

Kurosawa's Rain

by Rosanne Griffeth

The rain fell from the roof. It fell from my voice and and my eyes. Toshiro's Kukichiro stomped gutshot through the mud with his katana. Young and beautiful, Mifumi died there on the screen though he doesn't really die for fifty or more years, they think from something they call karoshi, which means he worked himself to death. They keep statistics on that in Japan.

I had the battle scenes of Shichinin no Samurai on a loop. Black and white shadows flickered in the dark day as I curled into a ball on the couch playing at numbness. Kurosawa and his rain haunt me, promising more torment.

I asked you to put the coffee pot in the bathroom should you leave. I didn't want to say goodbye, didn't want explanations, didn't want you to lie. But still, when I came home and found it there, lonely and empty on the toilet tank, I reeled. I sat on the bed for a moment staring through the door into the bath at its cheery morningness--out of place there.

But you came back and I fixed your favorite meal. The worst had surely happened, hadn't it?

When Kurosawa was thirteen, his brother, took him on a walking tour of Tokyo, a city defined by fantasies of destruction, decimated by an earthquake more deadly than Godzilla's dreams. Kurosawa wanted to hide his eyes from death but his brother made him look. He thought it taught him to face his fears.

His brother killed himself in his early twenties, having stared too hard.

I misunderstood just like Heigo Kurosawa. I thought by staring into our relationship I'd get to the truth of you. But that was just wrong. I asked you to look into it, holding your face by the jaw, wrenching your eyes around to my face.

That night I awoke and there you were, Isuzu Yamada in Throne of Blood, standing over me with the knife. Even then, I felt no fear. You sawed a slice in your arm, first on one side then the other and became Machiko Kyo in Rashoman.

"Help me!" you pleaded, ribbons of blood on your white arms. "I want to kill you so bad I can taste it."

"Put down the knife," I said.

There wasn't much left to do but take you to the emergency room and stand there while they called psych services. I'd dyed my hair a festive maroon for the holidays and had to snap at the nurse, "She's the one with the slashed arms."

Your shrink gave me the creeps and when I visited you, bringing something from home to keep you company in the locked ward, you sat, wet-mouthed, coloring a My Little Pony coloring book.

"What do you say to the nice lady?" the nurse said when I handed you the stuffed bear. We'd laughed months ago when my dog sniffed its butt.

"She's not three," I barked.

You looked at me with wide vacant eyes, making me a liar. I smiled to hide my disgust.

Kyuzo staggered to his death in the mud after the crack of a gunshot overpowered the rain. He's who I've been lately. Stoic,

accomplished, focused and cold. The actor playing the master swordsman had never picked up a sword before Shichinin no Samurai. I was a clever faker like that too. I understood Kyuzo's dismay at being shot in the back. It's a meaningless death and he threw his katana away in disgust. It's over just like that.

But now I was gutshot Kikuchiro. I didn't take out the bandit leader with my last breath. No, I left her there in the safety of her keepers, drooling and trusting them to fix her.

It's better I walked out while she had her orderlies, her doctors, her nurses, her locked rooms and her coloring books.

I told her goodbye in their company, saw her shocked face--she never thought I'd do it, never thought I'd abandon her, even with the knives and the homicidal ideations. And I told her, we never win. No matter how hard we fight, we always lose, even when we lived to walk away. I'm living to walk away, I said as the orderlies held her down to give her a shot of sanity—20 cc's of someone I no longer knew.

Kurosawa's rain continued to fall, and you know—it never means anything good.

