfast of Champions* and his worn out copy of *Walden*. Theories were becoming realities.

-So I heard you were robbed last night. A locksmith will change your lock tomorrow. You will also get a new mattress. We don't like to know our guests have been violated. He had on his best innocent face.

Ben thought of a line in "Breakfast of Champions: "Charm was a scheme for making strangers like and trust a person immediately, no matter what the charmer had in mind."

-It's a little late for that don't you think?

-Well, better late than never, he trilled.

-Well since you have my books on your desk, I suggest you tell me where the rest of my stuff is before things escalate.

-I don't know what you are talking about. I found these at the lending library on Broadway.

-Like shit you did.

-Don't start accusing me, sheetman.

Ben looked at Adonis. If he weren't behind bulletproof glass, he would strangle the twerp.

-Well, lets put it this way. You have my books. I don't have my clothes or wallet. That puts you somewhere in the path of my possessions and my books.

-Don't accuse me; I had nothing to do with the robbery of your room.

-Well, Adonis, you and I are the only ones that knew that I had five million Yen. Either you or some accomplice robbed my room. Either way, you are in a tough position my friend.

-Don't call me your friend.

-OK, asshole, you get my stuff back in my room before dark. After that, I'm not responsible for your safety.

-Don't threaten me or I'll ring for the cops. Also, you are on a women only floor. So I can evict you at anytime.

-That's odd; you assigned me the room.

-Maybe I made a mistake.

-I doubt that. More likely you set me up.

-Well smart boy, you touch me, and bigger friends than yours will deal with this

-Remember what I said. Before dark.

Ben went to the elevator and back to his room. When he opened the door, Rita was gone. So were her works.

To be continued.

